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education in Nairobi Province, Kenya**

By

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Abstract

Christian churches have played a pivotal role in the provision of primary, secondary and higher education in Kenya. However, the participation of the church in early childhood education appears minimal. This study was, therefore, interested in establishing the role of Christian churches in the provision of early childhood education in Nairobi Province, that is, as an alternative source to supplement the efforts of parents and local communities.

The results of the study indicated that the average school size increased from 31 in 2004 to 72 in 2007. This general low enrolment was due to poverty levels among parents and communities in the province especially among slum dwellers. The preschools received funds from fees paid by parents, contributions from churches in terms of provision of food, uniforms and free tuition to the needy children and other donors. The curriculum taught was Christian-based to enable the pupils to harmonize Christian faith with the three R's: writing, reading and arithmetic. English and Kiswahili were the major media of communication; few schools used vernacular to a very small extent.

The main challenge in the provision of early childhood education was inadequate finance. This has resulted in lack of provisions in the schools which was manifested in low payment for teachers, lack of adequate textbooks, permanent classrooms, transport, recreational facilities, clean sanitation and sports activities. Hence examining the role played by the churches in rural areas in the provision of early childhood education and establishing appropriate alternative methods of raising finance are potent areas for further research.

Keywords: Christian church, early childhood, education, provision, source of funds,

Introduction

The UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education defines education as comprising organized and sustained (or durable) communication designed to bring about learning. Here, learning means any change in behavior, knowledge, understanding, skills

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or capabilities that the learner retains and which cannot be ascribed simply to physical growth or to the development of inherited behavior patterns (Thomson, 1981). Indeed education is the means through which a society perpetuates and spreads its own culture; it is the development of all the faculties of an individual and involves the passing of knowledge from one person to another.

In Kenya the Christian missionaries played a dominant role in determining the type of education for Africans. They built schools (including preschools), managed and supervised them, determined the curriculum and influenced the direction of education policy (Ministry of Education, 1987). They also established training colleges for teachers and provided funds for running the costs of education, with a small subsidy from the government.

Early childhood is the period from birth through age six years (Ministry of Education, 1987); at six years a child joins primary one. Hendrick (1980) noted that families send their children to preschools during this period to learn to get along well with others. In preschools the striking changes in behaviours are linked to the growing sense of own identity and increasing independence. According to Erickson (1950), during early childhood the child develops autonomy, learns to choose and decides to accept the consequences of choice. The main objective of pre-primary (or preschool) education is to ensure that the total development of a child (physical, spiritual, social and mental) is brought about through an informal mode of interaction with the parents and the community taking a leading role (Ministry of Education, 1987, p. 21).

Kenya is known for its highly effective, decentralized, community-based early childhood development (Lokshin et al., 2006). The Kenya Government established the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) in 1984 to be responsible for developing training systems for ECCE personnel; developing and disseminating curricula for ECCE programmes; identifying, designing, undertaking and coordinating ECCE research; facilitating interaction between agencies and sponsors; coordinating and liaising with external partners; and informing the public of needs and developments within the ECCE programmes (Kipkorir & Njenga, 1993).

This was followed by the District Centres for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) in 1985 with the responsibility of training teachers at the district level, inspection, community mobilization, and evaluation of the local programmes (Otieno, 2004). Decentralization of the programme to the district level has provided flexibility and variation in terms of facilities provided and activities undertaken.

The Kenya preschool education programme encourages partnership at all levels. The government, parents, communities and the private sector (e.g. religious organizations, private companies, NGOs and individuals) are the main sources of ECD finance and support. While the government allocates less than 1% of the education ministry's budget for preschool education (SIDA, 2006), parents and the communities currently manage 75% of the preschools in the country. The community is the most important partner in the development of the centers, taking responsibility for the provision of physical facilities, furniture, payment of salaries, organizing feeding programmes, labour, and provision of learning and play materials. Some communities receive financial and supervisory assistance from NGOs and local government (Kipkorir & Njenga, 1993).

According to Kanuku (2007), a church is a local assembly of believers as well as the redeemed of all ages who follow Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; it is a community of Christians who believe in and follow Christ without reference to locality or limits. People see the church as a social organization with good moral values and are able to extend a helping hand to the needy. Indeed, the Catholic Code of Canon Law, Can 795, as quoted by Koech (1992, p. 7) states that

education must pay regard to the formation of the whole person, so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society. Children and young persons are therefore to be cared for in such a way that their physical, moral and intellectual talents may develop in a harmonious manner, so that they may attain a greater sense of responsibility and a right of use of freedom, and be formed to take an active part in social life.

