

Assessing Pre-primary Teachers' Involvement in Decision Making in Tanzanian Public Pre-primary Schools: A Look of Implementation of Structured Play Activities in Longido and Monduli Districts

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the extent to which school administrators involve pre-primary teachers in decision making related to implementation of structured play activities in Tanzanian government pre-primary schools where Longido and Monduli were used as study cases. Collegial Models of educational leadership and management developed by Tony Bush guided the study. The study adopted Convergent design of mixed methods approach. Sample of the study included 268 respondents where 34 were head teachers, 34 were academic teachers, 136 were internal school quality assurance team members, and 64 were pre-primary teachers who were obtained through stratification, purposive, and simple randomly respectively. Data were collected through structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively and through inferential statistics while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Findings show that teachers' involvement in school administrative decision making related to structured play activities is very low. Hypothesis testing shows existence of significant relationship between low level of teachers' involvement in school administrative decision making and those teachers' inadequate implementation of structured play activities in pre-primary classes. The study concludes that low level of implementing structured play activities by the pre-primary teachers is associated with low level of teachers' involvement in school administrative decision making. The study recommends that administrators should involve pre-primary teachers in decision making so as to improve implementation of structured play activities.*

KEYWORDS: instructional leadership, instructional supervisor, school administrators, decision making and structured play activities

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, teachers are considered as the main stakeholders in curriculum implementation process at all levels of education. This is the main reason why teachers have to undergo professional training for a considerable period of time where they learn theories and pedagogies for effective teaching and learning (Cortes,2019). Curriculum is understood as the sum of all the learning experiences and the intended learning outcomes that are offered to the learners under the auspices of a school (Lin & Goh,2017). Curriculum implementation is the process of disseminating these learning experiences and provision of resources in the classroom setting where teacher-learner interactions take place. In the process of curriculum implementation in different levels of education; teachers need to involve school administrators in various decision-making processes. The Tanzanian school structure is divided into four levels which are pre-primary level, primary level, secondary level, and tertiary level (URT, 2014). Pre-primary education is the initial stage of organized instruction designed primarily to provide a bridge between the home and a school-based learning (Black *et al*, 2016). Pre-primary education prepares children to join primary education with prerequisite knowledge in writing, reading and arithmetic (3Rs) (URT, 2020). Basically, this education level prepares children mentally, physically and socio-emotionally for formal schooling and prevents poor performance and early dropout (Mligo, 2018). Ndijuye *et al* (2020) argue that pre-primary education is intended to provide children with learning experiences that can best promote their development, learning and readiness for primary school.

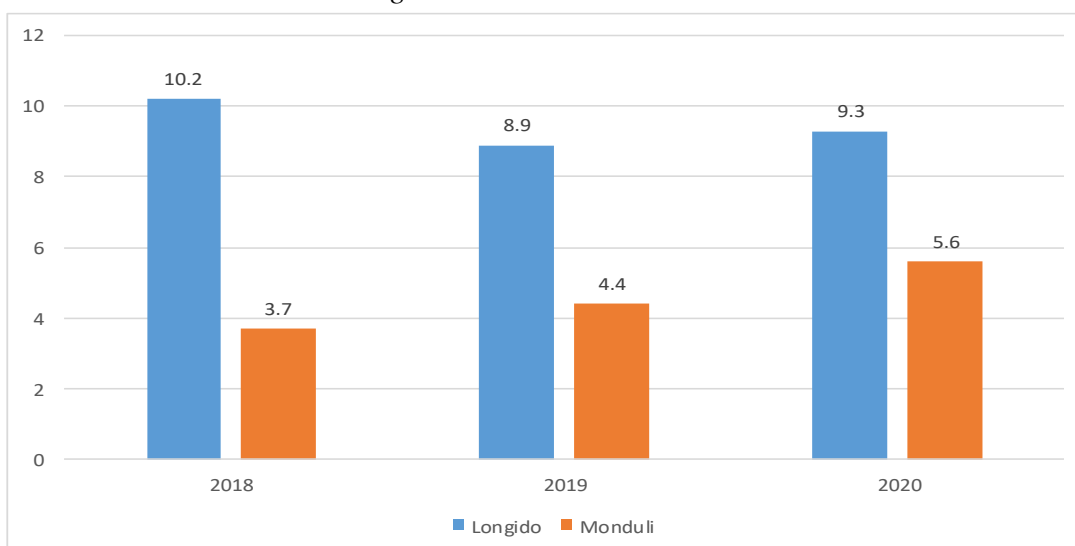
Before and after independence, pre-primary education level in Tanzania was mainly provided by the private sector such as religious institutions and community centres, and it was less formalized (Mtahabwa, 2010). Pre-primary education level in Tanzania was formalized and systematised in 1995 followed by the adoption of 1995 Educational Training Policy (ETP), and the policy stated that “Pre-primary school education for children aged between 5 and 6 years shall be formalised and integrated in the Formal School System” (URT, 1995, p. 13). Formalisation was done to broaden provision of pre-primary education and to make it more systematic. Thus, pre-primary education was declared a government responsibility and each public primary schools were assigning to establish one class for pre-primary session in partnership with communities to educate all children between 5 and 6 years. However, pre-primary schooling was not compulsory until the introduction of the 2014 Education and Training Policy that superseded the 1995’s policy. The policy states: “The Government shall set up procedures for compulsory pre-primary education that will be provided to children between age three and five years for a period of not less than one year” (URT, 2014, p. 24). As per the policy requirements, each primary school was then mandated to have a pre-primary section. The purpose of pre-primary education is to prepare children for primary education (TIE, 2016;2019). By making pre-primary education compulsory for all children, it was implied that no children would be enrolled to standard I (STD I) without passing through pre-primary class (URT, 2014). The embedment of pre-primary classes in primary schools added more responsibility to school administrators to ensure effective running of daily school activities (Cervantes,2018). School administrators have a responsibility of supervising

