

ABSTRACT

Children love to play as it is needed for both academic success and enjoyment. Play is therefore supposed to be integrated in teaching and learning of ECDE children. Despite the significance of integration of play in teaching and learning of ECDE children, effective integration of play is still a challenge to most teachers and parents in Kenya. This is because play does not yield its desired outcomes in ECDE centres yet both teachers and parents claim that they integrate play in teaching and learning. The degree to which they integrate play is not yet known. In addition, the extent of integrating play into ECDE curriculum seems to differ from teacher to teacher and from parent to parent. In Emuhaya Sub-County, the situation is worse as teachers integrate both relevant and irrelevant play activities, hence the need to carry out this study. This descriptive Survey design, framed from Vygotsky's (1934) Social Constructivists theoretical perspective aimed at establishing how effective parents and teachers integrate play activities in ECDE curriculum in Emuhaya Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya. Objectives of the study were to ascertain: the availability of play resources in ECDE centres; the role of both teachers and parents in integration of play in ECDE curriculum; the relevance of integrating play activities in ECDE curriculum; the extent of effective integration of play in ECDE curriculum; challenges and opportunities in integration of play in ECDE curriculum. This study involved; 651 head teachers, 1,302 teachers and 5,208 Parents drawn from 651 public pre-schools in the Sub-County and 1 Sub-County Program Officer. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 217 head teachers, 430 teachers and 1,719 parents (33% of the study population) drawn from 217 pre-schools. Saturated sampling technique was used to sample 1 Sub-County Program Officer. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule, focused group discussion guide and lesson observation schedule. To establish reliability of research instruments, a pilot study was carried out which involved 17 teachers and 69 parents drawn from 7 pre-schools (4% of the study sample). Validity of instruments was established by presenting them to three experts in the School of Education for verification. Trustworthiness and authenticity of qualitative data was enhanced through measuring of credibility, transparency, dependability and conformability of data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages and means. Qualitative data was transcribed and reported according to emergent themes and narratives. The findings of the study revealed that: Teachers have inadequate play resources in ECDE centres; Teachers poorly integrate play activities in ECDE curriculum; both teachers and parents do not fulfill some of the roles specified for them in integration of play in ECDE curriculum; lack of play resources and lack of special training of teachers on integration of play were among challenges hindering effective integration of play in ECDE curriculum. The study recommended that: both teachers and parents should be encouraged to improvise some of the play resources; teachers should be given regular in-service training on integration of play, their role in integration of play and be encouraged to have full involvement in the integration of play. The study then suggested a 'Model of Thematic Integration of Play in Teaching and Learning' to be used in teaching and learning of ECDE children.