



Bottlenecks to Early Childhood Education Curriculum Implementation in Primary Teachers' Colleges: A Focus on Voices of Administrators

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Abstract: In Primary Teachers' Colleges, the ECE Curriculum consists of content specifications for preparing teacher trainees with skills for promoting practical learning among children in early years of studying. This paper reflects on exploration of Administrators' views, lexis, perceptions, and opinions about the bottlenecks of ECE curriculum implementation in Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs). Children are the future of every nation, world over and for that matter, whatever confronts a child threatens the future of a nation. Regrettably, ECE Curriculum Implementation has bottlenecks which necessitate critical analysis. Consequently, the belief that "effective ECE Curriculum implementation is a crucial turning point" dominates this presentation. Realizing that the practical component of ECE is not as it should be in early childhood development centers; and considering the corpus of evidence indicating that almost all issues in attribution rarely leaves out teachers, there was a need to extend the margin of investigation to Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs). This was basically owing to the fact that tutors, who prepare teachers in handling children during ECE curriculum implementation too, were not free from the suspected hindrances. Tackling the problem from college level has totally changed the trend of affairs because it has been discovered that teachers' failure is propagated by various factors surrounding tutors in PTCs. With all the inadequacies noticed almost in every pedagogical approach to ECE curriculum implementation, it is improbable that one may fail to establish some bottlenecks. In a nutshell, ECE curriculum implementation is affected by, among other factors, failure to put in place better mechanisms to boost participation of tutors and learners in the learning process. What must not be missed out is the fact that any messes that arise at college level is eventually replicated and reflected in primary schools among teacher graduates. No wonder, there are many teachers who are always transferring knowledge instead of letting pupils own the learning process by encouraging their active participation and involvement in lessons. There are also bottlenecks in failure to provide for individual differences and this is not advisable given the fact that many students join colleges from different backgrounds. Some of the teacher trainees are time takers whereas others are quick at grasping concepts. There are also bottlenecks in inadequacy of relevant and appropriate instructional materials to meet the needs of teachers who are expected to implement 'Hands-on-Learning' most especially, at a time when institutions of learning are striving to respond to the expectations of the 21st. century education.

Keywords: Bottlenecks, ECE Curriculum Implementation, Primary teachers' Colleges

1. Introduction

The United States of America (USA), Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and some developing countries notably; Nigeria, Tunisia, Tanzania,

Kenya and Uganda, have serious concerns about Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum and its implementation through a great deal of programmes for children 0 to 8 years of age (Absolunet, 2013). The sole aim of implementing ECE curriculum in the above countries is to boost child's physical, cognitive and social development. Several other countries across the

world also strive to put ECE programmes into practice through Provision, Protection and Participation, as a way of fostering their early learning for self-sufficiency as they grow up (Jones, Brown, & Brown, 2011). In this journal, the researcher's presentation follows a realisation that the benefits and bottlenecks surrounding ECE determine the effectiveness of its curriculum implementation in various countries.

Kaitlan & Ikanva (2016) note that whereas South Africa has a great compliment in ECE Curriculum Implementation, many other African countries experience implementation bottlenecks such as inadequate number of specialists in ECE to register effective implementation at a large scale; some stakeholders' negative attitude which limits support from individuals and institutions; unclear curriculum (Tunisia), which hinders acquisition of supposed benefits; inadequate funding (DRC) thus, ineffective monitoring and support supervision. In Uganda, the benefits of early childhood education are captured in UNICEF statement for Vision 2040 "*InvestInUG children: Realise Uganda's Vision 2040*"; and a quotation from Patrick Bitature, Chairman, Private Sector Foundation Uganda and Simba Group that "*The development of children in the first five years is fundamental for brain development; otherwise they'll never reach their full potential. If we are ever going to achieve our Vision 2040, we must invest adequately in our children and right at the start. Playing catch up later is pointless*" (Bitature, 2019).

Kyambogo University in conjunction with Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), is responsible for designing the ECE curriculum and guidelines for its implementation in PTCs. The current ECE curriculum implementation in PTCs is based on 2012 Kyambogo University guidelines intended to prepare teacher trainees with hands-on approaches (Kaitlan, 2016). The new guidelines stipulate that following course completion, teacher trainee specialists, in ECE in turn, prepare children to acquire functional skills as opposed to the knowledge transfer approach predominant in the old curriculum. However, the nature of teacher trainees who graduate from PTCs is defined by a number of them not being in position to demonstrate practical skills, thus, keeping children with more of theory than practical skills. This is a clear signal that there are unclear bottlenecks to ECE curriculum implementation in PTCs and clear explanations can be obtained from college administrators who run ECE programmes in PTCs.

