

Parental and Community Involvement in Children's Transition from Pre- Primary School to Class One in Soy Division, Eldoret West District, Uasin Gishu County

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Abstract

Although the Ministry of Education has worked in collaboration with various partners to ensure that all children get access to education in a child friendly environment, the enrolment rates in class 1 in primary schools has continued to show some disparities as compared to those of other lower primary school class levels in soy division. This paper is a report of a study that was carried out in 2012 in Soy Division of Eldoret West District in Uasin Gishu County to investigate the extent to which parental and community involvement influence children's transition from pre-primary to class one in the division. The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory and adopted a descriptive survey design. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 14 private and 22 public schools. The respondents were head teachers, Parent Teacher Association chair-persons, class one and pre-primary school teachers from the sampled schools. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used in data collection. Obtained data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study findings revealed that; the parents and the entire community of Soy Division never provided common roles in the two class levels under study. Majority of pre-primary parents escorted their children to school as compared to class one parents. Most parents in the pre-primary provided essentials for the school feeding programme unlike their counterparts in class one. The community never organized graduation ceremonies for those children moving to class one. The study therefore recommended that there was need for the parents' mobilization so that they could get to understand children's developmental needs and that the Ministry of Education should organize for more fund allocation to allow for community mobilization and training on the children's transition.

Keywords: Transition, Involvement, Pre-primary, Community,

Parents Introduction

Education is the process that involves acquiring and imparting of knowledge, skills and values which societies need and utilize, it is viewed globally as fundamental in the development of human beings and principally as a fundamental human right (Abagi, 2001). Since the declaration by the United Nations that every child has the right to education, the enrolment rate of pupils in many countries in the world has been on the rise (UNESCO, 2007). For those starting the primary schooling, transition to them is perceived as an important aspect in their life but to Fabian and Dunlop (2007), this has an impact to the child's subsequent experiences.

In developed countries such as USA, the transition rates from Pre-Primary to the primary school levels are normally around 99-100%. Parents are said to have a long-term responsibility for their children since they provide information that help in the effective care of the child. They know the child's past difficulties and hence would help the teacher to give the child more security and stability in school (Cosby, 2005). Many school settings value the parent's expertise they know it as of great benefit to the school since they will bring in many skills, a parasitic relationship where parents feel used but not valued will result in them deciding not to offer their services again (Tassoni & Beith, 2002).

A study done in the USA show that greater parent involvement brings increased benefits in child development where children feel more confident and secure when they are aware that there is a good interaction between their teacher and their parents (MoE, 2010). Brown, Amwake and Speth (2002) state that partnerships between Primary schools and communities represent effective efforts at creating a complete system to meet the transition needs of children and families. However, the different collaborating agencies will need time, resources and the willingness to learn about each other and to establish trust. In the United Kingdom for example, the government initiated a programme called National Care Strategy; this supported the early years and childcare partnership which composed of members ranging from all walks of professionals (Tassoni & Beith, 2002). In South Africa, for instance, the De Lange Commission of the 1980s took the responsibility of looking into ways of improving the education system and therefore highlighted the importance of Pre-primary Education. The commission recommended the establishment of a bridging class to the Primary school. The idea was not bought by the Apartheid of South Africa, but was later revived by National Education Programme Investigation (NEPI) of 1992, and this paved way for a smooth transition from the Pre-primary to standard one (Phatudi, 2007).

According to UNESCO (1996), more than 20% of the primary school children in the sub-Saharan Africa and 10% in Latin America repeat a grade but this is said to be more significant in the first grade or Class 1. UNESCO (2007) also noted that the repetition and dropout rates were still high in the lower primary and especially Class 1 levels. For many of the countries for which dropout information was available by grade, grade 1 dropout rates were at least double those in grade 2 (class 2). The Government of Kenya like those other affected countries has also suffered the same problem and has undertaken many reforms in the education sector in trying to solve this problem. Government of Kenya (GOK) has demonstrated its commitment to the well-being of young children by participating in and signing various global policy frameworks such as the 1989 United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the 1990 Jomtein World Conference on Education For All (EFA), the 2000 World Education Forum in Senegal and the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (GOK, 2006). The Kafu Committee of 1998 recommendations were also timely since they came almost at the same time with the World Bank's Project. These recommendations advocated for a collaborative work between the lower primary and the Pre-Primary school teachers; this meant strive for a smooth transition between the two school levels (Kafu, 1998).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has therefore attached great importance to Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes for children aged between 0-8 years. It views Early Childhood Education as the cornerstone upon which the primary education is build (MoEST, 2000). According to the Kenya government (GOK, 2006), parents have the following roles to play in the children's transition from pre-primary to Class 1: provide primary care, health and nutrition, provide an enabling environment for children's growth and development, they should also provide learning and play materials among other services. All these concur with what the MOEST (2000) postulates that the parents should provide the following for the smooth transition from pre-primary to class 1: Care, physical facilities, funds, play equipment, teaching-learning materials, repair damaged property, school feeding programme, organize trips to learning areas for children, escort children to school among other services.