teaching and learning activities in the pre-primary classrooms which requires the application of structured play activities (TIE, 2016; Ngole Mkulu, 2021; Hunter, 2019 & Anney, (2016).

The application of structured play activities involves the use of puzzle, board game, playing cards, domino, snake play, draft, counters and toys (TIE, 2016). Since teachers are the main implementers of the pre-primary curriculum that emphasizes the use of structured play activities; it is imperative that school administrators and other education stakeholders involving teachers in the processes of decision making. Dampson & Afful-Bron (2018) suggest that teachers' involvement in decision making empowers them and make them accountable for ineffective teaching and learning. Teachers' involvement in most school decisions affecting their use of structured play activities is considered essential in enhancing the implementation of the pre-primary school curriculum (Ahmed *et al*, 2019; Muronga, 2017). Some of the decisions which need to involve teachers include setting the school budget for pre-primary education; syllabus analysis; setting up specific objectives of each lesson; identifying teaching and learning resources; and assessing pupils' progress; and mobilising other resources (Mustapha, 2015).

In Tanzania, there is a growing concern about the implementation of structured play activities in public pre-primary schools because of increasing trend in the numbers of Standard One I repeaters at the national level from 68,571 in 2018 to 75,945 in 2021. This repetition is due to lack of essential reading, writing and arithmetic (3Rs) skills despite attending pre-primary schooling which is a foundation for these skills (URT, 2014; 2018; 2019; 2020). Similar situation has been observed in Longido and Monduli districts between 2018 and 2020 as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Trend in Repetition among Standard One Pupils in Longido and Monduli Districts from 2018 to 2020 in Percentage



Source: URT (2018; 2019; 2020).

Information in Figure 1 shows that, between 2018 and 2020, Longido and Monduli districts had an increasing number of STD I repeaters across the three years due to their inability to master the 3Rs. Moreover, in the year 2020, more than 9% of the pupils repeated STD I in Longido district due to lack of skills on the 3Rs. These statistics raised concerns on the extent to which school administrators work together with pre-primary teachers in decision making that is related to teaching and learning through structured play activities. It is from this background, that the current study assessed the level of teachers' involvement in administrative decision making related to level of implementation of structured play activities in Longido and Monduli districts.

Statement of the Problem

Effective pre-primary school curriculum implementation rests on the firm foundations of effective school administration because one of the administrative tasks is the supervision of teaching and learning. Besides, one of the pillars of effective school administration is the involvement of teachers in administrative decision making. As explained earlier on, the implementation of pre-primary curriculum in public pre-primary schools in Tanzania which is meant to enable pupils develop reading, writing and performing arithmetic skills is not effective as evidenced by the number of pupils in STD I who fail to join STD II. Situation is a stumbling block forwards the achievement of the objectives of pre-primary education level as specified in Education and Training Policy of 2014 which stipulates that the 3Rs are expected to be taught and developed in pre-primary level.

To enhance the developments of 3Rs, the pre-primary curriculum emphasizes the application of structured play activities, which involves teaching by doing. In addition to other activities, effective implementation of structured play is enhanced by empowering teachers through their involvement in school administrative decision making. However, in Tanzania, there is limited literature on the level of empowerment of teachers in school administrative decision making related to teaching and learning through structured play activities. Therefore, this study examined the extent do school administrators involve teachers in decision making related to the implementation of structured play activities in public pre-primary schools?

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent in which pre-primary teachers are involved in school administrative decisions making to enable them implement structured play activities in public pre-primary school

Research Question and Hypothesis

This study was guided by one research question and one hypothesis as follows

Research Question

To what extent do school administrators involve teachers in decision making related to the implementation of structured play activities in public pre-primary schools in Longido and Monduli districts?

Research Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between the level of teachers' involvement in school administrative decision making and the implementation of structured play activities in public pre-primary schools in Longido and Monduli districts.

Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by theories of educational leadership and management advanced by Tony Bush (2011,2020). Bush proposes six models of education leadership and management namely: Formal models, Collegial Models, Political Models, Subjective Models, Ambiguity Models, and Cultural Models. The current study focused on Collegial Models which assumes that policy determination and formulation, decision making is based on a process of discussions, agreements and consensus and sharing of power among some or all of the members of the organization who are considered to have a common perception of the organizational objectives (Bush, 2020). Collegial Models are linked with three leadership styles which are transformational, participatory, and distributed leadership (Bush, 2020).

