

**Expert comm-
DR KEDRACE TURUYA
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"The quality of education is very uneven, as are teaching methods, and alleged violations of sound pedagogical principles of child psychology and development. But do not get surprised to find that there are schools in the country that lack the National Curriculum Development Centre learning framework and are teaching using their own materials."



POLICY/PRACTICE

ESSENTIALS AND ALTERNATIVE IDEAS



Nursery school pupils join letters to form words during a literacy lesson recently. Children must be taught with materials that stimulate them to learn. PHOTO BY GODFREY LUGAJU

Embrace early childhood development education

The National Curriculum Development Centre developed a learning framework for early learning. However, some schools do not follow it exposing children to inappropriate material.

BY DAVID MAFABI
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Recently, *Daily Monitor* moved around a few primary and pre-primary schools. The aim was to establish what learning materials the schools used to implement the 2007 early childhood development education (ECDE) policy by the Education ministry.

At Victory Infant School, Kiira, the teacher [names withheld on request] held a stick and called on the pupils to name the items she pointed at on the reading chart. She would occasionally write some words on the chalkboard which she would later ask them to re-write.

At Pearl Infants School, Bweyogerere, the teacher was in the compound with pupils aged between three and five on average, exercising with them by jumping.

There were, however, not many play materials in the compound save for the tyres, balls and ladders.

At Queen Ann nursery and Primary

School in Namuwongo, the nursery teacher, Jackie Wanyenya, says she uses preschool worksheets with words and pictures, and wooden blocks to arrange pictures of items for illustration.

Although in class there were several chats with pictures of body parts, plants, cars and houses, Wanyenya said they occasionally take children out in the compound to interact with the environment. "Nursery school teaching involves playing and using pictures that can have a tremendous impact on young children's development," she said, adding that they use materials recommended by National Curriculum Development Centre [NCDC] to achieve this.

However, some schools use improvised materials to teach their pupils

sometimes different from what the ECD policy stipulates.

Speed is of the essence

The policy provides for regulation and quality assessment of childcare and early learning services recognising the four centres; daycare, home-based, community and nursery schools.

While addressing a two-day conference organised by the Agakhan Foundation at Lake Victoria Serena Hotel, Kigo last week, the director of basic and secondary education in ministry of Education, Robinson Nsumba-Lyaze, said government is working on a policy that will see ECD introduced in all primary schools.

"We are lagging behind in ECD because Kenya has their ECD curriculum developed to 53 per cent, Tan-

APPROPRIATE MATERIALS

Books/records. Picture books, simple and repetitive stories and rhymes, animal stories, simple information books, variety of musical recordings based on ages.

Games. Socially interactive games with adults, matching and lotto games based on colours and pictures. Games of chance with a few pieces that do not require reading, such as chutes and ladders, flannel board

with pictures, letters, and storybook characters but all these must be in categories of various ages.

Active play. Push and pull toys, ride-on toys, balls of all kinds, indoor slide and climber, rocking boat based on ages.

Outdoor. Climbers, rope ladders, balls of all sizes; old tires, sand and water materials.

Source: Gender Ministry Technical adviser on gender, Jimmy Obbo

Take note of the age

The technical adviser on gender in the Gender ministry, Jimmy Obbo, said children in nursery schools are being taken through play materials meant for children above their age and taught to cram and reproduce work. "Anybody starts a school, installs play materials without specifying the age," he said. "And most of these materials do not stimulate the children, they instead injure them and once children start fearing them, the body produces a hormone that suppresses brain development," he added.

zania at 35 per cent while Uganda is at 9 per cent. We need to act soon," Nsumba said, adding that the revision for the ECDE is in course and the process will cost about \$1million (Sh3.9 billion).

Wasted efforts?

Nsumba said although the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) has developed a learning framework for ECD, many pre-primary schools do not use it relegating the quality of education these children receive.

Asked if they follow the NCDC framework, the teacher at Pearl Infants School said they follow guidelines given by the school proprietor. "Our boss tells us what to follow because the Education ministry never comes here. Since he is the one who pays us, we do what he tells us," she says.

The Education ministry under-secretary, Abbey Kibenge, urges ECD centres, teachers, proprietors and caretakers to ensure children are learning and playing with age-appropriate materials. "Getting children ready for primary school does not mean substituting academics for play time forcing them to master first grade "skills," or relying on exams to assess their success," says Kibenge.

The NCDC spokesperson, Eunice Gyaganda, said some ECDs teach children to cram yet the centre has developed a learning framework for ECDE. "The framework is outcome and competence-based. It focuses on results rather than goals, aims and objectives. It emphasises observable and measurable skills, competences and values to be acquired by the children. We condemn examinations that are given to children because our emphasis is on continuous assessment," said Gyaganda.

But Rosemary Seninde, the minister of state for Education said the Education Act does not provide penalties for nursery schools that do not comply with the NCDC framework which poses implementation challenges. "I have not seen any law against this, maybe I will have to cross check to find out," Seninde said.

Additional reporting by
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