This is enshrined in the Great Commission to Christians in Matthew 28: 19 (NIV) which states:

therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age

The Great Commission was the command Jesus gave to His disciples that they should baptize and teach new disciples to obey him. The mission of the disciples from then onwards was world wide and not limited to the Jews. This was to proclaim that Jesus is Lord of the earth and that He died for the sins of people from all nations.

According to Christian missionaries to Kenya, an education that was not provided by the church was incomplete; the school was the focal point of attracting the heathens and a means through which a native leadership in the church could be trained (Sifuna, 1980). Christianization and civilization of Africans could not best be achieved without the problem of keeping the native students away from the influences of the tribe. However, Kanuku (2007) noted that children are not taught well as the scripture demands in Proverbs 22: 6 that parents train their children in the way they should go and when they are old they will not turn from it. The church, however, has not put more effort in teaching children and the youth since the clergy do not take time to know what is taught in Sunday school and how they are taught, who is teaching them and whether the teachers are good role models or able to train strong future church.

Given this background, it was important to establish the role of Christian churches in the provision of early childhood education in Nairobi Province, Kenya as a supplement to the efforts of parents and local communities. The province is home to many churches that include Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), African Inland Church (AIC), Salvation Army, Catholic Church, Redeemed Gospel Church, Nairobi Pentecostal Church, Baptist Church and Deliverance Church whose contribution to early childhood education needs studying. Secondly, the province is cosmopolitan and has slums that are home to many needy children who seek early childhood education.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to establish the role of Christian churches in the provision of early childhood education in Nairobi Province, Kenya. Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Establish the policy of Christian churches on the provision of early childhood education.
2. Determine the proportion of preschools started by Christian churches in Nairobi Province in relation to the number of churches.
3. Establish the enrolment of children in preschools run by the churches.
4. Identify the level of training of teachers and caretakers in preschools managed by the churches.
5. Determine the pay-package for teachers in church-based preschools.
6. Identify the main components of curriculum taught in church-sponsored preschools.
7. Assess the provision of quality of education in church-sponsored or owned preschools.
8. Establish the challenges facing preschools in Nairobi Province.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used in this study because it attempts to show and document current conditions or attitudes and to describe what exists at the moment in a given context (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). The study embraced both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Quantitative methods were concerned with aggregates, general trends, averages and proportions. On the other hand, qualitative data analysis endeavoured to make general statements on how categories or themes of the data collected were related (Robson, 2002). Simple random sampling technique was used in this study to identify fifty preschools out of sixty-nine (72.5%) among the churches visited in Nairobi Province. This method reduces bias in sample selection and provides the basis of making statistical inferences to the population from which the representative sample is drawn (Chandran, 2004).

Instruments of data collection in survey research are the questionnaires, interviews, observations and content analysis. This study used the questionnaire as the major instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to preschool head teachers of church schools and church leaders. The questionnaires dealt with physical facilities in preschools, enrolment, financial resources, teachers' training and pay package for teachers and challenges facing the preschools. Suitable research assistants were trained to ascertain the collection of accurate data and for the administration of questionnaires to respondents. An interview schedule was also used to provide information on church policies on early childhood education, number of preschools supported, financing and challenges facing the church on the provision of early childhood education. The interviews were done for church leaders, mainly pastors, and a few head teachers.

Data analysis incorporated descriptive statistics. The data were converted into

percentages and averages. Data on enrolment were used to establish the trend of enrolment and the number of pupils joining primary school in the province. This was necessary to find out the economic viability of the schools. In addition, qualitative data were coded and analyzed to give explanations on the trends and challenges facing the preschools.

Research Findings

Policy of Churches on Early Childhood Education

Thirteen church leaders, out of nineteen that were visited (68.42%), stated that they had policies on early childhood education; the other churches had not laid down policies because they had new schools that were just coming up. These policies were appropriate in order to equip and bring up children in a Godly manner thereby developing them spiritually, physically, socially and in wisdom. That is, the policies were to build all-round pupils who would be responsible and able to develop in their immediate environment; give wholesome academics in Christian values in school and reflect the same at home; provide education to all at an achievable cost; teach children the word of God as early as they step in school even as early as three years of age; emphasize education from the time the child is young for better academic and spiritual growth; and ensure every child has an education regardless of background.