Transformational leadership is enshrined on commitments and competences of organizational members. Bush, *et al* (2019) and Chitpin (2020) have conceptualized transformational leadership in the education sector based on eight dimensions: building school vision; setting school objectives; intellectual stimulation provision; offering individualised patronage; best practices and core organizational values modelling; high performance anticipation display; productive culture creation within schools; and finally, encouraging participation in school decision making process involving teachers in implementing the curriculum.

Participative leadership refers to the opportunity for the organizational members to be engaged in the decision-making process within the school (Chitpin, 2021). According to Bush (2018) stated that distributed leadership focuses on seeking and utilization of expertise wherever it exists in the organization regardless of the organizational positions of the skilled members. In the school context, distributed leadership involve collaborative working between individuals who trust and respect each other's contribution and happens most effectively when people at all levels engage in action, accepting leadership in their particular areas of expertise and finally requires resources that support and enable collaborative environments which leads the administrators to involve all the organization staff in decision making.

The relevance of Collegial Models in this study is that it allows teachers to talk about teaching and learning process. There is a room for teachers to be involved on issues of budget, timetable, children enrolment and preparation of teaching and learning materials (Bush, 2011 & Gronn,2010). The complexity and effectiveness of a collegial system depends in part on the attitudes of staff. If they actively support participation, then it may succeed. If they display apathy or hostility, it seems certain to fail. The researcher chose Collegial approaches to guide the study because it was presumed, they would optimally show how school administrators involve pre-primary teachers in making decisions related to the implementation of structured play activities depending on the integration of different activities (Bush, 2020). This model informed this study as it was essentially about examining

the extent to which school administrators involve teachers in decision making with the view of enhancing the implementation of structured play activities. However, in the current study, only the influence of school administrators was examined to determine how involvement of pre-primary teachers enhances or constrains the implementation of structured play activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lin (2017) assessed teachers' involvement in decision-making in pre-primary schools in Japan. The study involved 20 pre-primary pupils and 20 pre-primary teachers who were randomly selected. The study revealed that decision-making on school staffing, curriculum, or resource allocation were always done in schools by school administrators. Teachers were usually excluded in the decision-making process as they were not tasked with the obligation to implement the school policies. According to Lin (2017), teachers were only involved in preparing time table and pupils' enrolment. However, Lin (2017) used data from teachers only and therefore it was not possible to triangulate the information collected from one source only, which affected the validity of the conclusions derived. The educational policy of Japan is quite different from what is exercised in Tanzania and thus the findings obtained in Japan may be different from what could be obtained in Tanzania-the thing which necessitated a study to be conducted in the Tanzanian context.

Khanal (2017) assessed the role of institutional schools in empowering female teachers in Nepal to gain a deeper understanding of female-teacher empowerment approaches in school decisions making. This was a mixed method research using descriptive survey and exploratory designs with a sample of 16 female teachers who responded to a questionnaire consisting of open and closed ended questions. Although the female teachers were given priority to teach in lower primary as well as the pre-primary levels; most of them reported limited involvement in school administrative decision-making processes. This was because such teachers taught at pre-primary level that was not given much consideration. It was also found out that female pre-primary teachers were not involved in developing school level policy strategies as the school administration did not get opinions from them.

Limited involvement of pre-primary teachers in decision making may have negatively affected the implementation of structured pre-primary curriculum as these teachers were in a better position of identifying the requirements for effective curriculum implementation which is characterized by play activities. In comparison to the Tanzanian context, literatures show that most pre-primary teachers in government schools were females (Pardhan & Pelletier, 2017). Unlike Khanal (2017), the current study did not assess gender differences on the involvement of pre-primary teachers in decision making but collected data from both male and female teachers. Moreover, the current study involved school administrators and analysed documents so as to triangulate the data collected from pre-primary teachers.

Muronga (2017) examined stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of teachers' participation in pre-primary school management and decision-making in the Kavango region of Namibia. The study used interpretive qualitative paradigm as well as documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observation instruments to collect data. The findings demonstrated that early childhood education required involvement of all stakeholders. The

study revealed the importance of involving stakeholders in decision making for effective pre-primary curriculum implementation. The study therefore leaves a gap on whether pre-primary teachers who are the main curriculum implementers are involved in the decision-making process. Thus, the current study was conducted to fill that gap.

Dampson and Afful-Bron (2018) explored basic schools teachers' participation in school decision making in Ghana. The study had a sample of 209 teachers, 26 head teachers, and 11 education supervisors. Findings revealed a low level of teachers' participation in decision making at school level and recommended for more training to the head teachers to equip them with the needed skills for stakeholders' engagement in decision making process. However, Dampson and Afful-Bron (2018) did not describe the situation of teacher involvement in decision making. Though the findings showed a low level of teacher' engagement in decision making; there was still a need to explore how such low levels of involvement affected the implementation of teaching and learning activities. Thus, in addition to the descriptive statistics, the current study also conducted statistical tests to determine the extent to which school administrators involve teachers in decision making related to the implementation of structured play activities which are the recommended teaching and learning technique in pre-primary education.