2. Literature review

ECE Curriculum implementation faces bottlenecks from top to bottom levels, notable among which is little or no funds allocated to ECE programmes, impairing the recruitment of teachers who are specialists in ECE, and shelving plans to have ECD teachers on permanent government payroll for several years due to other pressing priorities (Githinji & Kanga, 2011). In such an environment, parents would take up the responsibility of meeting financial needs but Mukuna (2011) noticed that since the government introduced Universal Primary Education policy, most of them have a misconception that education of children is government's responsibility. Whereas Githinji & Kanga (2011)'s views are related to the study, he lacks direct hints which provide answers to the study. The author clearly indicates how lack of funding has interfered with ECE programmes but much of these concerns are outside PTCs. Similarly, Mukuna's mention of UPE visa-vis parents' attitude towards ECE programmes lacks an explanation in the context of PTCs considering that public PTCs are fully funded by the Ministry of Education and Sports. It is these gaps that the researcher sought responses to, by seeking voices of college administrators.

Another bottle-neck relates to qualification of ECE teachers prior to the 2012 Kyambogo University guidelines for ECE curriculum implementation whereby, Muchanje (2015) observed that tutors who are specialists in ECE and who are expected to be primary implementers of the ECE Curriculum, trained years before 2012 and many of them have-not yet updated their teaching approaches to suit hands-on learning. In such an environment, the researcher saw a need to seek views of administrators in colleges. First, Muchanje (2012)'s observation alone creates a fertile ground to find out how much of the practical work tutors can demonstrate during ECE curriculum implementation. Besides, there is no written evidence to show that surely tutors lack hands-on-approaches to ECE curriculum implementation, since Muchanje's observation generally lacks revelations of cases in point and statistical evidence.

It is widely known that early childhood educators with required professional preparation provide more developmentally appropriate nurturing, responsive care and relevant education experiences to young children (NAEYC, 2007). Unfortunately, the situation in PTCs in Eastern Uganda where this study was conducted is contrary. Similarly, in many African countries, for example, Nigeria, in the privately owned pre-primary schools, majority of the teachers with no training background were often found in ECE classrooms, at the same time, in the pre-primary sections of government owned public schools, old female teachers with no

qualification in ECE were often in charge of children in classrooms (Botta, 2009).

Resources: When resources are available for ECE programme at pre-primary school level, it helps the caregiver/teacher to nurture and support the development of young children and to successfully implement the curriculum. According to Chukwbikem (2013), the quantity and quality of resources available for any educational programme would determine schools systems capacity for the implementation of the type of educational programme. In spite of the fact that resources are critical to successful implementation of ECE programme, they were not available in many PTCs in Eastern Uganda by the time this study was conducted.

Supervision: To ensure effective implementation of any educational enterprise, supervision must be given adequate attention. In regard to ECE, Awino (2014) noted that it is important to supervise in order to gather information from learners, caregivers, parents, communities and the general ECE environment. Supervision of ECE can be used to correct errors, modify practices where necessary and motivate as well as encourage all stakeholder to participate in its implementation (Awino, 2014). Usually, the changes and strategies that result from supervision can strengthen the implementation of such a programme. Supervision in ECE can help to focus on the holistic development of children to enable efficient implementation of the curriculum, checks whether the objectives of the programme have been achieved, promotes maintenance of basic standards, identifies problems and constraints, enriches and enhances personal as well as professional growth among all caregivers involved (Awino, 2014).

As it was found elsewhere in Africa according to Osakue (2011) and Sooter (2013), ECE in Uganda has equally not been of benefit because it is left unsupervised. This has disadvantaged effective implementation of ECE programmes at pre-primary levels in such countries

In a related study, the researcher discovered that America's children were taught by professionals with at least a four-year college degree in ECE. Some of the facts in this study show that young children's learning and development clearly depend on the educational training and qualifications of their teachers. Unfortunately, in Eastern Uganda where this study was conducted, it was found out that apart from the pedagogical gaps among the implementers of ECE at PTC level, qualification of caregivers was also a crucial bottleneck.

Research has identified that structural factors such as group size, staff-child ratios and staff qualifications are key in influencing the quality of care that children receive in early childhood programmes (Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney&AbbottShim, 2001). In particular, the level of education of early childhood education teachers obtained through pre-service or in-service teacher education programmes is a significant predictor of the quality of care provided(Darling & Hammond, 2000). In a related study, Barnett (2003) proposed that better-educated early childhood education teachers have vast knowledge and skills and are more likely to create richer learning activities that are appropriate to the learning needs of the children and that those teachers are also better equipped to solve problems when they encounter bottle-necks in the classroom.

