

# **Delivery of Early Childhood Education in Urban Areas of Tanzania: A Case of Ilala Municipality in Dar es Salaam**

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***Abstract:** The work reported here is a case study analysis on provision of early childhood education, its challenges and suggestions for improvement in Tanzania; basing on experience of Dar es Salaam. It was thought to be appropriate to conduct a study in institutionalized childcare settings like nursery and pre-primary schools and groups; in order to assess the degree of child care provision in Tanzania. This study was therefore conducted with the overall objective to investigate the delivery system of early childhood education at all levels in urban areas, and develop suggestions for better harmonization and coordination of this important education sub-sector in Tanzania.*

*The study was conducted in four wards: Kitunda, Ukonga, Kinyerezi, and Tabata in Ilala Municipality, in urban Dar es Salaam. Five registered schools offering pre-school education in each of the four wards were selected, using both stratified and purposive sampling techniques; making a total of twenty schools. Schools were classified whether they are public, private faith-based or private non-faith based.*

*Research issues pursued were: educational programmes, curriculum issues, co-curriculum aspects, parent and community participation, childcare aspects and expert opinion. Respondents were school heads/managers, ward education coordinators, Ilala District Education Officer, parents/guardians as well as selected education experts. Study results show that, apart from nursery classes at public primary schools, there is neither harmonized naming of pre-school programmes nor common age group brackets of same programmes among private schools.*

*The study revealed that public schools contribution to pre-primary education is 55%, whereas private schools' contribution is 45%. Public schools do not offer pre-school education below pre-primary level. Religious organizations play a leading role in offering early childhood education in Dar es Salaam. Privately owned pre-school institutions are better organized, engage more trained teachers and offer over and above learning and child care activities than what is recommended in the National Pre-Primary Curriculum. Due to pathetic conditions in nursery classes at public schools, there must be a remarkable discrepancy between intended, given and received curricula in these classes.*

*The study recommends that pre-primary education at all levels should be harmonized and coordinated by the ministry responsible for education with increased participation of all stakeholders. The current National Pre-Primary Curriculum should be revised to include necessary non-educational activities. In order to improve the situation in public schools, more involvement and participation of all stakeholders has to be encouraged and intensified.*

**Keywords:** Child care, curriculum, co-curriculum, early childhood development, pre-primary, pre-school

## **INTRODUCTION**

Child development is built on ten basic child development principles, which are: physical development, perceptual development, motor development, social attachment, emotional development, development of social relations, individual differences and exercise (Berne, 1990). Early childhood education is educational and child care measures which foster early childhood development in a systematic manner. The significance of early childhood education was realized as early as the era of Greek and German philosophers. Freud and Plato (Bhalalusesa quoted by Sembony, (2007) pointed out that early childhood education is the foundation upon which the future training and teaching is built. Early education is therefore a nursery where talents are born and creativity is raised as well as the best foundation for ethics and habits. Through early childhood education, children would get the best skills and knowledge needed to enable them to cope with, and be accepted in their ever changing environment. According to Berne (1990), the primary objective of early childhood education is to reflect on the best of what is known about young children's development, both physically and mentally.

In Tanzania, formal early childhood education traces back to the colonial times (1940s) when the bush schools were introduced by churches. After independence the government supported early childhood education by keeping an open door policy for those interested to establish pre-primary school centres (Katunzi and Mhaiki, 2003). Nevertheless, this education sub-sector has received limited attention in the formal education system in Tanzania. It was not until 1995 when it was formalized by including pre-primary classes at all public primary schools. A national curriculum was also prepared and released for this level at the same time. At present all public schools are obliged to provide for nursery classes between the ages of 4 years up to school age (prior to begin of primary school). Until now, there exists neither coordination nor official curriculum for pre-school education below pre- primary level. This lower level (below 4 years) is taken care of by private education institutions whose curricula are not even officially known, the lower pre-school levels are under the loose auspices of the ministry responsible for community development without proper coordination. Early education has received limited attention in terms of policy, operationalization and research in Tanzania and in the region, that there is scanty researched information on this important education sub-sector.

This study was therefore conducted with the overall objective to investigate the delivery system of early childhood education at all levels in urban areas, and develop

suggestions for better harmonization and coordination of this important education sub-sector. Consequently pre-school education would meet its objectives stipulated in the National Education and Training Policy of 1995; and hence make a tangible contribution to national development.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Materials**

The study reported here was conducted in four wards of south Ilala municipality; namely Kitunda, Ukonga, Kinyerezi and Tabata. This part of Dar es-Salaam has relatively high concentration of schools of different ownership types.

