

Appropriateness, Attainability, Balance and Relevance of Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Addis Ababa

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Received Date: March 23, 2024; **Published Date:** July 30, 2024

Abstract

Studies have observed from every angle the broad social perspectives of early childhood education. Hence, the present paper aims to examine the government's early childhood education syllabus with a specific reference to appropriateness, attainability, balance, and relevance in Addis Ababa, Arada city administration. The researcher deployed a qualitative content analysis evaluation approach and interview. Out of 10 sub-cities, the researcher selected by purposive sampling method one sub-city (Arada). In the Arada sub-city, there were 15 primary schools (government). However, the researcher selected by simple random sampling method only four of them: Africa Andnet No 1, Genet KG, Melkam Ermjachin, and Meskerem. However, by using a simple random sampling method for interviews two teachers, one director, and one supervisor from each preschool were selected. In addition, one coordinator and one expert have participated from Addis Ababa Educational Bureau. In general, 18 participants participated. Hence, the major findings are; that the syllabus does not include play, music, and aesthetics as major themes. Further, it lacks appropriateness, attainability, balance, and relevance. In conclusion, the school management, teachers, students, and all stakeholders are expected to ensure the Appropriateness, Attainability, Balance, and Relevance of Early Childhood. Finally, it was recommended that MoE, Addis Ababa Educational Bureau, and school communities improve the early childhood education curriculum.

Keywords: Early Childhood; Syllabus, Attainability; Appropriateness; Balance; Relevance

Abbreviations

ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education; KSA: Knowledge, Skills or Attributes; MoE: Ministry of Education.

Background of the Study

Research confirms that early childhood education has considerable optimistic short-term and long-term impacts

on the children who attend early childhood education. It is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak. During this stage, children are highly influenced by their environment and the people surrounding them. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school [1]. In line with this, the researcher argues that early childhood is a very critical stage, at every moment in early childhood education children need follow-up, scaffolding, treatment, and, showing direction for

the future, both mentally and academically. Over the global development of early childhood, education first got attention in the 19th century in Europe and North America. Later on, it expanded to developing countries such as China, India, Latin America, and Africa. Kindergartens and nurseries started [2].

Furthermore, Pre-primary education is important since it introduces children to basic learning skills that are needed in primary schools and enhances their chances of success in the education system (MoE, ESDP V). In addition (MoE, ESDP IV), it has been proclaimed that educating children at an early age is more critical than at a later age. It is believed that the incidence of repetition and dropout in lower grades of primary schools would decline if children were better prepared at a pre-primary level for school, improving the internal efficiency of primary education [3].

The aim of early childhood education is the versatile development of a child's personality. Besides education and teaching, early childhood education also includes basic care. Early childhood education should help a child to be ready and mature for a smooth transfer to primary school [4].

Investments in early childhood education are believed to be critical in forming the foundation for lifelong learning and providing children with the opportunity to reach their full potential. This is because early childhood is a crucial phase of growth and development, where early circumstances can influence outcomes across the entire course of an individual's life. In many high-income countries, there are several studies that support such relationships and strongly suggest that the best hope for correcting the educational disparity among children is to invest resources during their earliest [5].

This study explores the challenges and opportunities that emerge with early childhood by evaluating the syllabus its appropriateness, attainability, balance, and reliability In Addis Ababa, Arada sub city as a case. The researcher has taken the Arada sub-city because it is found in the center of the city and is well organized. Because of its location, the city KG teachers' training was found in the sub-city, which had a close attachment to it. Therefore, it was important to determine the capacity of kindergarten to equip students with knowledge, attitudes, and skills that contribute to their success.

Statement of the Problem

Early childhood care and education support children's growth, development, and learning, cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development [6]. The early years represent the most vulnerable time in individual human development. It is, of course, the best time for ensuring strong foundations for later learning and life chances. Early childhood care and

education is the foundation of social inclusion and equality in life chances; and cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development of children.