Sixty-nine churches out of 545 in Nairobi Province (12.7%) had a preschool each. The Methodist Church had a preschool attached to each of its four churches while the Nairobi Baptist Church with five churches had no preschool. The Seventh Day Adventist and the Presbyterian churches had the largest number of churches at 200 and 188 respectively. But the corresponding number of preschools were only 13 (6.5%) and 32 (17%) respectively. The other churches had varying figures.

Each of these churches made different contributions to their schools. The ACK Church spent Kshs 2.8 million over the last ten years for development while the spiritual nurture was managed by the Chaplaincy of the Church. The Deliverance Church spent Kshs. 1.5 million in 2007 on preschools and the Redeemed Christian Church of God gave an initial Kshs. 50,000 in 2008 (excluding salaries of the two teachers) to the preschool. The Salvation Army Church gave food, clothing, medical care (through camps) and home care for orphans. Financial assistance was given to Kabete Children's Home where older children stayed in order to attend school. The church provided fees, stationery, personal effects and pocket money for these children. The schools were fully run by the church that spent about one million shillings annually on them. The SDA did not sponsor any school as the children paid full fees. However, the children had weekly camps for spiritual nurture.

The role of the church in early childhood education includes, but not restricted to, employing teachers and support staff. The overall supervision of administration composed of a committee of church members under a pastor which managed the school accounts; provided physical facilities including buildings, furniture and repairs; promoted spiritual well being of the teachers and pupils; and sponsored children who were disadvantaged through payment of fees, buying uniforms and provision of meals.

Establishment of Preschools

Table 1 below shows the year of establishment of the preschools run by churches within Nairobi Province in Kenya.

Table 1: Year of Establishment of Preschools

Year	Number of Preschools	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1961 – 1970	3	9.68	9.68
1971 – 1980	2	6.45	16.13
1981 – 1990	5	16.13	32.26
1991 – 2000	10	32.26	64.52
2001 – Present	9	29.03	93.55
No Response	2	6.45	100.00
Total	31	100.00	

The oldest preschool was started in 1967 by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Bahati Estate as a kindergarten before a primary school section was incorporated in 2006. On the other hand, the youngest school was established in January 2008 by the Redeemed Christian Church of God at Solution Centre near Nyayo Highrise Estate. Only 10 schools (32.26%) were established between 1961 and 1990, a period of 24 years, reflecting a slow rate of expansion of preschools, while 19 preschools that accounted for 61.29% of all the schools visited were established between 1991 and 2008 indicating an increased interest in preschools after 1990.

The churches started 29 of the preschools. This accounted for 93.54% of all the schools visited. The community and both community and church started one school each (accounting for 3.23% each). The distribution of the schools visited among the churches indicates that the Presbyterian Church of East Africa had the highest number of schools. It had 9 schools followed by Seventh Day Adventist Church with 6 schools. In addition, the churches ran 29 (93.55%) of the preschools while the communities ran 2 (6.45%) of the schools. None of the preschools was run or assisted directly by the government. The preschools were located within the Central Business District (CBD), the slums and the suburbs of the city. The CBD had 16% of the schools; the slums had 32% while the remaining 52% were located in the suburbs (i.e. other parts) of the city.

Enrolment in Preschools

The number of children enrolled in preschools visited is recorded in Table 2.

Table 2: Enrolment in Preschools

Year	Baby Class	Nursery	Pre-Unit	Total
2004	255	358	345	958
2005	277	405	429	1111
2006	435	587	556	1578
2007	641	814	758	2213
Total	1608	2164	2088	5860

In all the four years under study, the baby classes had the smallest number of children while nursery had the highest number with the exception of 2005 when pre-unit had the highest figure. The total number that went through baby class in the four years was 1608 accounting for 27.5% of the enrolment in preschools. Nursery had 2164 (36.9%) while pre-unit had 2088 (35.6%). The table also shows that there was a consistent increase in enrolment in all the three categories for each subsequent year. This conforms to the increase in the number of preschools started. The increase in enrolment in the baby class was 151.4% between 2004 and 2007. Nursery enrolment increased by 127.4% while pre-unit increased by 119.7%. This resulted in an overall increase of 131% in enrolment in preschools.