In 2000, transition guidelines were made for the primary school head teachers and another for pre-school and lower primary school teachers. This was done to help these groups during the in-service training on the children's transition from Pre-School to class 1. These guidelines were meant to provide more knowledge on the issues of transition and hence a smooth transition from pre-primary to the lower primary school level, where class 1 is inclusive. In 2001, a workshop was held in Nakuru (Stem Hotel); the inspectors and DICECE officers from varied districts gave reports of transition from their districts and this exposed the gaps that still existed between pre-primary and class 1 (Ndeda, 2001). Challenges which the Pre-Primary school children encountered as they moved to class 1 include; walking long distances to the primary school, inadequate or lack of teaching/learning materials, difference in classroom arrangement, an increase in subject numbers instead of activity areas, change on attitude of parents to provide the school feeding programme or escorting the children to school on the ground that they are already old enough and finally reduction of play time (MoEST, 2000).

In Kenya, also, a community like in the global world is defined as a group of people living together in particular geographical area or location. Such people may be sharing common goals, expectations, beliefs, norms values, religion, food and language (MoEST, 2000). From the educational perspective, these are people who share same educational goals. The community support in the provision of education is supported by Kamunge report (GoK, 1988) which advocated for partnership between the government and the communities.

According to the MoEST (2003), the community has the responsibility of setting up the Pre-primary schools and sending children to these schools, pay teachers, and provide voluntary service among other responsibilities that help promote children's smooth transition from the pre-school to class 1. For a community therefore to be effective, there is need for it to network for the welfare of the school. During networking all concerned parties need to consult and share resources with one another (MOEST, 2004).

Indakwa and Miriti (2010) recognize the importance of community involvement in child development; they states that parents in some parts of Kenya were empowered by Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). These CBOs lend the parents loans which enabled them vent for their children and also mobilized them on the importance of parental involvement in school activities. The GOK (2006) postulates the roles of the community in the provision for the children's needs. Among these roles are to; provide the pre-primary school with physical facilities, play and learning materials, sustainability of the school feeding programme, and augmenting the parents' efforts.

The introduction of Free Primary Education in Kenya in 2003 was meant to lead to the achievement of the MDG's and so much has been done to boost this. Examples of these are policies laid down in support of the children's access and retention in school like; the funding of the transition

component by the World Bank in 1999, the establishment of the Sessional paper No.1 of 2005 on Policy Framework for education training and research, the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) of 2005, which enabled the provision of the community support grants for the pre-primary children among others. All the mentioned policies were put in place to enhance access, equity and quality at all levels of education (Thungu, Wandera, Gachie & Alumande, 2008).

In spite of these efforts, Soy Division of Eldoret West District has continued to have enrolments in Class 1 and Pre-Primary that has a lot of disparities. According to statistics in the District Education Office, Soy Division in Eldoret West District has a problem in the children's transition from pre-primary to Class 1 since the number of those children in Class 1 exceeds that of both the pre-primary and standard two class levels. This therefore prompted the researcher to try and establish factors which affect children's transition from Pre-primary to Class 1 in Soy division of Eldoret West District. The specific research objectives were to: find out the perceived roles of parents in children's transition and establish the extent of community involvement on the transition of children from Pre-primary to Class 1 in Soy Division.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Ecological Systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979). This theory borrows its ideas from a scientific point of view that, in an environment; there is always interdependence in life amongst the organisms. In such an ecological environment, organisms depend on each other in order to sustain their living. Basing on this argument, this theory looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Dunlop and Fabian (2002) argue that good communication between the child's home and the school enhances a smooth transition between the school levels. If the transition policy is implemented, then children's transition from one school level to another will be smooth. If all the parts of the system depend on each other to enhance a joint participation then, a smooth transition would be observed (Dunlop & Fabian, 2002). The Ecological Systems Theory was therefore used to find out parental and community influence on children's transition from Pre-primary to Class 1 in Soy Division, Eldoret West District.

