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## **INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' MOTIVATION ON LEARNING OUTCOMES AMONG PRE-PRIMARY LEARNERS IN MAARA SUB COUNTY, KENYA**

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## INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' MOTIVATION ON LEARNING OUTCOMES AMONG PRE-PRIMARY LEARNERS IN MAARA SUB COUNTY, KENYA

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Motivation in human beings is a vital issue and more so to teachers. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of teachers' motivation on academic learning outcomes among pre-primary children in Maara Sub County, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The investigation employed mixed methodology. The study embraced the concurrent triangulation design. The target population was 3,426 participants which comprised of 61 head teachers, 157 teachers and 3,208 children. Using the Central Limit Theorem, a sample of 6 preschools and 102 participants were selected. Stratified sampling was applied to create three strata based on the number of zones. From each zone, five head teachers and 14 preschool teachers were selected using purposive sampling. Fifteen preschool learners were selected using simple random sampling. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to sample 15 head teachers, 42 teachers and 45 pre-primary school learners. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from pre-primary school teachers, interview guide for head teachers whereas observation checklist was used to gather qualitative data from pre-primary school learners.

**Findings:** From the study findings, it was necessary to beef up recognition of teachers' performance in terms of motivation. Motivated teachers work better and so produce better outcomes. The issue of motivation is paramount in making sure that the anticipated learning outcomes are positive and admirable. If teachers continue to be demotivated, then one should not expect good results and this hampers acquisition of skills.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** The Self-determination and Social cognitive theories were used. Self-determination theory is about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation which preschool teachers need so as to produce better academic learning outcomes. If teachers are influenced mostly by the intrinsic motivation, they will produce better results. The stakeholders can externally motivate teachers whilst the teachers themselves are inwardly motivated. The combination of both internal and external motivations is the best way that teachers get to produce desirable outcomes academically. Social cognitive theory is about environment and whatever surrounds it. People are influenced by actions that they observe from others in their environment. Academic learning outcomes can be propelled by the environment. This environment includes the preschool teachers who are the most important participants in the children's life. When they positively interact with the learners, there is a likelihood of emerging with the best academic learning outcomes among the children.

**Key Words:** *academic learning outcomes, influence, learning outcomes, pre-primary children, teachers' motivation*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The practice of teacher motivation leads to desirable learning outcomes among the pre-primary children. If there is good motivation, the pre-school teachers will perform far much better in their work. Teachers' motivation has become an important issue given that they have the responsibility to impart knowledge and skills to learners. It is argued that satisfied teachers are generally more productive and can influence learners' achievement (Nyakundi *et al*, 2019). Motivation guides people's actions and behaviours towards achievement of some goods and goals (Mutuse, 2016). This study documented evaluation of preschool teachers' motivations on the learner acquisition of basic skills in Maara Sub County, Kenya.

In the last years, the percentage of children attending preschool has grown tremendously and thus the potential impact of preschool education on children's literacy skills is great. In 1965 fewer than 20% of children were enrolled in preschool. However, in 2005/2006 half of the children who attended preschool or center-based day care were served in public programs. Nursery schools started in England way back in 1913 as compensatory education for working class – children with the aim to level up the gross disparities in early backgrounds between rich and poor children. In recent years, partially to counter this capacity problem and partially to meet a growing parental wish for 4-year-olds to be enrolled in preschool, there has been a concerted effort. There were a growing number of states funding public preschool programmes (Ndani & Kimani, 2010).

Teachers' promotions – qualification to promotions in the Ghana education service depend on a number of conditions. These include the fact that a teacher must have a satisfactory work history for a minimum of three consecutive years; the teacher must have a satisfactory appraisal from his or her supervisor who is normally the head teacher of the school, the teacher and that the teacher must pass an interview (Agezo, 2011). The teacher rather prefers a system of promotion based on academic qualification.