Similarly, Mustapha (2015) investigated teachers' involvement in decision-making in government primary schools in Missenyi District in Tanzania. The study employed descriptive research design under mixed research approach. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review. The study revealed that the main areas that primary teachers participated in decision-making in their schools were setting up the teaching objectives, moderation of pupils' examinations, planning for programmes of the year and syllabi analysis. By identifying the critical areas proposed by Mustapha (2015) which were setting up the teaching objectives, moderation of pupils' examinations, planning for programmes of the year and syllabi analysis; the study then left a gap on the extent to which the pre-primary teachers were involved in the identified decision-making aspects. Thus, the current study was conducted to fill that gap.

Joseph (2018) examined teachers' involvement in decision making in primary schools in Kinondoni Municipality-Tanzania. The study used qualitative method which was informed by case study design. The study sample was 72 participants (8 heads of schools and 64 teachers) which were obtained through purposive and convenient sampling respectively. However, head teachers reported to involve teachers in the decision-making process using the following criteria: a sense of responsibility, commitment, wisdom, education level and hard working. Joseph's (2018) findings were contradicting with teachers views who reported to be excluded in decision making, while head teachers in Joseph's (2018) study reported to be involving teachers in decision making. The mismatch of responses between teachers and head teachers may have been caused by the use of only one method of data collection which was interview guide. The use of interview guides is limited only on the views and feelings of respondents because two respondents may have contradicting views on the same aspect. Additionally, qualitative research limits the generalisability of findings to other places. Therefore, to find more data on this, the current study employed document analysis guide

whereby different documents related with decision making were analysed to determine whether there was evidence to prove teachers' involvement in decision making.

The reviewed empirical studies have shown the importance of involving different stakeholders (including teachers) in the decision-making process for effective pre-primary curriculum implementation (Muronga, 2017). Curriculum implementation, syllabus analysis and planning of yearly programmes are among the aspects requiring maximum involvement of teachers (Mustapha, 2015). Despite the importance of involving teachers in decision - making, the literature reviewed have shown that teachers were not much involved by the school administration in decision-making process (Dampson & Afful-Bron, 2018; Joseph, 2018; Lin, 2017). There is disagreement among the empirical studies on teachers' involvement in decision making process. Therefore, there was a need for further studies to be conducted so as to come out with evidence indicating the extent to which school administrators involve teachers in decision making process for effective implementation of structured play activities in government pre-primary schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed methods approach because it allowed the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Specifically, convergent design was employed whereby the researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data concurrently during the same phase of the research process. This design was used since it saves time as both qualitative and quantitative data are collected at the same time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; 2023). The target population for this study was 104 head teachers, 104 academic teachers, 416 Internal School Quality Assurance Team (henceforth, ISQAT) members and 193 pre-primary teachers from public pre-primary schools in Longido and Monduli districts (URT, 2020). From this population, stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain a sample of 268 respondents using Yamane formula ($n = N / (1 + N e^2)$) for sample size determination in which the margin of error was 0.05 (Mweshi, 2020). Using the formula, sample obtained consisted of 34 heads of schools, 34 academic teachers, 136 ISQAT members and 64 pre-primary teachers.

Data were collected through structured questionnaires and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires had both open-ended and close-ended questions and were distributed to the pre-primary teachers, academic teachers, and ISQAT members. Questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher herself in the same day. The head teachers were interviewed using an interview guide which consisted of open-ended questions. Interviews with the head teachers were conducted in the head teachers' offices. Tape recorders or notebooks were used to record the conversation. The interview sessions took a maximum of 40 minutes. The major topic for the interview and questionnaires were involvement of pre-primary teachers in decision making on the aspects of goal setting, selection of teaching and learning resources, setting school budget, pupils' enrolment and evaluation of pupil's performance.

The tools were validated by three experts in the field of educational research, school administration and early childhood education. The experts provided suggestions for

improvement which were incorporated in the instruments' final version. Thereafter, the researcher proceeded with data collection including obtaining permission from relevant authorities and seeking consent from the targeted respondents.

Prior to data collection, the tools were piloted in four pre-primary schools (two from Longido and two from Monduli) to determine whether they were well understood and unambiguous to respondents, also to estimate reliability, and whether they could adequately yield the anticipated data. Reliability of quantitative data was obtained through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient while reliability of qualitative data was ensured through triangulation of data collection methods. Data from pilot study were analysed to check if they address the research questions and hypothesis. Thereafter, the researcher made the required and necessary modifications on the research instruments before the actual data collection process could commence.

The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS computer software version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the means, frequencies and percentages. Since the calculated values for data from the Likert scales were in two decimal places, the interpretation was based on the scale suggested by Pimentel (2019). In this scale, 1.00 –1.79 represented “never”; 1.80–2.59 represented “rare”; 2.60 – 3.39 represents “sometimes”; 3.49 – 4.19 represents “often”, and 4.20 – 5.00 represent “always”. For this study, the researcher retained the values but synonyms to the scales were used whereby; very high extent stood for always; high extent stood for often; moderate extent stood for sometimes; low extent stood for rare and very low extent stood for never. The mean scores for each category of respondents together with the grand mean scores across all the items were calculated. In the interpretation however, the grand mean scores were used as they summarized responses from the three categories of respondents. The descriptive statistics were then used to describe the situation on teachers' involvement.