Although ECE covers children in the age range of 0-8 years, the reality in Uganda is that ECD centres (schools for young children) take up children from 0 to 5 years (MoES, 2008). Emphasis in ECD centres is on moral development, ethical values, creativity, imagination, self-reliance, critical thinking skills, appreciation of cultural backgrounds, life skills, language and communication skills in the mother tongue (NCDC, 2005). Much as most parents wish their children to be first taught reading, writing and arithmetic, these skills are not emphasised at this level of education (MoES, 2007; NCDC, 2005). This is because the thematic curriculum used in lower primary schools for children of 6–8 years has taken care of literacy and numeracy as its main focus using local language as medium of instruction (NCDC, 2001, 2005; Smart, 2006). The personnel who take care of children in ECD centres, is therefore, supposed to take cognizance of the level and scope to avoid exposing children to content of a level too high for them to consume before the right stage (NCDC, 2001, 2005).

In most of the developing countries, Uganda inclusive, ECD teacher training is still one of the areas that attract inadequate funding from government. The lack of funds makes it challenging to facilitate qualified staff, adequate support supervision to teacher training institutions or to attract consultants and experts needed to raise the profile of ECD teacher training (Schoenmann, 2011). Consequently, there is fewer than five staff in-charge of ECD teacher training at the ministry headquarters in Uganda. This makes the monitoring, follow-up, evaluation and support supervision yet a serious bottleneck. Most times, the Ministry relies on ECD Lecturers from Kyambogo University to help them develop programmes, monitor, and evaluate training and the arrangement is at times not reliable (Marope & Kaga, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This was a predominantly qualitative study conducted using a descriptive design comprising of mainly qualitative data collection methods, instruments and analysis strategies. The core intentions of using this kind of design was to ensure that authentic and in-depth findings could be obtained from participants who included Principals, Deputy Principals, Commissioner for ECE at the Ministry of Education and Sports Headquarters and the Head of Department for ECE at Kyambogo University.

3.2 Population/sample size

The study population comprised 12 Principals, 15 Deputy Principals, 15 tutors of ECE, 1 Head of Department for ECE at Kyambogo University, 1 Commissioner for ECE in the MoES as policy makers whose views were expected to have a significant bearing on the entire process of ECE curriculum implementation. Each of those participants was included directly in the study. Some head teachers from a few selected primary schools were also included to compare and contrast the training environment and what happens on ground.

3.3 Data collection instruments

The researcher used an interview guide comprising of mainly open-ended questions based on the specific objectives and research questions. The interview sessions/schedules provided an opportunity for the researcher to have a direct interface with individual participants. In instances where participants (interviewees) experienced difficulty in responding to an item or providing an unclear response, the researcher (interviewer) probed the participants for better responses. The main task in interviewing was to understand the meaning of what the participants could say. Interviews were also employed to seek and facilitate the researcher to obtain facts from the participants about the topic under study. For such reasons, interviews were particularly useful in facilitating the researcher to get the views, ideas, opinions, feelings, facts and perceptions within the participants' experiences.

A Direct Observation guide was also used to ascertain the level of appropriateness of; microteaching, role plays, group work, plenary discussions, project work, brainstorming, storytelling, think-pair-share, team-teaching and debate as were ideally expected to be used by the tutors of ECE in teaching the teacher trainees in the selected PTCs under study (Eastern Uganda). Physically observing lessons in progress for selected

teachers who specialised in ECE and were teaching in schools under the geographical area of study (Eastern Uganda) was also found necessary by the researcher. This was helpful in acquiring information on relevance of materials to meet changing demands through interactive learning as suggested in Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory, which was adopted to underpin this study. Additionally, teaching based on learners' response to learning, use of assessment and feedback to meet learning objectives, extent of implementation of interventions, conducting direct instruction, use of drill and practice approach, discussion, discovery learning and inquiry approach were also focused on by the researcher during the direct observation exercise.

For dependability of results, the researcher made a deliberate arrangement to develop member-check transcripts to get back to the interviewees. This arrangement facilitated the participants to genuinely consent that what the researcher had documented was a true deliberation of what had been provided during their initial interface. The results of the member-check validation exercise were also helpful in contributing to data credibility in terms of validity and reliability to increase the level of trustworthiness as a substratum for quality in the final results.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained an official permission letter from the office of the Dean of College of Education and External Studies; School of Education, Makerere University for introduction to all authorities where the study was carried out. In addition to the permission letter from the University, the researcher made a comprehensive and clear introduction about himself and the purpose of the study to the Principals, Deputy Principals, as well as other participants.