Main research instruments were structured open and closed ended questionnaires which were either filled by respondents or used for interviews. These were complimented by official documents i.e National Pre-primary curriculum and the National Education and Training Policy (1995), own observations and existing instruments and structures available at respective schools. Other sources of information were school documents, brochures and neighbours.

### **Methods**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied according to type of information required. A combination of stratified sampling basing on school type; and purposive sampling of schools conducting pre-school classes were chosen following a school frame analysis in each ward.

Five registered schools offering pre-school education in each of the four wards were selected for the study, using both stratified and purposive sampling techniques; making a total of twenty schools. Schools were classified whether they are public, private faith-based or private non-faith based. These are referred to in this study as “school types”.

Research issues pursued were: educational programmes and their characterization, curriculum issues, co-curriculum aspects, parent and community participation, child care aspects and expert opinion on improvement of early childhood education in Tanzania. Respondents in this study were school heads/managers, ward education coordinators, Ilala District Education Officer, parents/guardians as well as selected education experts.

### **Data Analysis and Presentation**

Where quantitative data is available, means with their standard deviations are presented in tabular form. Qualitative information is presented in comparative statements between schools and school types. Where applicable, analysis of variance has been carried out and significant difference established, if any. Results are presented in summary statements and tables.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **School Characteristics and Their Early Childhood Programmes**

Schools involved in this study are summarized in Table 1, according to their ownership type.

**Table 1: Summary of Schools Visited During the Study**

S/No	Ward	Type of school	Number of schools
1.	Kitunda	Public	3
		Private, non faith-based	1
		Private, faith-based	1
2.	Ukongga	Public	3
		Private, non-faith-based	-
		Private, faith-based	2
3.	Kinyerezi	Public	2
		Private, non-faith based	2
		Private, faith-based	1
4.	Tabata	Public	3
		Private, non faith-based	-
		Private, faith - based	2
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>20</b>

Eleven public schools, six private, faith-based, and three private non-faith based schools, making a total of twenty schools were investigated.

Table 2 demonstrates educational programmes offered by researched schools according to school type.

**Table 2: Types of Pre-school Programmes Offered by Researched Schools According to School Type**

S/No	School type	Type of Pre-school programme	Number of programmes
1.	<b>Public</b>	Baby class (<3yrs)	-
		Nursery I (3-4yrs)	-
		Nursery II – Kindergarten (4-6 yrs)	-
		Pre-primary (>4yrs)	11
2.	<b>Private, non faith-based</b>	Baby class (3yrs)	1
		Nursery I(3-4yrs)	3
		Nursery II – Kindergarten(4-6yrs)	3
		Pre-primary (pre-unit) 5-6yrs.	-
3.	<b>Private, faith-based</b>	Baby class (3yrs)	1
		Nursery I (3-4yrs)	6
		Nursery II – Kindergarten (4-6yrs)	6
		Pre-primary (pre-unit) 5-6yrs.	1

For the purpose of comparison, nursery II, Kindergarten and pre-unit classes (4-6 yrs) have been regarded as pre-primary level.

These results show that, apart from nursery classes at public primary schools, there is neither harmonized naming of pre-school programmes nor common age group brackets of same programmes among private schools. Names range from baby class, nursery I, nursery II, kindergarten or pre-unit classes. Results indicate further that in Dar es Salaam pre- primary education is provided by public schools at 55% and by private settings at 45%. It has further been revealed that public schools do not provide pre-school education below pre-primary level. These lower levels are taken care of by private settings, whereby religious organizations play a leading role.

These results agree with available information elsewhere. Gitau *et al.*, (1993) report that early childhood education was established in England by churches; which up to date still play important role in this area. The role of churches is also reported in Zambia, it is noted that the ministry of education is responsible for pre-school education only at policy level; whereas main providers are churches, local councils, NGOs and other private providers (Ministry of education and Ministry of Science, Technology and Vocational Training-Zambia, 2001).

### Curriculum Issues

Table 3 summarizes class size, teacher/pupil ratio and teacher qualifications in different school types. Class size in public schools is significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than in both private school types. In some private faith-based settings, one class is manned by two teachers per session; hence two different teacher/pupil ratio (see Table 3). Results indicate further, that teachers in privately owned schools are better qualified than counterparts in public schools; and those with early childhood education are available only in private schools. Surprisingly enough, some public schools engage untrained teachers to teach nursery classes contrary to policy. This has not been observed in privately owned settings. The national pre-primary curriculum recommends a teacher/pupil ratio of 1:25; and one qualified teacher and an assistant during the class session. The teacher/pupil ratio of 1:41 found in public nursery classes is much higher than the recommended value. To the contrary, average teacher/pupil ratio of 1:26 revealed in private schools of both types, agrees well with the recommended value of 1:25. Smaller class size, standard teacher/pupil ratio and better qualifications in privately owned pre-school institutions compared to public ones, may be attributed to better remuneration and working conditions; but also the strive to maintain international standards for business reasons.