Inferential statistics were used to test the hypothesis. The chi-square test was estimated at 95% confidence level. On the other hand, thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. Coding and themes development was done using Braun and Clarke's (2006) model. The themes that emerged from the data were identified based on the research question. Tables were used to summarise the quantitative data while the qualitative data were supported by verbatim quotations. The researcher adhered to the ethical principles in all stages of the research process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The extent school administrators involve pre-primary teachers in decision making

The research question investigated the extent to which pre-primary teachers were involved in the decision-making process related to the implementation of structured play activities. Thus, ISQAT members, academic teachers and pre-primary teachers responded to the questionnaire. There was also additional data from face-to-face semi structured interviews with head teachers. The questionnaires were composed of with Likert five -point rating scale statements concerning involvement of teachers in decision making. The responses on the

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rating scale ranged from 5 which represented “very high extent” to 1, which represented “very low extent or not involved at all”. In this scale, 1.00 –1.79 mean score represented “very low extent”; 1.80–2.59 represented “low extent”; 2.60 – 3.39 represents “medium extent”; 3.40 – 4.19 represents “high extent”, and 4.20 – 5. 00 represent “very high extent”. (Pimentel,2019). The mean scores for each statement across the respondents were then calculated to test the extent of teachers’ involvement in decision making as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean Scores for the Academic Teachers, pre-primary teachers and ISQAT Responses on the Pre-primary School Teachers’ Involvement in Administrative Decision making (n = 205)

| Aspects of Teachers’ Involvement | | X₁ | X₂ | X₃ | Grand mean |
|---|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| i. | Preparation of pre-primary education time table | 4.07 | 3.94 | 3.77 | 3.93 |
| ii. | Enrolment of pre-primary pupils | 3.97 | 3.91 | 3.13 | 3.67 |
| iii. | Decisions concerning pupils’ progress | 3.35 | 3.21 | 3.66 | 3.41 |
| iv. | Setting the school budget for pre-primary education | 2.67 | 2.44 | 2.04 | 2.38 |
| v. | Designing the teaching and learning environment | 2.09 | 2.15 | 1.62 | 1.95 |
| vi. | Preparation of teaching and learning aids for structured play activities | 1.98 | 2.03 | 1.62 | 1.88 |
| vii. | Strategic planning for implementing structured play activities | 1.90 | 1.97 | 1.62 | 1.83 |
| viii. | Mobilization of teaching and learning resources | 1.85 | 1.88 | 1.62 | 1.78 |
| ix. | Planning the implementation of structured play activities | 1.81 | 1.82 | 1.62 | 1.75 |
| x. | Selection of teaching and learning resources | 1.78 | 1.82 | 1.66 | 1.75 |
| Average Mean Score | | 2.55 | 2.52 | 2.23 | 2.43 |

Source: Field data, (2022)

Key: X₁ = Mean Score for Internal School Quality Assurance Team Members; X₂ = Mean

Score for Academic Teachers; X_3 = Mean Score for Pre-Primary Teachers.

Data in Table 1 show that the overall mean score on the involvement of pre-primary school teachers in school administrative decision making was 2.43. According to the rating scale's key, this is low extent zone which means that most of the respondents experienced a low level of teachers' involvement in school administrative decision making. However, the mean scores for each aspect show that involvement was high in three aspects, namely: preparation of pre-primary education time table, enrolment of pre-primary pupils, and decision-making concerning pupils' progress. The three aspects had a mean score above 3.40. Quantitative findings were triangulated through interview data from head teachers to determine the extent pre-primary teachers were involved in making decisions concerning the implementation of structured play activities in pre-primary classes. The information collected from the heads of schools has been presented in the following subsections being supported by direct quotations.

Teachers' involvement in the preparation of time table

Data in table 1 show that the mean scores on involving teachers in the preparation of pre-primary education time table was 3.93 which indicate that there was high involvement of pre-primary teachers in preparing pre-primary classroom time table. Also, qualitative findings from Head teachers indicated that teachers are involved in the preparation of timetables for pre-primary education. One of the head teachers said:

Their schedule of activities is different from ours. But the timetables must be shared with the teachers. The head teacher's office should have that timetable, and so are the teachers' office and classes. Therefore, the ones who prepare the schedule are the teachers but in collaboration with academic teachers. (*Head Teacher 5, Personal Communication, 13th October, 2022*).

Another head teacher added:

The time table includes games because most of the lessons include plays. But the academic teacher must be involved so that he/she knows what the first period is, at what time the teacher leaves the class, and what time the teacher has to take pupils for porridge, among other things. (*Head Teacher 13, Personal Communication, 19th October, 2022*).