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is an umbrella term that encompasses development, growth, and education and care. As a holistic approach to supporting children from three up to eight years of age including health, nutrition, education, early stimulation, and legal, social, economic, and emotional protection [7]. For early childhood education, play is one of the mechanisms to teach children in early childhood classrooms. Children explore their world and learn through play. Of course, in the early childhood education curriculum, children receive education from their parents, preschool teachers, and caregivers as well as with their peer groups in the form of play.

The key reason why the researcher is motivated to study this issue was, due to limited research has been done so far on the issue both in the region and the country. And, due to a strong belief that the researcher had less knowledge concerning to early childhood education curriculum. Therefore, the researcher's interest in the area of early childhood education curriculum has pushed the researcher to study the issue. Therefore, the researcher conducted the study on early childhood education curriculum in Addis Ababa city administration (Arada sub-city) taking as a case to evaluate the syllabus with a specific focus on balance, relevance, attainability, and appropriateness and to solve those problems and to put some strategic which mentioned at the above text. Moreover, the study attempts to find out answers to the following research questions.

1. To what extent does the early childhood education curriculum (syllabus) fulfil in terms of relevance, balance, attainability, and appropriateness in Addis Ababa city administration?
2. What are the challenges of early childhood education curriculum to fulfil the relevance, balance, attainability, and appropriateness of early childhood curriculum in the Addis Ababa city administration?
3. To what extent does the investment of early childhood education curriculum improve the challenges of the syllabus particularly its relevance, balance, attainability, and appropriateness in Addis Ababa city administration?

Objectives

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to explore the early childhood curriculum in Addis Ababa, Arada sub-city taking as a case with a specific focus on appropriateness, attainability, balance, and relevance.

Specific Objectives

- To evaluate the early childhood curriculum (syllabus) in terms of its relevance, balance, attainability, and appropriateness in the city administration.
- To investigate the challenges to ensure to relevance, balance, attainability, and appropriateness of early childhood curriculum in the study area.
- To find out some possible opportunities that could help improve early childhood curriculum relevance, balance, attainability, and appropriateness.

Methods

Research Design and Approach

The researcher used a qualitative content analysis evaluation approach and interview. It helps to identify and describe the early childhood education curriculum (syllabus). Therefore, the researcher believed that a case study was more suitable for these types of qualitative research. Hence, qualitative content analysis evaluation and qualitative interview help an in-depth investigation to get answers to the research questions raised in this study.

Qualitative interviews attain the objectives set, by probing data from those who are directly or indirectly involved in the early childhood education curriculum in the Arada sub-city that is why qualitative research was important. Qualitative data content analyses were utilized to secure evidence that is more comprehensive and to investigate ECCE. Therefore, qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviour, and experiences, through such methods as interviews and it attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants [8].

Population, Sampling, and Sampling Techniques

Population

Currently, in Addis Ababa city administration, there were 193,659 students in pre-primary schools in government and non-government KGs. And, there were 10013 pre-primary school teachers in Addis Ababa in 10 sub-cities of the government pre-primary schools.

Therefore, the researcher has taken only one sub-city (Arada), focusing on government pre-primary schools. There were 741 teachers in the Arada sub-city. In addition, out of 10013 kindergarten teachers from the sub-cities 141 were from the Arada sub-city. For this study, the researcher selected from those four selective pre-primary teachers, coordinators, experts, directors, and supervisors because they were the target sources of this study.

Sample Size

There are ten sub-cities in Addis Ababa. Namely, Bole, Yeka, Kirkos, Arada, Gulele, Akaki Kaliti, Kolfe Keranyo, Lideta, Adis Ketema and Nifas silk. However, Arada sub city selected from government pre-primary school for it is the oldest and high population. Out of 15 pre-primary schools, four were selected using purposive sampling. These were Africa Andnet No1, Meskerem, Melkam Ermjachin and Genet kindergarten. Out of 141 teachers in Arada sub-city 38 teachers were selected from pre-primary schools. For this study, the researcher had selected participants for an interview, two teachers and one director from each were taken as sources of data during the interview. Additionally, one coordinator, four supervisors, and one expert participated in the interview to provide information through interview. In general, 18 data sources participated in this study.