Materials and Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. This design was used because it makes accurate assessment of the incidences, and also involves measurement, classification, analysis and interpretation of collected data. The study was undertaken in Soy Division, since the authors identified that Class 1 had a high enrolment as compared to Pre-primary school levels. The study targeted the PTA chairperson of every school, the Pre-primary and Class 1 teacher and the primary school head teachers in Soy Division of Eldoret West District. There were 73 public primary schools, 47 private primary schools, 240 pre-primary and Class 1 teachers and 120 head-teachers in the division.

Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain a representation of public and private schools. Simple random sampling technique was used to obtain a sample size of 22 public schools and 14 private schools, using 30% of the target population a total of 36 schools were sampled. Kerlinger (1992) states a sample size of at least 10-30% would be adequate to allow for reliable analysis. Purposive sampling was used to select one head-teacher and one PTA chairperson from each of the sampled schools. Finally, simple random sampling was used to select one Pre-primary school teacher and one Class 1 teacher from the sampled schools. Data collection instruments used were questionnaires administered to the Pre-primary and Class 1 teachers and interview schedule prepared and administered to the head teachers and PTA chairpersons.

The content validity of the instrument was determined when the researcher discussed the items in the instrument with the supervisors, colleagues and other lecturers of the department in the school of education, Moi University. To ascertain the reliability of the research instruments, the researcher did a pilot study in the neighbouring district. The coefficient of reliability obtained was 0.70, showing that there was a strong relationship between the research instruments and hence reliable to be used in the study.

Data analysis was done basing on the descriptive survey research design where measures of central tendency were used. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Data was presented in form of tables and charts.

Results

Teacher's Perceived role of Parents on Transition of Children from Pre-primary to Class 1

From the study majority, 20(55.6%), of the Pre-Primary school teachers and 14(38.9%) of class 1 teachers said that parents escorted their children to school. Majority, 19(52.8%), of the Pre-Primary

school teachers and 13(36%) Class 1 teachers responded that parents' assisted in the making of the teaching/learning materials. On the provision of the school feeding programme, 23(63.4%) of the Pre-primary school and 18(50%) of Class 1 teachers agreed that parents were of assistance. Fourteen (38.9%) of the Pre-primary and 11(30.6%) of Class 1 teachers answered that parents helped in their classes as resource persons. Finally, on the provision of the school uniform, 30(83.3%) Pre-primary school and 31(86.1%) of Class 1 teachers said that their parents in their classes provided the children with the school uniform. These findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-primary and class 1 teacher's perceived role of parents

<i>Perceived Roles</i>	<i>Pre-primary Teachers</i>		<i>Class 1 teachers</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Escort children to school	20	55.6	14	38.9
Assisting in making children's teaching/learning materials	19	52.8	13	36.1
Provide essentials for the school feeding programme	23	63.9	18	50.0
Helping as resource person	14	38.9	11	30.6
Provide uniform for children in pre-primary and class 1	30	83.3	31	86.1

Head Teacher's Perceived role of Parents

From the study head teachers perceived that majority 35(97.2%) of the parents in the Pre-primary and 34(94.4%) in Class 1 provided their children with the school uniform. The response on the provisions for the essentials of the School Feeding Programme revealed that, 33(91.6%) was the proportion which represented the Pre-primary school parents while 28(77.8%) represented the response from Class 1 parents. On the role of escorting children to school, 31(86.1%) of the parents of the Pre-primary school children and 14(38.9%) of the parents of Class 1 children gave a positive response. As far as the assistance in the making of the teaching/learning materials was concerned, 22(61.1%) was the response obtained from the parents of the Pre-primary school children while 14(38.9%) was obtained from Class 1 parents. The least role played by the parents was that of assistance as resource persons where 15(41.6%) represented the response obtained from the parents of the Pre-primary school children while 12(33.3%) was from those of Class 1 as presented in Figure 1.