The preschool teachers provide early childhood care and education through a variety of teaching strategies. The teacher plans and implements a curriculum that covers various areas of child's development such as the motor skills, social, emotional and language development (Owala, Odongo & Raburu, 2016). In addition for being knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, preschool teachers must be experienced in the profession, have a positive attitude towards the profession, and be pragmatic and flexible to help children succeed in their studies. Bandura (1997) suggests that early childhood teacher needs to have learned effective skills for working with young children and for communication with them at a level in our global society. Lesson plan should suit the activities and objectives for individual learning styles. The teacher should be flexible and ready to adjust approaches of teaching in order to cater for individual differences. Hence the aim of this research was therefore, to evaluate preschool teacher motivation on preschool learners' acquisition of basic skills in public pre-schools in Maara Sub County, Kenya in this era of curriculum change.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is a current concern as far as the pre-school learners' academic outcomes is concerned as 70% of the centers do not register desirable results in Tharaka Nithi County. This has been so

due to low motivation of teachers. Pre-primary teacher motivation is a pertinent issue in the study county. It is evident that motivation of teachers improves academic learning outcomes among children. Nevertheless, teacher motivation in the county has been dismal hence manifestation of results among pre-primary children (County Director of Education, 2017). This is as a result of unclear teacher motivational strategies. There are not many known studies done in this county in the area of teacher motivation. If the situation is not addressed, there will be low outcomes continuously hence threatening children's education. This study, therefore, aimed at examining the influence of teacher motivation on academic learning outcomes among pre-primary in children Maara Sub County.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study was guided by the Self-determination and the Cognitive theories. This section begins with the theoretical framework of the two theories use in the study.

### **2.1 Self-determination Theory**

This study was guided by self-determination theory (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation). It is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that concerns people's interest growth tendencies and innate psychological needs. It focuses on the degree to which an individual's behavior is self-motivated and self-determined. Extrinsic motivation is when one is motivated by external factors such as rewards, social recognition or fear of punishment. This kind of motivation focuses people on rewards rather than action (Bandura, 1977).

Intrinsic motivation on the other hand refers to the desire to do things because they enjoy doing them; hence it is stronger motivator than extrinsic. An important factor leading to intrinsic motivation is providing learners with the opportunity to develop effectance that is being successful at work we do. It is given rise when it accomplishes success of something that they perceive challenging and falling in what Ndani and Kimani (2010) term as optimal zone of development. This is a task that is perceived as difficult enough to be challenging but within the stretch of the learners' ability. Self-determination theory assumes that there are individuals for whom a feeling of being in control of their life and responsible for their actions is very important for their personal fulfillment and consequently for their motivation.

Implications of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theory have it that teachers should make lessons as enjoyable as possible and make the learners experience effective regularly during the lesson; this will make them boast their intrinsic motivation. Teachers plan every single lesson with the following questions in mind, "How can I make sure that every learner goes out of my lesson feeling they have progressed?" Consequently, this means the acquisition of the basic skills. Teachers foster connectedness in the class by creating a team spirit and a sense that the whole class is working towards the same goal and that every learner feels comfortable working with everyone else. This is where the teacher makes sure that learners do not work with the same partners all the time when staging group work. Teachers should give plenty of opportunities for positive peer feedback, for example get learners to celebrate other children's achievements. The teacher should make sure that for every activity staged in lessons in terms of learning benefits them for future jobs prospect. Use praise as a means to validate their efforts but ensure that you don't over praise or it will lose its motivational power. Many learners can sense when you are

trying to bribe them with compliments, this may provoke complacency and even loss of motivation in the long run. A learner that does not enjoy literacy may through experience a sense of effectance and obtaining consistent praise and rewards become more appreciative of the subject especially if one is experiencing steady growth in mastery of the language and feels connected and supported by the peers. It is self-evident that using extrinsic motivation will work with certain individuals rather than others, hence as already mentioned. Government and political policies are intervening variables which also include learner's attitude, parental involvement and teaching and learning methods (Ndung'u, 2014).

## **2.2 Social Cognitive theory**

The study was also guided by the Social cognitive theory which was postulated by Albert Bandura. It states that environment and personal variables impact human behavior through the process of observational learning. The main concept in this theory is that an individual's actions and reactions, including social behaviors and cognitive processes, in almost every situation are influenced by the actions that individual has observed from others. Bandura put it that behavior is best understood in terms of triadic reciprocity where behavior, cognition and the environment exist in a reciprocal relationship and influence each other. The theory is based on self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) believed that two cognitive processes impacts behavior; outcome expectancy and self- efficacy. Outcome expectancy is one's belief that behavior can produce a desired effect.