On ethical matters, the researcher obtained a letter of approval from the Executive Secretary for Uganda National Council, Science and Technology (UNCST) to prove the authenticity of the data collection tools used in this study. In the field, qualitative data was collected in colleges in Eastern Uganda in order to save time and transport expenses. For the qualitative instruments such as interview guides, direct observation guides, document analysis guides which required the physical presence of the researcher, appointments were made according to the convenience of individual participants. The researcher sought permission of individual participants on issues of recording and photographing before proceeding to do so at the will of a participant. On a daily basis, the collected Data was organised and stored in both hard and soft copies, ready for processing and analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis techniques

Data from informant interviews, observation guide and document analysis guide were summarised, grouped / sub-grouped, analysed thematically. At the same time, data was reported in verbatim form using quotations and statements of the participants where applicable. A few figures, percentages and tables were also employed to present data obtained using the interview schedules.

3.6 Ethical considerations

At the back of the mind of the researcher, it was very clear that ethical considerations were always important whenever the collection of data involved human beings. The main ethical issues considered in this study were physical and psychological harm, deception, informed consent and privacy. Participants were informed that the study was only for academic purposes which provided an opportunity for them to decide whether to participate or not in the exercise. For that matter, confidentiality was taken into account so as to protect participants' privacy.

In addition, respect and dignity were put into consideration when constructing interview items. All participants were given equal treatment to enable each of them to participate willingly without bias and unrealistic expectations. In addition, all researchers and scholars whose work was referred to in this study were quoted /acknowledged and cited accordingly. The researcher made sure that what was found out was reported exactly as it existed in the area of study and that was done to avoid fabrication of information through presentation of fraudulent results.

Right from the beginning of the data collection process, the researcher continuously sought the consent of the participants by establishing rapport with them and declaring the intentions of the research project. It was also important to seek permission of participants to make recordings, photography or video coverage. The researcher first detached himself from being a Deputy Principal but became purely a researcher and then, sought permission from the Principals upon entering

every PTC. At the same time, an informed consent was sought from various participants by assuring them that, their identities would be kept confidential and all information provided by them would be used purely for only academic purposes. Above all, the researcher sought an ethical clearance from Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC) and registered the study with Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST).

4. Results of the Study

Throughout this research presentation, it has been very clear that ECE curriculum implementation is a practical process which necessitates application of practical approaches by tutors who are well-grounded in practical methods of teaching. A total of twenty eight (28) interview sessions were conducted all together. Among the frequently reported bottlenecks, inadequate continuous professional development (CPD) courses in form of workshops, seminars, conferences; inadequate support supervision to tutors, inadequate resources such as relevant references, time and attitudinal issues as well as lack of training to match the curriculum were highlighted. Majority of the Principals and Deputy Principals identified lack of training to match the current Revised ECE syllabus of 2012 as the most frequently reported bottleneck in their colleges and the least reported bottleneck was inadequate support supervision to tutors.

4.1 Tutors' methods of Implementing Kyambogo University 2012 Guidelines

Considering a realisation that tutors who are specialists in ECE trained many years ago prior to the 2012 Kyambogo University Guidelines, it was necessary to seek views of Principals and Deputy Principals towards the same. Table 1 shows results from Principals and Deputy Principals.

Table1: Tutors' Knowledge of implementing 2012 Kyambogo University revised ECE Curriculum

Respondent Category	Knowledgeable		Not knowledgeable		Total	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Principals	3	11	9	33	12	44
Deputy Principals	4	15	11	41	15	56

Total	7	26	20	74	27	100
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Table 1 shows that out of 27 administrators in the selected public primary teachers' colleges, only 26% reported that tutors use hands-on approaches to implementation of ECE curriculum. By implication, there is need to encourage hands-on-approach if the ECE Curriculum is to be implemented as effectively as stipulated in the 2012 Kyambogo University guidelines. More investigations revealed that qualifications of many tutors were not upgraded to suit the requirements of the 2012 Kyambogo University guidelines. Quoting from one of the Deputy Principals during an interview session the following was shared;

...it is very unfortunate that majority of the tutors of ECE in our Primary Teachers' Colleges trained long time ago before the ECE syllabus was revised in 2012. Formerly, Early Childhood Education (ECE) used to be just a unit under Foundations of Education (FED) which is currently referred to as Professional Education Studies (PES) until 2012 when the Primary Teacher Education (PTE) curriculum was revised by Kyambogo University in conjunction with MoES. For that matter, all those tutors of ECE who trained before the revision of the current 2012 curriculum find

bottlenecks with the implementation of the revised content since there was also no proper training to the curriculum implementers after its revision, rendering the implementers incompetent...(*Informant interview session with a Deputy Principal from one of the PTCs in Eastern Uganda, September, 2019*).

The quotation highlights a serious gap attached to the need for tutors to subscribe to effective training in order to obtain more skills that enable them perform appropriate tasks in preparation of their teacher trainees to acquire practical skills through hands-on-learning arrangements.