The percentage increase in enrolment per class category is given in Figure 1.

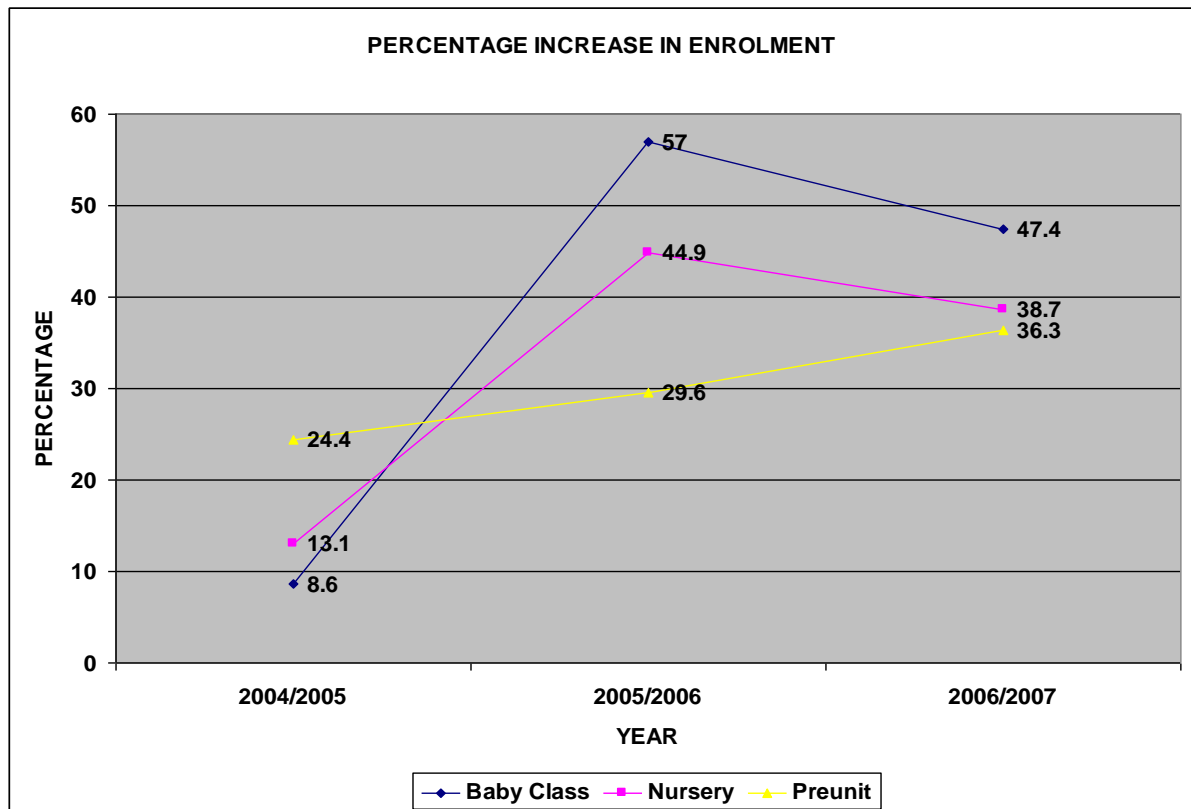


Figure 1: Percentage Increase in Enrolment per Class Category

There was a gradual percentage increase in enrolment for pre-unit class from 24.4% in 2004/2005 to 29.6% in 2005/2006 and finally to 36.3% in 2006/2007. For both baby class and nursery, there were steep increases followed by a decrease. In baby class there was an increase from 8.6% in 2004/2005 to 57% in 2005/2006 before decreasing to 47.4% in 2006/2007. In the nursery category, the increase was from 13.1% in 2004/2005 to 44.9% in 2005/2006 and then decreasing to 38.7%. In all cases the increase in baby class was higher than the other categories. The number of children who joined class one from these

preschools increased from 308 in 2004 to 660 in 2007. This gave a percentage of 89.3% of the enrolment in pre-unit class in 2004 and 87.1% in 2007. There were, on average, 85.9% class one pupils enrolled within the four years 2004 to 2007.