Ethical Consideration

Most people learn ethical norms at home, at school, in religious institutions, or in other social settings. Although most people acquire their sense of right and wrong during childhood, moral development occurs throughout life and human beings pass through different stages of growth as they mature. Therefore, ethical norms are so ubiquitous that one might be tempted to regard them as simple common sense. In general, the researcher conducted every activity during the interview or observation of participants with carefulness and consideration of the ethical norms.

Result and Discussion

This study was to explore the early childhood education curriculum (syllabus) in Addis Ababa government preschool with a specific focus on appropriateness, attainability, balance, and relevance. For this study, the researcher used qualitative content analysis evaluation and qualitative interviews. Therefore, this part of the study deals with presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the collected data through content analysis of the syllabus, interviews with the participants, and observation in the classroom and out of the classroom.

Balance of the Syllabus

The inclusion of the content of learning in terms of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains should be in a balanced and systematic way. Any objective set within the working environment should enhance a person's knowledge, attributes, or skills (KSA) in some way to bring them overall benefit in terms of their competencies and behaviours. Actually, on page 6 the syllabus has stated and explained five themes, namely: physical development and care, meaningful

communication, language development, numeracy and knowing the environments. However, there is no inclusion play and music as main themes.

Relevance of the Syllabus

Relevance refers to the responsiveness of the materials to the needs of the learners' daily lives while considering their heritage and culture. It is closely connected with each respective input, output, or outcome with the needs, abilities, and aspirations, intellectual and physical abilities of the learner. Therefore, the syllabus should consider learners' ability and their interests. In addition, the syllabus lacks relevance, for example on page 10 (2.2.1), these learning outcomes stated that after they learn the course they can develop self-confidence, self-respect, and self-awareness. Look, these three words are so difficult for children not only for children but also for elders. Because there are different criteria that require a lot of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, generally it needs a lot of effort how someone to develop either self-confidence or self-awareness.

Appropriateness of Syllabus

Appropriateness refers to the suitability of the content to learners in terms of physical and mental growth with their ages. So, a good syllabus is a resource for students. It should, at the very least, offer suggestions to assist students in pursuing topics that interest them. But it can also serve as a reference, a field outline to which they can refer long after they have finished the course. Of course, the syllabus from pages 10 up to 56 is well differentiated and defined for the level of kindergarten namely: nursery or kg1 (age from 3-4), lower kindergarten or Kg 2 (age from 4-5), and upper kindergarten or Kg 3 (age from 5-6). This is one of the suitability of the syllabus. For this, the researcher gave a big value as well as a strong side of the syllabus

Major Findings

1. Overall, the syllabus lacks comprehensive themes. For example, there were no inclusions in the syllabus like play, music, and aesthetics as major themes of the syllabus. However, the syllabus believes and analyses play as one of the basic significances for children's teaching-learning process as well as for teaching methodology. However, the play does not have inclusively with these five themes. In addition, there is a lack of aesthetics or music in the syllabus as major themes. Nevertheless, play and music are very important for children.
2. In addition, the syllabus lacks relevance: learning outcomes on page 13 of the syllabus state that children could develop appreciation, self-confidence, self-respect, and self-awareness. But, these words are a higher level

of learning, which they difficult for children, It states that children can recall their full name, age, and part of their body (like eye, nose, tongue, hand etc....). However, those are all things, they know at home before they go to the preschool either by their parents or families.