4.2 Availability of Materials Required for ECE Curriculum Implementation

ECE reference materials that acted as a central part in implementation of ECE Curriculum in the PTCs under study included textbooks in libraries, ECE Modules, charts and copies of the 2012 MoES/Kyambogo University revised curriculum. From the results obtained, it was clear that gaps existed in adequacy of ECE Curriculum implementation materials in the PTCs under study. Table 2 indicates results from Principals and Deputy Principals.

Table 2: Availability of Materials for ECE Curriculum Implementation

Respondent Category	Materials Available		Materials Not Available		Total	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Principals	5	18	7	26	12	44
Deputy Principals	7	26	8	30	15	56
Total	12	44	15	56	27	100

The responses in Table 2 clearly show that though colleges have tried to make materials for ECE Curriculum implementation available to tutors and teacher trainees specialising in ECE, gaps stills exist. This is because, 56% of the administrators (Principals and Deputy Principals) reported that materials for ECE Curriculum implementation were not available in the PTCs under study. This was supported by views obtained using other tools. For purposes of cross-validation of

data, the researcher probed into responses from the Commissioner in charge of ECD in the MoES and Head of ECE at Kyambogo University towards availability and accessibility of ECE support, and copies of reading materials in PTCs in Eastern Uganda. The researcher established that two copies of ECE syllabus (*MoES, Revised version, 2012*) were available in every PTCs under study. In terms of accessibility, majority of the PTCs made the copies of ECE syllabus strictly accessible

to tutors of ECE. Since teacher trainees were the target group in this endeavour, denying them accessibility to the revised syllabus was one way to limiting their initiative towards acquisition of creativity, one of the components to hands-on-learning, thence, posing a serious bottleneck to ECE curriculum implementation.

Other ECE support reading materials available in the PTCs under study included modules containing content covered in the students' first year of study in the ratio of 4:1 though no module of ECE was available covering students' work in their second year of study by the time this research was conducted! The researcher found out that majority of the colleges in Eastern Uganda possessed reading materials in their libraries/bookstores which were not relevant to the Kyambogo University Revised 2012 ECE syllabus. By analysis, the researcher discovered that such a situation could make tutors of ECE to be compelled to refer to outdated reference reading materials which could not align with the revised 2012 syllabus of ECE curriculum.

Basing on the findings of the study, the researcher wondered why KYU produced a module for ECE which

could cover work for first year but the one for year two could not be found after a period of 8 years when this study was conducted! As a matter of improvisation, some colleges possessed ECE Modules of 1997 which contained shallow content in reference with the revised KYU 2012 ECE Curriculum. To make matters worse, whereas the old syllabus was objective-based, the revised one was competence-based in nature. By implication, the revision of the curriculum became a bottleneck in itself because tutors could hardly get appropriate materials to enrich the suggested guidelines in the ECE syllabus content most especially for year two.

4.3 The use of Demonstration Primary Schools to Practice Acquisition of Hands-on-Skills

Demonstration primary schools are established for teacher trainees' practicum in general and ECE specialists in particular to practice the practicability of skills they obtain in colleges during their training. It is also a platform for tutors and college administrators to assess their roles. Table 3 shows findings from Principals and Deputy Principals in connection to Demonstration schools.

Table 3: Use of Available demonstration Primary Schools under PTCs in Eastern Uganda

Respondent Category	Demo Schools fully utilized		Demo schools under-utilized		Total	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Principals	3	11	9	33	12	44
Deputy Principals	4	15	11	41	15	56
Total	7	26	20	74	27	100

Findings in Table 3 show that there was no maximum use of available demonstration primary schools. This is because 74% of the administrators (Principals & Deputy Principals) reported under-utilization of demonstration schools. By implication, the basic approaches to assess teacher trainees on whether they could demonstrate practical skills for ECE training or not were not largely provided for, by tutors. In an initiative to cross-validate data, informant interviews were held to analyse and ascertain the availability and use of the Demonstration

primary schools. Results of interviews also indicated that majority of the government aided PTCs in Eastern Uganda underutilized the available demonstration schools in the training of their teacher trainees. Further probes revealed that majority of the PTCs in Eastern Uganda used primary schools in their catchment areas mainly during their school practice exercises. The commonest observation was that unlike semi-final and final school practice exercises which were supervised for a period of only four weeks, Child Study was never supervised at all during the students' school attachment.

Generally, the practicum component which would align well with KYU's intentions of promoting hands-on-learning was instead given little time and attention.