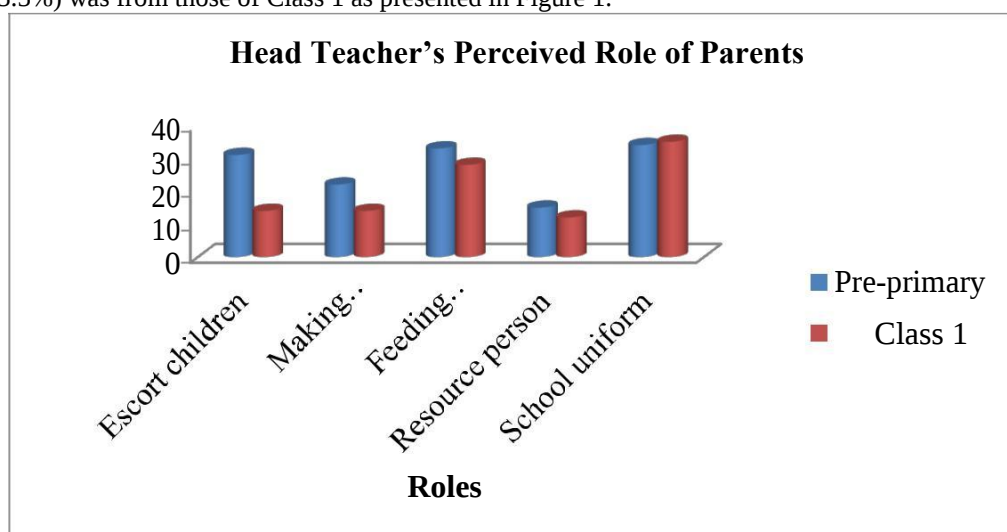


Figure 1. Head teacher's perceived role of parents

PTA Chairperson's Perceived Role of Parents

The PTA chairpersons' response on the perceived roles of parents on the children's transition from Pre-primary to Class 1 showed that, 29(80.6%) of the Pre-primary school parents and 7(19.4%) of Class 1 parents escorted their children to school; 18(50%) of the Pre-primary school parents and 10(27.8%) of Class 1 parents assisted in the making of the teaching/learning materials for the children. On the role of providing essentials for the School Feeding Programme, 28(77.8%) of Pre-primary school parents and 20(55.6%) of Class 1 parents responded positively. The proportion of the parents who helped as resource persons was; 20(55.6%) were from the Pre-primary while 13(36.15) were from Class 1. Finally, 30(83.3%) of pre-primary school parents and 34(94.4%) of Primary school parents provided school uniform for their children. This information is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. PTA chairperson's perceived role of parents

<i>Perceived Roles</i>	<i>Pre-primary parents</i>		<i>Class 1 parents</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Escort children to school	29	80.6	7	19.4
Assisting in making children's teaching/learning materials	18	50	10	27.8
Provide essentials for the school feeding programme	28	77.8	20	55.6
Helping as resource person	20	55.6	13	36.6
Provide school uniform for children in pre-primary and Class 1	30	83.3	34	94.4

Teachers' Response on Roles of the Community in the Children's Transition

From the study 24(66.6%) pre-primary teachers agreed that the community provided land for school construction, hiring and paying pre-primary school teachers. However, 16(44.4%) identified the providing of essentials for the school feeding programme and the organization of graduation ceremonies for children completing the pre-primary school comprised of 10(27.8%) as community's role as summarized in Figure 2.