For example, in this study, provision of an enabling environment helps the learners to conceptualize reading, writing and speaking skills more. On the other hand, self-efficacy refers to people's belief in their ability to carry out behavior in any situation. In this study, this can be viewed in terms of the parents perceived characteristics influence reading, writing and speaking skills. Bandura (1977) also reveals that Self-efficacy influences behavior via selection processes. For instance, parents who feel that they might be successful when single will more likely adopt challenging goals, attempt harder to achieve them, persist despite setbacks, and develop coping mechanism for managing their emotional states.

The theory explains that self-efficacy is developed from external experiences and self-perception and is influential in determining the outcome of many events. Self- efficacy can be increased through: assisting in helping children with school work, participating in school activities and paying attention to children's social and emotional needs to enhance academic learning outcomes. This theory can be applied in this study since academic learning outcomes is a significant variable in this study. This would describe the behavior of pre-primary teachers.

## **2.3 Influence of Recognition of Teachers' Performance on Academic Learning Outcomes**

All teachers yearn for reassurance that they are doing a good job. Administrators should recognize teacher's effort by offering positive feedback both publicly and privately, weekly memos or emails and regular staff meeting are the perfect forums for recognizing special contributions teachers or other staff members make. Such recognition should be included in staff memos and during a special celebration or closing assemblies also make a special point of spotlighting efforts of teachers who make development projects that involve learners across all grade levels or with other schools. These special recognitions will make others consider extending learning outside the walls of individual classrooms. With all teachers have to do,



motivation is the key to keeping them focused and feeling worthy. Fredrick Herzberg spent much of his professional life researching what motivates people in the work place. His findings show that when a person is recognized for a high level of learning outcomes at work, this has a powerful effect on motivation (Mose, 2015).

Recognition needs to happen all the way down the hierarchical ladder of any organization or school. If the person who is directly responsible to teachers does not seem to notice or care when they perform outstandingly they understandably feel unappreciated. This in turn, can affect their work learning outcomes negatively to the detriment of the school they work for. Recognition from colleagues or those higher up the ladder can also be very effective at motivating the teachers. Teachers who work in an environment where recognition is part of the institutional culture are much more likely to reciprocate in kind of making the learners acquire the basic skills as required (Akyeampong, 2017).

Motivational factors on the other hand are factors which make a difference on how the worker feels about their job in a long lasting way. Herzberg (1959) cited areas such as motivational, achievement, recognition, the work itself and advancement and responsibility. If we strive to have vibrant high quality language organizations, the motivation of learners, teachers, managers/administrators and all other staff members, is an essential part of good management practice. If we accept that taking the time to recognize good work can make a significant difference to people's level of motivation, then language organization would be well advised to make sure that the recognition of people's merit initiatives and hard work becomes part of their institutional culture (Rugarabamu, 2018).

Teachers must be made to feel recognized and motivated so that the country's educational system could play its role of being the key to the door of development. There is concern over the lack of respect for the teaching profession over the years but not withstanding the precarious situation in which some teachers found themselves in. Many teachers are willing to work but are handicapped by the lack of educational materials and infrastructure (Raburu, 2016).

When teachers' views are sought in major education reforms, they would own those policies and be committed to supporting them to succeed. Thus without recognition, no educational reform in any country will succeed. Educational reforms succeed where teachers are recognized, respected and motivated. This is seen clearly where the teachers are involved in curriculum change implementation. In Kenya, some pilot schools have been picked in each county. Organization structure of basic education of 2-6-3-3 curriculum has been launched. Basic Education will be organized into 3 levels. Early years Education middle school education and senior school. The model of new curriculum 2-6-3-3 system in Kenya states that early years education (5 year) preprimary and lower primary will comprise two years of preschool and three years of lower primary education. All learners are expected to begin their education at this preprimary level. It is a two year programme. Digital literacy and pertinent contemporary issues will be integrated across all subjects. In the sampled schools the preschool teachers are participating in the curriculum change in all the counties thus teachers' recognition in curriculum implementation (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2017).