Preschool Teachers

The number of teachers employed in the preschools is recorded in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of Teachers

Year	Trained		Untrained		Total	% Untrained
	M	F	M	F		
2004	7	65	1	18	91	20.9
2005	9	74	1	19	103	19.4
2006	17	94	1	10	122	9.0
2007	24	121	1	8	154	5.8

The total number of teachers increased from 91 in 2004 to 154 in 2007, an increase of 69.2%. The number of untrained teachers consistently decreased from 20.9% in 2004 to 5.8% in 2007. The majority of the teachers were female throughout the four years indicating the special role women play in early childhood development and care in general and education in particular.

The number of churches that had training centres for preschool teachers was only three (16%) while the other sixteen churches (84%) did not have, yet there is need for trained teaches for ECE. These colleges offer certificate and diploma certificates upon graduation; with the length of training ranging from six months for certificate courses to two years for diploma courses. In addition, there are refresher courses that last between one day and one week.

The pupil/teacher ratio for the years 2004 to 2007 increased from 10.5:1 in 2004 to 14.4:1 in 2007. In addition, the gross salary paid to teachers per month varied between Kshs. 1,500 in schools within slums and Kshs. 20,000 for well-to-do regions. This gives a big disparity in the remunerations among members of the same class and category. However, about half the schools (48.39%) paid between Kshs. 1,500 and Kshs. 9,000.

Curriculum for Preschools

The church ensured that all schools teach Christian Education to the children in addition to reading, numeracy and writing. The curriculum included, but was not limited to, Pastoral Programme Instruction (PPI) and Christian Religious Education (CRE) that were taught directly and were on the timetable; daily Bible lessons that taught memory verses, songs and Biblical stories; outreach programmes involving children, vocational Bible study and camp meetings; moral uprightness and train children importance of Christian values; prayers every day; and counseling sessions regularly to assist in good character formation. This made it necessary to employ Christians particularly born again Christians. The languages used in teaching were vernacular, English and Kiswahili. However,

English and Kiswahili were given prominence; English was the most common language in use followed by Kiswahili with vernacular rarely used.

Financial Resources

The government did not give any form of financial assistance to the preschools. All the funds came from fees, donors and sponsors. Nine schools did not give the amounts of money they collected for the period 2004 to 2007. The total amount collected for each year for the remaining 22 schools is indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Income for Preschools for 2004 – 2007

Year	Amount (Kshs.)	Number of Pupils	Unit Amount of Income
2004	4,560,800	958	4,760.75
2005	11,161,200	1,111	10,046.08
2006	15,353,034	1,578	9,729.43
2007	26,115,230	2,213	11,800.83

The unit amount of income increased from Kshs. 4760.75 in 2004 to Kshs. 10,046.08 in 2005, dropped to Kshs. 9,729.43 in 2006 before increasing again to Kshs. 11800.83 in 2007. This gives an increase in the unit income of 147.8% between 2004 and 2007 which closely corresponds to the increase in student enrolment over the same period of 131%. The policy on sourcing for funds adopted by the schools was the cost sharing strategy where both parents and the churches worked together in raising the funds required for the financing of all school activities. The churches adopted various methods of raising funds for the preschools. These are indicated in Figure 2 and included fees paid by parents to sustain teachers and purchase learning/teaching equipment and materials; donations from organizations, NGOs, individual well-wishers, the government, church assistance and other churches; and direct church involvement in the school funding.