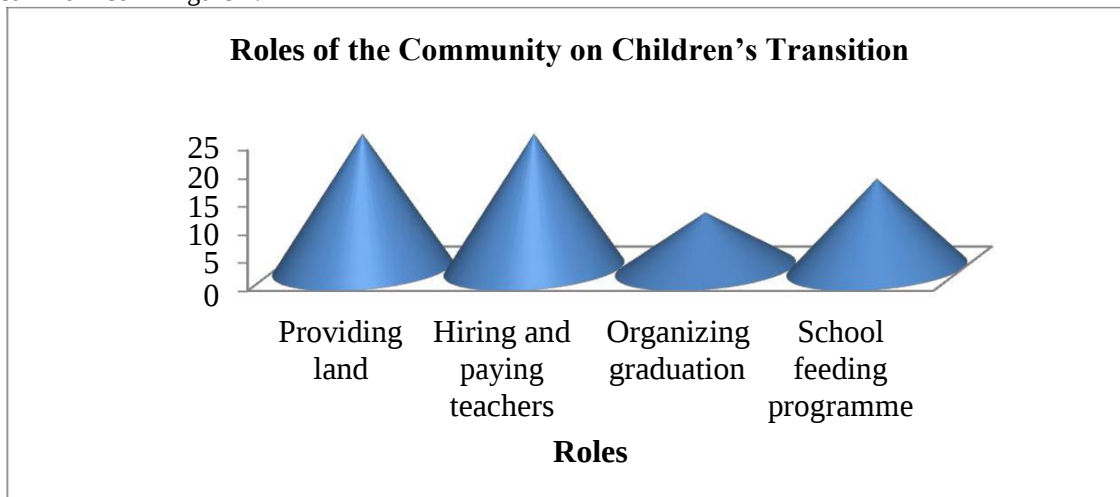


Figure 2. Pre-primary and class 1 teachers' response on roles of the community in the children's transition

From the interviews majority of head teachers identified that the community provided land to construct the school while the remaining proportion said that the community hired and paid teachers, organized for graduation days for children completing Pre-primary schooling and also provided essentials for the school feeding programme. Majority of school PTA Chairperson identified that the community provided land for school construction and also did the hiring and paying of teachers. The rest said that it organized for graduation ceremonies for children after completing the Pre-primary school education and also provided essentials for the school feeding programme. The Provision of essentials for the school feeding programme appeared the least service provided by the community. This does not concur with Indakwa and Miriti (2010) who argue that children are not ready to move to the next level of schooling if the school feeding programme is not continued.

Influence of Parental and Community Involvement on Children's Transition

The relationship between independent variables (parental and community involvement) and dependent variable (transition) were investigated using spearman rank correlation coefficient as shown in Table 3. There was a positive relationship between the parental involvement [$r=.211$, $p<.001$], and community involvement [$r=.151$, $p<.05$], on transition of children. This showed that the more the parents and community are involved the higher the number of children transited from pre-primary and standard one.

Table 3. Influence of parental and community involvement on children's transition

		Transition	Parental involvement	Community involvement
Transition	Correlation Coefficient	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	. ^{***}		
Parental involvement	Correlation Coefficient	.211 ^{**}	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006 [*]		
Community involvement	Correlation Coefficient	.151 [*]	.333 ^{**}	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	.000	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

c. Listwise N = 144

Discussion

The study established that majority of the parents played most of their roles in the Pre-primary school levels than in Class 1. It can therefore be concluded that, parents never played unified roles in the Pre-primary and Class 1 levels in the area of study and there is a need to sensitise parents on the importance of early years. This finding concurred with what MoEST (2000) has established that parents changed their attitudes towards the children moving to Class 1 on the grounds that they were older enough. The finding of the study fails to concur with Kafu Committee (1998) who advocated for a harmonious relationship between the Pre-primary and the Primary school levels that enhanced a smooth transition between the two class levels. In this study the harmony was lacking since parents were not playing unified roles in the two class levels under the study.

The findings of the study established that, the community played its roles averagely well except on the component of graduation days. The findings on the issue of graduation does not concur with what Ramey and Ramey (1999) argue that the role of the community in pre-primary transition to primary school is important because community involvement can minimize the risk of stressors, by enhancing children's internal and external protective factors.

The findings concur with what Brown, Amwake and Speth (2002) say that partnerships between Primary schools and communities represent effective efforts at creating a complete system to meet the transition needs of children and families. It also agrees with Kamunge report (1988) which advocated for partnership between the government and the communities. According to MoEST (2003), the community has the responsibility of setting up the Pre-primary schools and sending children to these schools, pay teachers, and provide voluntary service among other responsibilities that help promote children's smooth transition from the pre-school to Class 1.

Conclusion

Basing on the objectives that the study explored, the following conclusions were arrived at:

1. Majority of the parents played their roles in Pre-primary school levels as opposed to the Primary school levels.
2. The community played its roles well but lacked the organization of graduation days for the children completing the Pre-primary school level.

Recommendations

Parents need to be mobilized so that they can get to understand the children's developmental needs. The Ministry of Education should organize for more fund allocation to allow for a community mobilization and training on the children's transition.

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