Recognition and feedback concerns informing teachers that they are doing a good job and recognizing their achievement publicly and privately makes them feel appreciated. Good work

done by teacher should always be acknowledged (Mutua, 2016). Devising better methods of determining ways and means of rewarding teachers is paramount to the educational administrators. If they expect the rewards to have an impact teacher, they should offer positive feedback giving teachers trophies, conducting prize giving days or a letter of appreciation (Berhenke, 2013). Praise and recognition are effective in most teachers which enhances acquisition of basic skills. This entails credit for work done which can be supported by verbal praise of excellent and public recognition through awards. According to Mutua (2016) recognition must be sincere and need to be based on acquisition of basic skills. It was found that teachers gained satisfaction from receiving praise and appreciation from their peers or those higher in rank. Praise and recognition can be rated as strong motivation. Motivation can be implicit or explicit. Implicit recognition can be mirrored in a head teacher's choice of teachers to act as mentors or to teach classes (Adeyinka, Asabi, & Adedotun, 2013).

The need of recognition relates to the dimension of Maslow's need for esteem which refers to the desire for reputation or prestige, status, fame, glory dominance, recognition attention, importance, dignity or appreciation. Teachers' need for self-esteem indicates that they seek good evaluation of themselves. Lack of recognition for achievement may provide feelings of dissatisfaction which could generate apathy following the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

Teaching is a noble profession as soon as you launch yourself into it you gain a lot. Lack of prestige, low remuneration and low autonomy in planning and teaching has been associated with private tutoring an activity where teachers often enjoy more professional status, self-esteem and better pay. Teachers feel that another way to increase societal respect for teaching is to improve the public awareness of the actual conditions they face (Onyambu, 2014).

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study used self-determination theory and social cognitive theory. The investigation employed mixed methodology. The study embraced the concurrent triangulation design. This involved simultaneous data gathering but separate scrutiny of quantitative and qualitative data was done.

The target population was 3,426 participants which comprised of 61 head teachers, 157 teachers and 3,208 children. Using the Central Limit Theorem, a sample of 6 preschools and 102 participants were selected. Stratified sampling was applied to create three strata based on the number of zones. From each zone, five head teachers and 14 preschool teachers were selected using purposive sampling. Fifteen preschool learners were selected using simple random sampling. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to sample 15 head teachers, 42 teachers and 45 pre-primary school learners. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from pre-primary school teachers, interview guide for head teachers whereas observation checklist was used to gather qualitative data from pre-primary school learners.

**Table 1: Sampling grid**

Categories	Sample Size
ECDE Head teachers	15
ECDE Teachers	42
ECDE Learners	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>

**Source: (The researcher, 2020).**

#### 4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data was set according to the research objective. This research examined the influence of recognition teachers' performance on academic learning outcomes in Maara Sub County, Kenya. Two levels of analysis were employed namely: descriptive and thematic.

##### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics Analysis

As per the objective, the study sought to examine the influence of recognition of teacher's performance on learning outcomes amongst pre-primary school learners. Data was collected from preschool teachers, organized and summarized and results are as indicated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Teachers' responses on recognition**

Summary of Test Items	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Recognition of teachers' motivation earns them social respect	71.1	13.1	1.3	10.1	5.3
Pre-primary school teachers improve self-esteem through recognition of motivation	66.9	13.2	2.4	12.7	4.8

**Source: The researcher, 2020**

The shows that majority 27 (71.1%) of the pre-primary school teachers strongly agreed with the view that recognition of teacher's motivation enhances social respect, though has not enhanced their numeracy, literacy, and creativity skills. At the same time, 5 (13.1%) agreed. However, only a paltry 1 (1.3%) of the pre-primary school teachers were undecided, 4 (10.1%) disagreed whereas 2 (5.3%) strongly disagreed. These findings corroborate the assertions of Kihara, Kamiti and Muola (2018) that teachers can better perform immediately after motivation which continues at a later time period if there is consistency. Despite the fact that recognition of teachers' motivation improves self-respect and self-esteem, there was no difference in recall at a later time period when no recognition was prompted, and there was no improvement in children's learning outcomes. These findings thus affirm the fact that teachers self-respect and self-esteem play is critical for helping children build the ability to solve problems and draw their own conclusions. This is indicative of the fact that, recognition of teachers motivation can help improves a child's learning outcomes.