4.4 Commonest Strategies to Enhancing ECE Curriculum Implementation

Another probe was made into stakeholders' views on how to enhance the implementation of ECE in PTCs in Eastern Uganda. The frequently suggested strategies included retraining of tutors of ECE by the help of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), increasing on the number of tutors of ECE in PTCs, increasing time for ECE on the time-table to aid more practical lessons, emphasising participatory methods of teaching and assessment, ensuring that every PTC possesses a demonstration school for teacher training purposes. Other suggestions included introducing an ECD centre as an attachment to the ECE Department in every PTC, establishing a well-equipped Resource-centre in every PTC and involving specialised teacher trainees in the interpretation of the curriculum. The least frequently suggested strategy was encouraging more male teacher trainees to specialise in ECE at Grade III primary teachers' Certificate level because their number was the least across the PTCs under study. In further investigation of the bottlenecks tutors of ECE faced in the implementation of the ECE Curriculum, the suggestions of one of the Deputy Principals were quoted as below;

...since ECE implementation demands hands-on-learning, it requires a lot of time for the tutor(s) to make sufficient preparation by first of all collecting instructional resources from the local environment, identifying particular/relevant instructional materials for specific lessons, ensuring that they are adequate for all learners, making proper use of them to develop the intended concepts, storing the instructional materials safely for future use and so on. However, bearing in mind that tutors for other subject areas also need to teach the same teacher trainees, the time allocated to ECE as a practical learning area does not facilitate adequate practice on practical work (*informant interview session with a College Deputy Principal, in one of the PTCs in Eastern Uganda, September, 2019*).

By interpretation, the comment of the participant sounded as if the periods allotted to ECE as a subject could not enable tutors to employ the practical approaches to teaching (*Hands-on-Learning*) to the expectations. Administrators on the bottleneck of

inadequate time, majority observed that subjects like ECE which demanded the use of activity-based methods of teaching, required more time on the time-table in order to rescue the tutors from the temptation of using theoretical methods such as lecture during the instructional process.

The Head of ECE Department at Kyambogo University's views regarding bottlenecks faced in the implementation of ECE curriculum revealed tutors' inadequate experience and accessibility to participating in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses in form of workshops, seminars, conferences; and above all, there was inadequate college-based initiated CPDs at Departmental and subject area level. To the researcher, college-based/subject-based CPDs is less expensive in terms of time and finance. For cross-validation purposes of the data, the researcher engaged the Commissioner for ECE in an informant interview and among the key aspects he stated was in relation to lack of initiatives for CPDs in public PTCs. The commissioner's concern was as in the quotation below;

...I wonder why colleges do not conduct their own locally organised workshops, seminars and conferences in order to keep their human resource updated! The biggest bottleneck is failure to retool tutors of ECE on the current generic methods of teaching because majority of them have consistently gone ahead to apply the traditional approaches which cannot match with the ongoing trends in education. Is it possible to apply the tools of yesterday in today's business and you expect to remain in business tomorrow? The world is running very fast to the extent that people who resist change will always find themselves out of focus and target... (*Informant Interview session with Commissioner for ECE in the MoES, September, 2019*).

The foregoing quotation was in response to an impression that colleges were facing bottlenecks of theoretical curriculum implementation against the intentions of Kyambogo University and MoES whose purpose was to revise the curriculum so as to make the teaching and learning of ECE practical. By impression, the researcher expects higher chances of the team which revised the curriculum to cause a change, missing out the recommended procedure and steps which are always advocated by Lewin as in (www.med.upenn.edu, 2016) regarding the Organization Development theory which was employed to underpin this study.

After obtaining views from the Commissioner for ECD, the researcher prompted the Head of Dept. ECE at

Kyambogo University to share an opinion on the same. His views were as in the following quotation;

...the advantage colleges have is that there are some few tutors of ECE who have proven to be dynamic, self-motivated, creative and practical in their day-to-day work. We, therefore, only need to identify wherever such good tutors are, organise a mentorship programme to facilitate peer mentorship initiatives so that tutors who are still backward in terms of the demands of ECE as a practical learning area, would quickly get motivated to acquire the pedagogical support from their peers to update them... (*Informant Interview session with the Head of ECE Dep't at Kyambogo University, September, 2019*).

The statement of the HoD appears to be very easy, less expensive and applicable but leaves many disturbing questions on who should kick start such initiatives in the colleges, and who may be responsible to monitor and ensure that mentorship programmes get into the right direction. Nonetheless, if well handled, it may eventually get back to Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory advocacy on peer support to promote collaborative learning, thereby, making the theory which was employed to underpin this study relevant.