The responses from school administrators show that pre-primary teachers were involved in the preparation of the timetables for pre-primary education. Involving the teachers in making the timetable is a good move towards ensuring the implementation of structured play activities. This needs first the teachers to have knowledge on different structured play activities to be included in the time table. Therefore, involving teachers in making the timetable does not guarantee that the timetable prepared will include structured play activities if the teachers themselves do not have adequate knowledge and skills on such structured play activities and pre-primary curriculum in general. For instance, when the timetable for pre-primary education is set by individuals with little or no knowledge on Early Childhood

Education (ECE), the time allocated for structured play activities may be limited to the extent of hindering implementation of such activities hence to make them remain in vain.

Similar observations were reported by Lin (2017) who found out that the involvement of teachers in the preparation of curriculum supporting materials was high. High level of teachers' involvement in the preparation of the school timetable has a big impact on the implementation of such timetable in relation to the application of structured play activities. For instance, when the timetable for pre-primary education is set by involving teachers, appropriate time may be allocated for pupils' involvement in structured play activities. If the preparation of timetable fails to involve pre-primary teachers, it could be more challenging for individuals with little knowledge on early childhood education to effectively allocate adequate time for structured play activities because the performance of structured play activities can excel. This argument is in line with Lucia (2016) who found out that implementation of structured play activities in some schools within Tanzania was hampered by the limited time allocated for such activities-a situation that constrained the pupils to play only during the break time. Lack of proper timetable for structured play activities may be attributed by moderate level of involving the pre-primary teachers in the process of preparing time tables. According to Collegial Models of educational leadership and management theories, involving teachers in planning and timetabling contributes to effective implementation of teaching and learning activities (Bush, 2018).

Teachers' involvement in the pupils' enrolment

Similarly, there was high involvement of teachers in the enrolment of pre-primary pupils with the mean score of 3.67. Involvement of pre-primary teachers in the enrolment process could help in controlling the number of pupils to be enrolled to avoid overcrowding in classrooms (Tan & Goh, 2017). As the literature revealed, overcrowded classrooms limit effective implementation of structured play activities. This is in line with the Collegial Model of educational leadership and management which assumes that effective decision making is one that is based on a process of discussions, agreements and consensus because there is power sharing among school administrators and teachers as they work towards the achievement of school objectives (Bush, 2020).

Teachers' involvement in the school budgeting

As Table 1 shows, teachers' involvement was found to be low in the remaining school decision making aspects such as setting the school budget for pre-primary education. It had mean score of below 2.40. Head teachers demonstrated that they involved the pre-primary teachers in the process of decision making with regard to budgeting though there was lack of funds specifically allocated for pre-primary pupils. One of them said:

We involve teachers in preparing the school budget. However, we receive no capitation grants for pre-primary pupils. So, the level of involving pre-primary teachers in budgeting is minimal. The government has promised to send money for pre-primary pupils but we have not received the money up to the moment (*Head Teacher 1, Personal Communication, 10th October, 2022*)

Little involvement of teachers in preparing the school budget could affect the availability of most of the resources which need money. It could hardly be possible for the school administrators to budget for teaching and learning resources for pre-primary pupils without involving the teachers who had adequate knowledge of the required facilities and who are the actual players of the game. In another school, the head teacher acknowledged to be involving the pre-primary teacher in the budgeting process despite the financial constraints as she said:

I involve the teachers because even the little that the government gives, we always convene meeting, and we ask the pre-primary teachers to mention their needs. Teachers always provide their suggestions and after that we consider the amount of money that we have. We tend to prioritize the most important needs based on the financial situation (*Head Teacher 8, Personal Communication, 11st October 2022*).

These responses show that though pre-primary teachers were involved in the budgeting process, there was a possibility that their suggestions and views were not considered when making decisions. This is because no specific funds from the government were being allocated to pre-primary education. For instance, teachers seemed to suggest allocation of funds to purchase the learning facilities but only to find out that no money had been allocated.

According to Shemahonge (2018), lack of funds is one of the factors leading to poor implementation of pre-primary education curriculum in Tanzania. Low level of teachers' involvement in setting of pre-primary education budget may be one of the reasons for having such limited funds. Those who prepare the school budget may have inadequate knowledge on the role of structured play activities; hence they end up preparing a limited budget. Insufficient funds/budgetary allocation due to lack of involvement of pre-primary teachers with their knowledge of requirements for quality implementation of structured play activities could easily lead to unavailability of essential teaching and learning materials as well as playing facilities in most of pre-primary classes in Tanzania.

Low level of pre-primary teachers' involvement in preparing of school budget may also be a reason for lack of teaching and learning resources as well as playing facilities in most of the pre-primary government school classes (Mabagala & Shukia, 2019; Mghasse & William, 2016). Consequently, the budget prepared may not correspond to the needed resources (Bakuza, 2019). The involvement of teachers in preparing the budget for pre-primary education could help the effective use of the little money provided by the government to solve some of the challenges that are attributed by financial constraints (Charles & Mkulu, 2020),

The low level of teachers' involvement in decision making concerning the implementation of structured play activities in the government pre-primary schools in Longido and Monduli districts were supported by Joseph (2018) who also found a low level of teachers' involvement in decision making in Kinondoni Municipality. Similarly, Mustapha (2015) recommends that pre-primary teachers need to be involved in making decisions regarding the implementation of curriculum for them to play their roles effectively. Less involvement of

teachers in decision making reduces their morale and consequently develops apathy towards the implementation of curriculum.