The study also revealed that a fair majority 25 (66.9%) of the pre-primary school teachers strongly agreed with the view that self-esteem plays a vital role in teachers ability to instruct, however this was not totally supported as did 5 (13.2%) of the teachers. At the same time, 1 (2.4%) of the pre-primary school teachers were undecided, 5 (12.7%) disagreed whereas 2 (4.8%) strongly disagreed. These findings lend credence to the assertions of Mose (2015) that



teachers can transfer aspects of self-esteem to young children as they learn by imagining and doing. It was noted that when teachers have low self-esteem the instructional process is greatly hampered. These findings also lend credence to the assertions of Mutuse (2016) that as well teaching as being a great way to encourage interaction and communication recognition of motivation can also help enhance self-esteem among teachers.

#### **4.2 Thematic Analysis on Influence of Recognition of Teachers' Performance on Academic Learning Outcomes**

The researcher also conducted interviews amongst head teachers to establish the relationship between recognition of teacher's performance and learning outcomes among preschool children. During the interviews, majority of the head teachers indicated that most preschool teachers are usually rewarded to enhance acquisition of basic skills among learners. In the same vein, the interviewees and discussants responded in favor of the view that most preschool teachers are never promoted so as to enhance acquisition of skills among learners. On further probing, head teacher, H1 remarked,

*'Preschool teachers performance is usually rewarded as a strategy to support their instructional activities, however majority are never promoted'*

Just like in quantitative data, these views did not lend credence to the qualitative findings of a study carried out amongst Grade III teachers in Ghana in which Akyeamong (2017) suggested that teachers should be motivated to enhance active learning among learners as a way to do this is to promote classroom practice. Thus, this points to the fact that, in most preschools in Maara Sub-county, preschool teachers' performance has not been well recognized. In keeping with these assertions, motivation strategy is highly effective to enhance instruction, since it allows teachers to feel connected to the schools, promotes active learning and allows teacher-learners interaction. The researcher also conducted observation schedules on the pre-primary school learners. It was observed that pre-primary school learners' reading skills such as phoneme awareness, vocabulary and comprehension, writing skills such as sentence formation, punctuations and spellings and oral or speaking skills such as attentiveness and sound recognition are below average. Just like in quantitative findings, these observations lend credence to the views expressed by Uwezo (2011) that Kenyan pre-primary and primary schools are poorly grounded in language skills. The researcher also observed that Pre-primary school learners participate in pretended, hide and seek, socio-dramatic and storytelling play activities.

Just like in quantitative findings, these observations further corroborate the views that teachers feel motivated if their performance is recognized. These observations also concurred with the assertions of Uwezo (2014) that positive recognition of efforts is a motivating factor in performance. Hence, these viewpoints attest the fact that pre-primary school teacher who are awarded, given certificates, whose learners are awarded and given certificates are likely to register improved children's learning outcomes. One H2 further remarked,

*“Pre-primary school teachers are awarded, given certificates and promoted among other incentives, though this has not enhanced children’s learning outcomes”*

These observations also corroborate the viewpoints held by Raburu (2016) that recognition of teachers’ performance have can enhance learning outcomes. Thus, these observations point to the fact that, recognition of teacher’s performance is critical for influencing children’s learning by helping build cognitive skills and helping children build the ability to solve problems and draw their own conclusions. These observations are also in concurrence with the assertions rewarding young children improves learning by imagining and doing. It was noted that that when adults feel appreciated they perform better. Just like in quantitative findings, the observations also lend credence to the assertions of Berhenke (2013) that as well as being a great way to encourage instruction, performance recognition can also help develop children’s numeracy, literacy and creativity skills. These findings affirm the fact that preschool teachers in Maara Sub-county whose performance is not recognized are likely to feel demotivated to instruct.

## **5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the study results, it was necessary to promote teachers’ performance through motivation. Drawing from the above findings, it is evident that preschools teachers have different strategies for recognition of teacher’s performance. These include; awarding teachers, awarding learners, certification and teacher promotion which enhance learning of preschool children. These strategies, when used effectively, enhance preschool learners’ acquisition of basic numeracy, language and creativity skills.

Two aspects of recommendations were made. These included recommendation for practice and for policy makers as follows. County Governments and schools should improve teacher motivation by recognizing the teachers for their achievement through promotion and improvement of remuneration. The county governments, which are in charge of ECDE, should come up with policies that will control motivational and professional development of EDCE teachers.

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