

## **Pedagogical experiences of ECDE teachers on best practices in public pre-schools in Kendu zone, Homa Bay County, Kenya**

The debate surrounding best practices in Kenya ECDE centers have been going on and is not about to end any soon. Despite the fact that teachers have a responsibility of imparting relevant and useful knowledge, skills and values to the learners, teachers need to employ best practices to enable them model learners to realize their full potentials in life at formative stages. However, studies indicate that many preschool teachers do not apply best practices in their schools. Hence, the study established pedagogical experiences of ECDE teachers on best practices in public pre-schools in Kendu Zone, Rachuonyo North Sub County. The study was guided by the following objectives: to establish developmentally appropriate learning activities/tasks pre-school teachers engage learners in pre-school centres, to determine the entry age of preschool children in preschool centers, to examine the mode of communication that preschool teachers employ at pre-school level and to determine the form of assessment administered by preschool teachers at preschool level in Kendu Zone, Rachuonyo North Sub county. The study targeted a total population of 60 preschool teachers and 20 head teachers. Using saturated sampling technique, the study sampled all the 60 pre-school teachers and 20 head teachers. The study used questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data. Validity was ensured by expert judgment by the university supervisors while reliability was tested by internal consistency method and an index of 0.7513 was reported. The quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics while qualitative findings were thematically analyzed. The study found that majority of the preschool teachers admitted their learners at the age of 4 years. It was also found that there was a difference between children attending preschools at a tender age and those not attending such preschool centres. Majority of the respondents indicated that children who attended early childhood development centres (ECD) cultivated good preliteracy skills. It was also found that almost all the teachers engaged their preschool learners in mathematics /science /music/ counting and creative activities. On singing of alphabetical letters, most of the preschool teachers engaged their 3-4 years old in singing letters of the alphabet. The study also found that most of the respondents strongly agreed that group activities improved performance of pre-school learners. Further, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that regular inspection and adequate playground maintenance and properly organized supervision of children in the playground enabled preschool children to effectively participate in outdoor activities. The study found that majority of the preschool teachers in Rachuonyo sub-county adopted both verbal and non-verbal communication modes in their practice. The study found that majority of preschool teachers used display of children's work as one method of assessment. Similarly, the preschool teachers also observed that children model and draw things as they observe. There were also oral questions used when testing learners. The study recommends that ECDE teachers should collaborate with parents to provide learners with appropriate learning materials that engage learners in developmentally appropriate activities that will enhance holistic development of the children at formative ages.