In the subsequent interview sessions, the HoD for ECE at Kyambogo University reported the bottleneck of narrow coverage in ECE practicum in PTCs. The observation made revealed that practicum was only emphasised by tutors of ECE during examination time, creating an impression that much emphasis was on obtaining marks as a course requirement at the expense of enriching teacher trainees' pedagogical competences in their day-to-day business. In addition, practicum was always started late and teacher trainees could panic a lot at the last hour as tutors pressurized them to prepare for National External Examiners. Further, the bottleneck of sending guidelines for practicum on Principal's platform through phones does not clearly indicate whether what is sent is what is done by the teacher trainees across the country in the practical examinations. By implication, the ongoing ECE practical examinations in PTCs where this study was carried out have gaps which require attention.

5. Discussion of Results

The study established that tutors faced bottlenecks in encouraging learners' active involvement in classroom activities. Additionally, tutors in PTCs in Eastern Uganda faced bottlenecks in taking care of individual differences among teacher trainees during the teaching and learning

process and developing appropriate materials for activities performed during the teaching and learning process in PTCs in eastern Uganda. When resources are available for ECE programme at pre-primary school level, it helps the caregiver/teacher to nurture and support the development of young children, and to successfully implement curriculum. According to Chukwbikem (2013), the quantity and quality of resources available for any educational programme determine school systems' capacity for the implementation of the type of educational programme. In spite of the fact that resources are critical to successful implementation of ECE programme, they were not found in majority PTCs in Eastern Uganda where this study was conducted.

Results further indicated that there was a bottleneck in developing appropriate materials for activities during teaching and learning process. This implied that tutors were not sensitive and thus could not apply the most appropriate tools required in the process of teaching and learning of ECE programmes in PTCs in Eastern Uganda. Research has identified that structural factors, such as group size, staff-child ratios and staff qualifications are important in influencing the quality of care that children receive in early childhood education programmes (Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney & AbbottShim, 2001). In particular, the level of education of early childhood teachers obtained through pre-service or in-service teacher education programmes is a significant predictor of the quality of care provided. Barnett (2003) proposed that better-educated early childhood education teachers had more knowledge and skills and were more likely to create richer learning activities that are appropriate to the learning needs of the children and that those teachers were also better equipped to solve problems when they encounter bottlenecks in the classroom. By impression, the researcher expresses the need for the curriculum technocrats to empower teachers in their work so as to enhance their professional performance.

Evidence from qualitative results indicated that majority of the tutors who participated in the study reported that the bottleneck of inadequate time and other resources could not enable them to exhibit learner-centered planning to encourage active participation of teacher trainees during the teaching and learning of ECE content. In addition, during subsequent interview sessions with the Principals and Deputy Principals, other bottlenecks such as some tutors' inability to use the Local Language (LL) of the area was also highlighted by majority of the college administrators. In fact, more than half of those who were interviewed expressed a similar bottleneck. In related studies, Githinji & Kanga (2011) established that

ECE Policy implementation process faces bottlenecks from top to bottom levels, specifically, by observing that negative attitude towards ECD by some senior ministry officials leads to little or no prioritisation of finances and budgeting plans for the same. According to the researcher, government officials have a feeling that ECE programmes can even be implemented without funding, thereby, encouraging private sector to exploit it and sometimes mess it up!

The basic management related bottlenecks faced by tutors during ECE implementation included difficulty in developing mathematics related concepts during ECE curriculum implementation and developing abstract concepts such as how to teach the 'zero' concept. In addition, during the subsequent interview sessions with the Principals and Deputy Principals, other bottlenecks such as inability of ECD programme to attract adequate funding from government was also reported. To the researcher, inadequate funding makes it challenging to facilitate staff members who participate in supervising teacher training institutions or to attract consultants and experts needed to raise the profile of ECD teacher training.

Other bottlenecks were spotted in areas of continuous assessment mechanisms and proper management of relevant records of assessment. Through further engagements with the College Administrators, it was reported that bottlenecks associated with assessment were as a result of inadequate support supervision and monitoring. Such bottlenecks were in line with Awino (2014)'s findings who noted that it is important to supervise in order to gather information from children, caregivers, parents, communities and general ECE environment. Supervision of ECE can be used in identifying training needs, instructional gaps, correct errors, modify practices where necessary and motivate as well as encourage all those involved in its implementation.

Further results also revealed that most of the bottlenecks manifested were related to the inadequate play related facilities in PTCs in Eastern Uganda. Many researchers report about the relationship between ECE and play facilities and emphasised that play is a child's avenue to learning. Unfortunately, there were inadequate play related facilities in the PTCs under study. The researcher wondered how the teacher trainees would be able to promote the aspect of play without practicing it during their training!