3. The syllabus lacks appropriateness: In the syllabus, there are many learning outcomes that they written without considering the age of the children, sometimes it is stated above their status and below. For example, children can only know numbers from 1-10 for ages 3-4, this indicates that below their status and they can appreciate things so this is above their status. And, it contains a higher level of learning which is above the age of the learner.
4. The syllabus lacks balance: The syllabus explains five themes but it does not consider those age three up to near age four. Because, age three and age four learn in the same class, and the same content it is very difficult to balance those learners. Age three and four does not have the same performance, their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills are different and they have different IQ. So how can make balance these learners? This is why the researcher states that the syllabus lacks balance.
5. The syllabus lacks attainability: The syllabus was not achievable with time, not updated; its last publication was in 2009, which means the syllabus cannot run with time. The old version of the syllabus makes to have the syllabus have low attainability.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to explore the early childhood education curriculum (syllabus) in Addis Ababa, taking the Arada sub-city as a case and with a specific focus on appropriateness, attainability, balance, and relevance. Concerning those research questions and major findings, the researcher has put a conclusion as wallowed.

It is concluded that in the syllabus there is no comprehension of themes and it emphasizes many problems, it lacks appropriateness, attainability, balance, and relevance.

The content analyses of the evaluation of the syllabus regarding learners' age, interest, needs, performance and culture, show that the syllabus is goal-oriented. Nevertheless, it is very old and out dated with many repetitions and it is below and above the status of the learner. Hence, the syllabus is goal-oriented rather than free-play. From this, the researcher concluded that there is a lack of quality of education in the study area. However, the Addis Ababa Educational Bureau did not give the necessary attention to pre-primary schools concerning to quality of education. In addition to this, there is no prepared textbook for preschools and they are under the primary schools.

Therefore, kindergarten or preschools are not independent. According to the researchers interviewed most teachers do not take any trainees, they are not professional. Supervisors do not have enough knowledge concerning early childhood education. However, preschool teachers, supervisors, and experts are not professionals; this is due to a lack of trainees. Finally, there are lack of basic facilities and materials like classrooms, toilets, restrooms, and teaching materials are not well furnished or not adequate for children.

Recommendation for Ministry of Education (MoE)

The syllabus lacks comprehensiveness. For example, play, music, and aesthetics are very important for early childhood education; however, it is not stated as major themes. Therefore, MoE as necessary and as needed can be included in the learning outcomes as a major theme. Nevertheless, play and music are very important for children as a teaching methodology. If preschools receive special attention from all institutions, governmental or non-governmental it could improve the quality of early childhood education and there becomes a positive change in the society. In addition, MoE needs to prepare either a seminar or penal discussion on improving early childhood education. Finally, MoE as needed and necessary can establish institutions only for early childhood education training, the syllabus should be renewed and updated as much as possible with time and preschools should separate independently from the primary schools by preparing their own budgets.

Recommendations for Addis Ababa Educational Bureau

Addis Ababa Educational Bureau needs to work cooperatively with preschool teachers, coordinators, supervisors, and experts to improve the quality of the early childhood education curriculum (syllabus). In addition, can construct additional classrooms, facilities, and materials in order to eradicate the problems of early childhood education. Additionally, the Education Bureau with directors, teachers, and supervisors and with all stakeholders as necessary can work cooperatively on the improvement of early childhood education. Finally, Addis Ababa Educational Bureau as it needs or necessary can prepare seminars or workshops with all preschool stakeholders and the community concerning early childhood education.

Recommendation for Schools

Schools as its importance and as needs could create an attractive and conducive school environment by working cooperatively with whom it may concern. Directors, supervisors, coordinators, experts, and teachers with all these stakeholders need to participate in terms of social, and economic as well as ways of lifestyle on the improvement of early childhood education curriculum (syllabus). In addition, all the stakeholders of the preschool as it necessary can work cooperatively with the community to provide instructional materials, it is necessary to invest in school structures including classrooms, laboratories, toilets, and showers. Moreover, school teachers need to work cooperatively with each other to prepare modules, textbooks, or worksheets as well as for entrepreneurship that helps early childhood education.

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