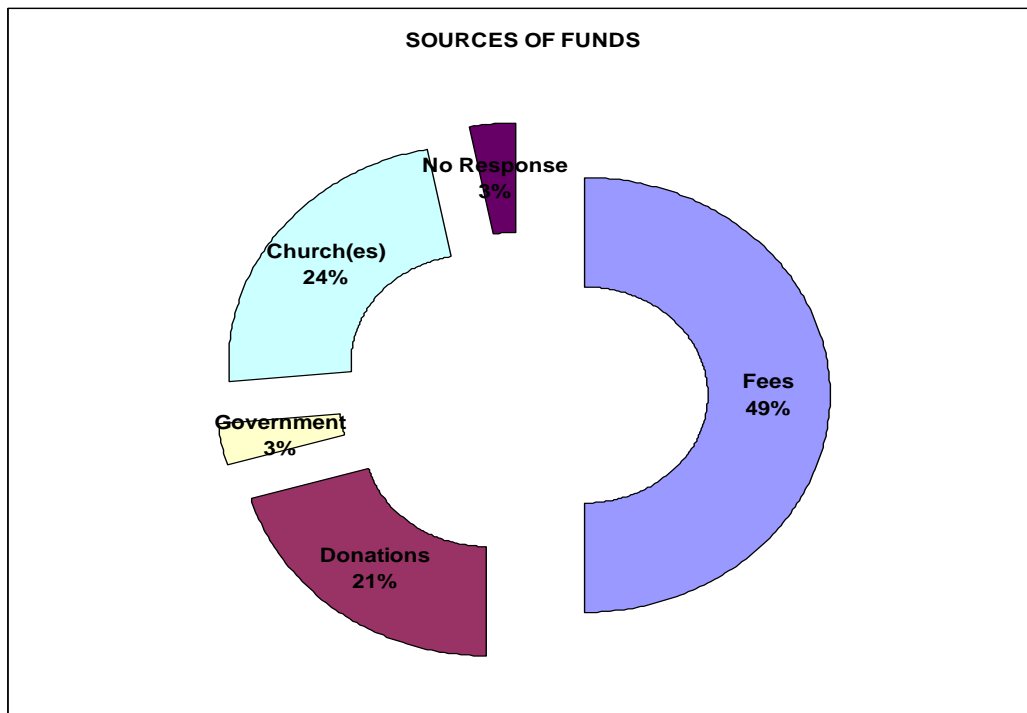


Figure 2: Sources of Funds for Preschools

The rationale for this policy of cost sharing was mainly because most children were not able to pay the fees and this required the church to assist with donations. However, payment of school fees remained the easy way of collecting revenue as churches had difficulties in sourcing for funds elsewhere. One preschool sponsored all its children in baby class, nursery and pre-unit. These children were mainly orphans living in a slum set up. The rest of the schools charged fees that ranged from Kshs. 500 to Kshs. 45,000 per year. The most expensive school charged Kshs. 39,000 for baby class, Kshs. 42,000 for nursery and Kshs. 45,000 for pre-unit class; most preschools (80.1%) charged below Kshs. 15,000.

Provision of Quality Education

The schools lacked the basic facilities for teaching/learning process. For example, 30 schools out of 31 had no canteen where the pupils could buy their wares; 13 schools had no classrooms and chairs; 18 had no textbooks; 16 had no pitches, balls for games and sports and offices; and 15 had no toilets. The inadequacies of these physical facilities hampered the normal learning/teaching process. Very few schools (5 out of 31) had very adequate and adequate items.

Textbooks are quite critical in the provision of education, more so quality education. The pupil/textbook ratios ranged from 1:1 to 1:50; the latter was an extreme case in a slum school. An ideal ratio of pupil/textbook should be one book per child per subject which achieved in only seven schools (22.58%). Lack of textbooks greatly affects quality of education.

The schools and churches took a key role in putting up of buildings. They accounted for 35.48% for buildings while the churches alone accounted for 25.81%. Parents took a low

profile though they had some contribution alongside schools, churches and donors in a few schools. Parents, however, had a major contribution in the purchase of textbooks where they accounted for 25.81%, and in liaison with schools their contribution was 22.58%.

Preschool Dropouts

Up to 18 schools (58.06%) indicated that they had dropouts while 12 (38.71%) had no problem with retention of the pupils. The major reason for dropout was lack of school fees. The other reasons included pupils transferring to other schools mainly due to parents relocating to other estates or moving away on transfer, parents separating causing pupils to dropout, failure to provide for all the children's needs which made some pupils leave, sicknesses among the pupils, death of a parent or both parents and ethnic clashes as was the case during the 2007/2008 post-election violence.

Challenges Facing Preschools

The challenges being faced by preschools could be classified as financial, lack of physical facilities, teacher issues, perceptions of parents, issues regarding pupils and administrative issues. The preschools received low income that did not fully meet the needs and growing demand for education at this level. The inability of parents to pay fees in full and within the required time due to poverty especially among schools in the slums delayed the preschool programmes. The financial constraints led to lack of adequate facilities necessary for teaching and learning. These included basic needs such as clean sanitation, play grounds, classrooms, teaching aids and materials, books, classrooms and inadequate or lack of transport facilities.