**Table 3: Average Class Size, Teacher Pupil-Ratio and Teacher Qualifications According to School Type**

S/N	School Type	Class size	Teacher per class	Teacher/pupil ratio	Teacher qualifications			
					Diploma	Certificate	Certificate in pre-school education	Untrained
1	Public	41 Range: 13-67 (47) SD =17.4	1	1:41	-	13	1	04
2	Private, n on faith-based	30 Range: 25-35 (10) SD=5.2	1	1:30	-	04	09	-
3	Private, faith-based	28 Range: 20-40 (20) SD=6.2	1/2	1:28/1:14	07	10	03	-

Table 4 demonstrates learning activities conducted in researched schools.

**Table 4: Numeracy and Literacy Skills (Class Activities) Taught at Different Schools**

No. of schools per school type Skills	Public	Private, non-faith-based	Private, faith-based
Arithmetic learning activities	11	3	6
English learning activities	11	3	6
Science learning activities	11	3	2
Vitendo vya Kiswahili	11	-	2
Arts and craft activities	3	1	4
Physical Education	-		1
Reading English	-	3	
Writing English	-	3	
Creative activities	2		2
Environment Education	-	1	
Personality, Development and Sports (PDS)	3		1
Singing and rhymes	-		2
Watching Television	-	-	1
Religion	-	1	4

These findings show that all public pre-primary classes teach educational activities prescribed in the national pre-primary curriculum except music and religion activities. On the other hand, music and rhymes are taught in private schools 100%, and religion 55.6%. Failure to teach music in public schools may be due to teachers' low level qualifications in the field of early childhood education. In private pre-school settings, all prescribed educational activities are covered in their curricula, including others over and above prescribed ones.

In public schools, teachers depend on teaching materials recommended in the national pre- primary curriculum, which are, however, not enough in most schools. Other teaching aids such as toys, paper drawings, charts and the like are not available in public schools. To the opposite, there is a variety of teaching/learning aids ranging from print materials to game toys and electronic media in most of privately owned settings.

Teaching methods applied in public pre-school classes is teacher centred with limited child-child interaction. In most of private schools, teaching/learning methods are more flexible, allowing more child-child interactions and motivation. Better teaching/learning environment in privately owned schools as compared to public counterparts can be explained by better financial situation, better institutional organization, larger school space and influence of foreign curricula and experiences.

### **Extra-curricula Opportunities**

The most common out-of-class activities in all school types are ball games, drama, handcraft and cultural performances. Other activities are variable among schools. It has been observed in this study that seesaw and swing plays are offered in 100% of private schools; while this opportunity is lacking in all public schools. This is a serious shortcoming since such plays are vital for physical and manipulative skills development, as well as socialization at this stage of child development (Hobart and

Frankel, 1985). It is an international practice to offer such games to young children in child care centres and similar settings.

### Child Care Services

Important child care services and level of their provision in researched schools are displayed in Table 5.

**Table 5: Child Care Services Provided at Different Schools**

S/No	Type of service	No. of schools receiving the service and their percentage in brackets		
		Public	Private, non-faith	Private, faith based
1	Meals (i) Breakfast	8 (72.7)	3 (100.0)	6 (100.0)
	(ii) Lunch	-	3 (100.0)	5 (83.3)
	(iii) Afternoon snack	-	3 (100.0)	3 (50.0)
2	Body cleanliness facilities (water availability)	7 (63.6)	3 (100.0)	6 (100.0)
3	First Aid facilities	9 (81.8)	3 (100.0)	6 (100.0)
4	Visit to clinic/dispensary/hospital	2 (18.1)	1 (33.3)	5 (50.0)

While breakfast is supplied at all private schools, (100%) it is only 72.7%. of children in public school who get it It is unjust for those schools not providing anything to children who stay at school for more than five hours continuously. Almost all private schools provide lunch and afternoon snacks (between 50 and 100%) while this does not happen in public schools. Health services are provided only sparsely in public schools and more comprehensively in private ones. For instance, only 18% of public schools take their children to clinic or dispensary for regular health check-up; such as bacterial, fungi or helminthes infestations, dental and visual abnormalities. On the other hand 33.3-50% of private schools do so. Experts (Katunzi and Mhaiki, 2003; and Hobart and Frankel, 1985) argue that non-educational aspects such as feeding and nutrition, sanitation, parental care, and others. are equally important as educational ones for early childhood development. The national pre-primary curriculum does not address childcare services.