Teachers' involvement in designing teaching and learning environment

Data in Table 1 show that teachers' involvement was found to be low in designing the teaching and learning environment as it had mean score of below 2.40. This means that pre-primary teachers are involved to a low extent in making the teaching and the learning environment. Since the pre-primary teachers are expected to have the knowledge and skills on teaching pre-primary pupils; they are therefore aware of how the teaching and learning environment for pre-primary pupils should be. Failure to involve them in designing the teaching and learning environment may result into having teaching and learning environment that do not provide the required support for implementing the structured play activities. According to the pre-primary curriculum; learning corners are important for a pre-primary classroom (TIE, 2016). School administrators may not have adequate skills on how to make such corners but the teacher does. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be highly involved in designing of teaching and learning environment for effective implementation of structured play activities in the pre-primary classrooms.

Teachers' involvement in preparing teaching and learning aids

As data in Table 1 show, teachers' involvement was found to be low in preparation of teaching and learning aids for structured play activities, as it had mean score of below 2.40. This means that pre-primary teachers are involved to a lower extent in preparing teaching and learning aids. Failure of involving teachers in preparing such teaching and learning aids may also account for lack of such facilities in most of the schools. This is because these teachers may have knowledge on improvising and making different teaching and learning aids by using the locally available materials. If teachers are not involved, some of the materials may not be made in the schools and there is a possibility of having teaching and learning aids that are not relevant to with pre-primary pupils in terms of their level and environment.

Teachers' involvement in strategic planning of structured play activities

Teachers' involvement was found to be low in strategic planning for implementing structured play activities as data in Table 1 show with a mean score of below 2.40. If teachers who are the main implementers of the pre-primary curriculum are not well involved in the planning process, it may not be easy for them to implement the suggested plans effectively. Moreover, failure of involving teachers in the planning process may cause inclusion of irrelevant and unrealistic plans in pre-primary education leading to failure in implementing the structured play activities.

Teachers' involvement in mobilizing teaching and learning resources

Low involvement of teachers in mobilising teaching and learning resources was found to be low with a mean score of below 2.40 as shown in table 1. This means that pre-primary

teachers are not much involved in the process of mobilizing teaching and learning resources. According to Okumbe (2006), the process of mobilization involves acquisition, allocation, implementation and evaluation. If teachers are not involved in all such processes, some problems may emerge in acquiring, allocating, implementing and evaluating the resources, improper management of the available resources. All these factors may negatively hinder, not only the availability of such resources, but also the way such resources are used in the process of teaching and learning and hence affect the implementation of structured play activities.

Teachers' involvement in planning implementation of structured play activities

As data in Table 1 show, teachers' involvement was found to be low in planning the implementation of structured play activities with a mean score of below 2.40. This implies that most of the plans regarding the implementation of structured play activities in public pre-primary schools are set without much involvement of the pre-primary teachers. It is true that the teachers are the main implementers of all the plans pertaining to the teaching process and thus their involvement in planning for different activities is crucial as Mustapha, (2015) argue. Findings on low level of teachers' involvement in planning were reported by Joseph (2018) and Lin (2017) who collectively showed that teachers are not much involved by the school administrators during the planning of teaching and learning activities. This low-level rate of involving teachers in making plans for implementing structured play activities may hamper the implementation of such activities since teachers may not be willing to implement something that they did not participate in planning.

All the three categories of respondents were provided with closed-ended questionnaires that required them to rate the level of pre-primary teachers' involvement in decision making. The item had five options (very high level, high level, moderate level, low level and no involvement). This question was asked so as to get the categorical data that were used to test the study hypothesis for the purpose of determining whether the implementation of structured play activities depends on the level of teachers' involvement in decision making. The percentages of the responses for respondents' categories were computed as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' Responses on the Extent of Involving Teachers in Decision Making ($n = 205$)

| Response | Response (%) |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Very high level of involvement | 0.00 |
| High level of involvement | 3.13 |
| Moderate level of involvement | 33.67 |
| Minimum level of involvement | 59.67 |
| No involvement | 3.53 |

Source: Field data, (2022)

Data in Table 2 show that none of the respondents rated a very high level of teachers' involvement in decision making regarding the implementation of structured play activities. Most of the respondents indicated moderate and minimum level of teachers' involvement. These findings imply that some teachers were completely not involved in making decisions about the implementation of structured play activities in their respective schools. The inferential statistics were performed to determine whether the level of involving pre-primary teachers in decision making had an effect on the level of implementing structured play activities. The researcher first determined the level of implementing structured play activities as perceived by the three categories of respondents who were Internal School Quality Assurance Team members (ISQAT), academic teachers and pre-primary teachers.