First, through verbal information it was established that play objects could include play cards, bottle tops, seeds, tins, boxes and reading corners but such were not

adequately available. The inadequacy meant a lot in the implementation of the ECE Curriculum. Bottle tops, for instance are normally used to count so that the more a teacher encourages their use, advocacy for mastery in counting is practiced. On the other hand, seeds are always important in schools because pupils are taught how to use them for the development of their finer muscles but also learn to plant crops for good harvest. The reading corners promote day-to-day development of a reading culture as well as group work. Lack of adequate play objects is disadvantageous because it makes children miss out benefits spelt out by Kohn (2015) who established that learning using play-objects makes a child's mind committed and promotes a high level of concentration with implications of incidental learning and high level of memory.

A related research was conducted by Pyle, Poliszczuk, & Erica (2017) and reported that kindergarten teachers faced the challenge of balancing traditional developmental programming and contemporary academic standards. Pyle et al., (2017) noted that in classrooms which involve following a play-based learning framework, academic content such as literacy is taught within children's play. However, educators have reported conceptual and practical bottlenecks with integrating play and literacy. In the event that primary school teachers have been identified not to be practicing play-based learning at large, it is important to find out whether similar bottlenecks are related to integration of play into learning framework or not.

Furthermore, the study found out that there was no adequate attention put on Free Activity programme in most of the PTCs under study. Free Activity is a very important component of the ECE Curriculum in that it helps to cater for learners' multisensory skills. Most Free Activity initiatives are organised under indoor and outdoor arrangements which, according to Hagar & Tehrene (2017), help children to spend time alone and have a time of meditation. Therefore, without those activities, it is possible to suffocate learners' talents. In a nutshell, it was discovered that across the PTCs in Eastern Uganda and the selected primary schools used in this study, there was very little attention paid on Free Activity to stimulate play as a component of ECE. According to Walker (2015), in early childhood development, play is regarded as children's avenue to learning; therefore, it is incumbent upon those who train as ECE teachers or caregivers to be well equipped with all that it takes to provide for children's play.

5.1 Conclusion

With all the inadequacies found out in almost every approach to ECE curriculum implementation, it is improbable that one may fail to establish some bottle-necks. In fact, ECE curriculum implementation is affected by among other issues, failure to put up better mechanisms which enhance active participation of teacher trainees in learning how to learn. What must not be missed out is the fact that any messes that arise at college level are eventually replicated and reflected in primary schools and ECD centres. There are also bottle-necks in suitability of instructional materials to meet the needs of teachers who are expected to implement the ECE curriculum, most especially materials made of low/no cost resources from the local environment as advocated by the revised 2012 Kyambogo University Curriculum. It was also found out that very little attention was put on play in the preparation of teacher trainees which consequently affects their competences in providing for children's play. Furthermore, learning centres were not emphasised and yet they provide for incidental and insight learning. Finally, failure to empower teacher trainees with effective communication skills in local language, inadequate use of learner-centred methods of teaching and inadequacy in provision of support supervision to the teacher trainers were all found out as serious bottlenecks that College Administrators expressed as hindrances to effective ECE curriculum implementation in PTCs in Eastern Uganda.

5.2 Recommendations

Basing on the fact that the study findings indicated serious gaps in ECE curriculum implementation, well equipped demonstration schools and functional ECD centers should be a compulsory requirement for the day-to-day running of a teacher training college. The requirements of a demonstration school should be a prerequisite to the existence of a PTC regardless of its

foundation body, ownership (Government or Private), status (Core or Non-Core), location or size. Like it was in the 1960s, demonstration primary schools would serve PTCs as Laboratories for both tutors and teacher trainees in terms of the component of practicum which is stipulated in the KYU revised ECE Curriculum, 2012.

In an initiative to address bottle-necks of teacher trainees' inadequacy in practical skills as reflected in the findings of this study and establishment of ECD centres in PTCs should be very helpful in enhancing the practical experiences of teacher trainee specialists in ECE in terms of their practicum. The ECD centers, if well equipped, should provide a very strong pedagogical opportunity and exposure to both tutors and their trainees in learning how to deal with different age brackets of infants, responding to their learning needs, relating the ECE curriculum content to real experience of learners as well as demonstrating the competence of caring, providing for, protecting and supporting children to participate in their learning.

Finally, in an initiative to address the gap between community (local stakeholders) and institutions of learning, Administrators /Managers/Proprietors of PTCs, Primary schools and ECD centers should initiate programmes which provide for community participation and involvement. This arrangement may be helpful to provide for the innovation of Community-based learning in the classroom which is currently on the lips and serious advocacy of Professor Alice Merab Kagoda of Makerere University as also emphasized by Wendy (2017) in response to the 21st century education, SDGs particularly SDG No. 16. At the same time, promotion of local language, active teaching and learning, generic methods of teaching, support supervision, peer mentoring and conducive learning environment are key to effective ECE curriculum implementation.

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