The one major teacher issue was how to maintain well trained teachers in terms of payment; low pay resulted in mass movements of teachers. The number of trained preschool teachers was limited and there was lack of cooperation of teachers in regard to their work and carrying out the policies of the schools. In addition, there was lack of proper parenting of the children resulting in lack of commitment, on the part of children, to school. This affected mainly children from the slums who did not have one or both parents. Secondly, the expectations of some parents were not in line with educational policies. Parents expected that their children could go through the three stages of preschool in a shorter time. Parental poor perception of early childhood education led another group of parents to bring babies making preschools day care or baby sitting centres. Thirdly, divergent views of parents on the school and school development promoted disunity among parents with different views. For example, dealing with parents with slum mentality that they were poor and that the church should bear all the burden of providing preschool education, was not easy. Lastly, parents lacked confidence in new schools and they never gave proper support in taking care of their children while they were in school.

On their part, pupils particularly those in slums, did not attend school regularly. This resulted in high drop out rates, inadequate enrolment and low retention rates. There were serious absenteeism among pupils due mainly to sickness and poor nutrition among the pupils. Other issues included lack of adequate time for play for the pupils at this early stage of their growth and enhancing proper Christian discipline among the pupils and staff.

Administrative issues were both internal and external. Internal challenges included children being picked up late from school due to lack of school transport as parents came late from work, poor management and having many divergent views from stakeholders that made it hard to formulate clear policies to run the preschools. On the other hand, external issues were unclear government policy on early childhood education particularly on training and remunerations of teachers, external interference especially political when there were differing views, inadequate number of preschools, marketing new schools to attract more pupils, high competition from other preschools and addressing occasional emergencies due to natural calamities.

Given these challenges the preschools were undergoing a lot of pressure in terms of failure to generate enough funds to run them. This pressure could not be reduced by increasing fees as parents could not afford. Hence to assist the preschools the following measures could be taken:

- More sponsors and donors particularly the NGOs, individuals and foreign organizations or government should be sought.
- Government should train, employ and pay teachers.
- Government should provide aid and grants and/or subsidies as in primary schools, and should recognize preschool as the foundation of education and offer free early childhood education.
- Parents and communities should be more involved in the provision of physical facilities. Churches should mobilize communities as stakeholders and own the schools through the cost sharing strategy.
- Government should provide physical facilities and learning/teaching materials in preschools.
- Preschools should start income generating activities to raise funds.
- The financial base of churches should be improved to enable them take full responsibility of the schools.

Conclusions

This study set out to establish the role of Christian Churches in the provision of early childhood education in Nairobi Province. The study found out that the churches played a pivotal role in the provision of ECE. They fully or partly (with the help of fee paying parents) sponsored preschools in which Christian values were taught as part of the curriculum. Their policy was to bring up children in a Godly manner by developing them spiritually, physically, socially and in wisdom.

However, despite their efforts the schools had low enrolments with the average school size ranging from 31 in 2004 to 72 in 2007 for the three categories of classes, baby class, nursery and pre-unit. The pupil/teacher ratio during the same period rose from 10.5: 1 to 14.4: 1 while the teachers were paid between Kshs. 1,500 and Kshs. 20,000 per month.

The major challenge facing the schools was inadequate finance. The schools relied on fees with few churches sponsoring the pupils. The money collected was used to run the schools and also finance development projects. Lack of adequate finance resulted in inadequate physical facilities, salary package for teachers and supply of materials required for teaching/learning process.

Recommendations

In order to improve service delivery in preschools in Nairobi Province, there is need to improve the cost sharing policy of financing early childhood education in order to assist children from poor families. Government subsidy in terms of training and payment of teachers' salaries is necessary as this would reduce the frequent teacher turn over and improve the teaching/learning process while parents and communities around the church and preschools can be engaged more in the provision of physical facilities in the schools. The churches should come up with income generating activities to supplement the fees paid. In addition, more sponsorship from donors, the church itself and individuals would go a long way in improving access to preschools.

In effect, the potent areas for further research include examining the role played by the Church in rural areas in the provision of early childhood education, analyzing the extent to which the Christian faith is embedded in the preschool curriculum, and establishing the appropriate alternative methods of raising finance for church-sponsored preschools.

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