### Parents and Community Participation and Awareness

Parents/ guardians and the community around schools participate through fees payment, financial and material contributions, as well as ideas and suggestions for improvement. This study has revealed that average school fees paid by day scholars for nursery classes in public schools is Tshs. 60,000.00 per academic year; while that in private schools it is Tshs. 300,000.00. Boarding scholars in private schools pay around Tshs. 1,000,000.00; while this category does not exist in public schools. Whereas in private schools children have to pay several contributions, public schools do not demand extra contributions apart from the fees. The study revealed further that parents in private schools are availed more opportunities to air their views and make suggestions for improvement of learning environment. It is therefore be deduced that poor teaching/ learning environment in public schools is contributed by low fees and financial or material support by the responsible local authority and/or parents and community. There is no similar reported study on this issue conducted in Tanzania; thus making a comparison of these results difficult.

For the purpose of checking parents/guardians awareness on what schools ought to provide for their young children, the question was asked on the reasons of their school choice. Responses showed that 68% of parents who send their children to nursery classes at public primary schools were influenced by the short distance from home to school; they do not have to pay for the transport. Twenty four percent of parents gave good child care services as the reason for their school preference; and 20% gave good school environment as a reason of their school choice. Very few parents/guardians gave good learning content as a reason of their school choice.

For parents/guardians who send their children to private schools, main reasons are good learning content (69.2%); good child care services (69.2%); and short distance from home (38.5%). All interviewed parents in this category agreed that the fees they pay match the services provided in respective schools. In a supplementary question on problems in each school category, parents of children in public schools claimed that lack of teaching/learning materials and aids and lack of trained teachers in pre-school education were the most serious problems there. It can therefore be interpreted that good child care services and school environment as reported above, cannot be real reasons for their choice of public schools as this is contrary to their previous opinion. It is highly suspected, that financial ability would be the reason for opting for public schools. The fact that parents with children in public schools are not very much concerned about learning contents of their children, may lead to inference, that this category of parents are not aware of what schools should provide for their children. To the contrary, parents who opt for private schools have the ability to pay, but also are conscious of the quality of education and care services their children require, as most of them are probably educated people.

### **Expert Opinion**

Selected experts in education were requested to respond to two main questions:

- (i) Should pre-school education be compulsory in Tanzania education system, and how should it be coordinated?
  
- (ii) Should curricula and fees and contributions be harmonized for all school categories?

Seventy five percent of respondents were of the opinion that pre-school education is vital for child development, but also allows time for parents to engage themselves more effectively in economic activities. They are of the opinion that pre-school education should be categorized in two stages: Nursery I(3-5 years) and Nursery II-Kindergarten (5-6years). Both categories should be under the auspices of the ministry responsible for education. Again, all respondents agreed that curricula for both pre-school categories should be harmonized in broad terms to meet the objectives of the National Education and Training Policy of 2005; but flexible enough to allow innovations and situational adaptation. They also concurred that fees in different schools should be harmonized and regularly reviewed to avoid unnecessary exploitation. It was however cautioned that this should be done with full participation of all stakeholders.



## **CONCLUSION**

Basing on the findings of this study it can be concluded that; whereas pre-primary classes at public schools are called nursery classes in the age group bracket of 4-6 years, pre-school programmes in privately owned settings have different names and age group brackets for same programme among schools. Whereas both public and private schools contribute almost equally to pre-primary education, pre-school education below pre-primary level is provided at 100% by private institutions; whereby religious organizations play a leading role. This implies that, privately owned educational institutions play a significant role in promoting early childhood development in Dar es Salaam. However, the situation may be different in rural areas.

The National Pre-Primary syllabus of 2005 is stereotype in nature, inclined to educational issues and directives without paying sufficient attention to the equally important child care component. Early childhood development is to be conceived in an integrated and holistic concept. This document needs therefore a serious review. Pathetic conditions in pre- primary classes attached to public schools, cannot support early childhood development as stipulated in the Education and Training policy; as a result there must be a remarkable discrepancy between intended, given and received curricula in these classes. Privately owned nursery schools or nursery groups in such schools, are better organized; and also have the desire to maintain internationally acceptable standards in order to attract business. In so doing, they regulate their activities according to demand for betterment.

It is recommended that early childhood education should be harmonized and coordinated by the ministry responsible for education at all levels, with increased participation of all stakeholders. The current national pre-primary curriculum should be reviewed to include necessary non-educational activities. In order to improve the situation in public schools, more involvement and participation of parents, NGOs, CBOs as well as commercial and business organizations and local government authorities has to be encouraged and intensified.

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