In the questionnaires, all the three categories of respondents were requested to rate the level of implementing structured play activities in their respective schools. Respondents were given a closed-ended questionnaire for them to indicate whether the level of structured play activities was excellent, very good, good, fair or poor. The aim of this question was to establish whether there is a close link between lack of teachers' involvement in decision making about implementing structured play activities and the teachers' practice in implementing structured play activities. Responses of respondents on the level of implementing structured play activities are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Respondents' Responses on the Level of Implementing Structured Play Activities (n = 205)

| Response | Response (f) | Response (%) |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Fair | 135 | 65.85 |
| Good | 46 | 22.44 |
| Poor | 23 | 11.22 |
| Very good | 1 | 0.49 |
| Excellent | 0 | 0.00 |

Source: Field Data, (2022)

The quantitative information summarized in Table 3 show that a large number of respondents (65.85%) rated the level of implementing structured play activities in their respective schools to be fair, while 22.44% of them reported it to be good. This shows that the level of implementing structured play activities by pre-primary teachers in public schools was not so good. This was evidenced by a very small number of respondents (0.49%) who rated the level of implementing structured play activities to be very good and none of the respondents (0.00%) indicated excellent, and a significant number (11.22%) indicated a poor level of implementing such activities in their respective schools. The findings concur with Bawani *et al* (2021) who observed a minimal level of implementing structured play activities while teaching pre-primary pupils in Botswana. Findings from these two countries show that implementation of structured play activities in some African countries has not reached

satisfactory level. Due to this fact, there is a high possibility for the pre-primary pupils not to acquire adequate skills for the 3Rs.

Given low level of involving teachers in decision making by school administrators as well as low level teachers' implementation of structured play activities; a chi-square test for independency was calculated 95% confidence level to find out whether there was a significant relationship between the two variables. The responses on the level of involving teachers in decision making in Table 2 and on the level of implementation of structured play activities in Table 3 were used to test the hypothesis. The process of hypothesis testing is described below and the results of statistical testing are presented in Table 4

Null hypothesis

There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' level of involvement in decision making and the level of implementation of structured play activities in government pre-primary schools.

Assumptions for chi-square test for independence

- i. The two variables are measured at an ordinal or nominal level.
- ii. The two variables consist of two or more categorical, independent groups.
- iii. There should be no significant outliers
- iv. The sample should be relatively large

Decisions rules

- i. If the p-value is less than the significance level (0.05), reject the null hypothesis.
- ii. If the p-value is greater than the significance level (0.05) does not reject the null hypothesis.

Table 4

Results of Chi-Square Test

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|---------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 197.509 | 9 | 0.000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 167.577 | 9 | 0.000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 111.641 | 1 | 0.000 |

Source: Field data, (2022).

Data in Table 4 show that $X^2(9, N=205) = 197.509$; p-value = 0.000. Since the p-value (0.000) was less than the significance level (0.05) the null hypothesis was rejected. Rejecting the null hypothesis implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of involving teachers in decision making and level of implementing structured play activities in pre-primary school curriculum. This means that the higher the level of teacher involvement in decision-making, the higher the level of implementation of structured play activities by these teachers. These findings concur with those by Dampson and Afful-Bron (2018) who observed that teachers' involvement in decision making makes them committed to effectively implement the curriculum. Therefore, the observed low level of implementing

structured play activities by pre-primary teachers is attributed to their low level of involvement in decision making by the school administrators.

The data for the level of involving teachers in decision making with regard to enhancing the implementation of structured play activities showed contradicting findings. While teachers on their side indicated not to be much involved, the head teachers reported to be involving teachers. To address the contradiction, a null hypothesis was tested and the findings showed the existence of a relationship between the level of involving pre-primary teachers in decisions making and the level of implementing structured play activities. The pre-primary teachers' low level of implementing structured play activities was associated with their low level of involvement in decision making. Thus, pre-primary teachers were not involved in deciding on most of the issues pertaining to the implementation of structured play activities and that is why the level of implementing structured play activities in the government pre-primary schools was found to be low despite the claim made by the head teachers, academic teachers and internal school quality assurance team members that they engage pre-primary teachers in the process of decision making. The pre-primary teachers were not much involved in setting the school budget, designing the teaching and learning environment, setting strategic plans and mobilizing teaching and learning resources. The only aspects where teachers were at least involved included setting time tables and enrolment of pupils.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the level of involving pre-primary teachers in decision making concerning the implementation of structured play activities was low. Teachers may be involved during meetings although most of their suggestions are not taken into consideration due to financial challenges. This low level of involving pre-primary teachers in decision making has affected their implementation of structured play activities since there is a significant relationship between the level of involving pre-primary teachers in decision making and of implementing structured play activities (p-value = 0.000).

Recommendations

Based on these findings, it is recommended that pre-primary teachers need adequate involvement in all matters related to the teaching and learning in pre-primary classrooms. This should also include budgeting so that the needs for effective implementation of structured play activities can be attained. Moreover, the school administrators should stress mandatory implementation of structured play activities in public pre-primary schools so as to equip learners with the 3R skills.

Recommendation For Further Study

The influence of pre-primary teachers' involvement on the implementation of structured play activities

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