

Parents and teachers roles in preschool children's education in Kenya. How can it be defined?

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Abstract – *This paper analyses the roles of parents and teachers in preschool education in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The paper argues that in spite of the Kenyan government effort to strengthen parent-teacher partnerships, partnerships in early childhood education in Kenya is still low. This article argues that most parents and even teachers and other stakeholders in preschool are ignorant of the roles they need to play in the partnerships. The study uses data collected for a doctoral dissertation study findings in Uasin Gishu County. The purpose of this study was to explore parents' teacher roles in children's education. This study used an Ex Post Facto design. The target populations were parents and teachers of preschool, pre-school and primary school Headteachers and MOE officials. The sample size consisted of 135 parents, 60 teachers, 10 Head teachers and 10 MOE Officials. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. Means, percentages formed part of the descriptive statistics. ANOVA and t-test of independent samples were used and null hypotheses were tested at alpha value 0.05. Findings revealed that parents, teachers, head teachers and MOE officials differed significantly in some modes of parent-teacher partnerships. All this is partly because of ignorance of the roles that parents and teachers define for themselves among others. The main argument is that the Kenyan government and stakeholders must unite in promoting parent-teacher partnerships for the betterment of children's education and holistic development. It was recommended that there is need to highlight the roles stakeholders should play in early childhood education for harmonious working relationships in schools.*

Keywords – *Uasin Gishu County, Role definition, Parent-teacher partnerships, Pre-school Stakeholders.*

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper shares my research on parent-teacher

partnerships in Uasin Gishu county in 2009. This article provides analysis of the roles of preschool parents and teachers from the perspective of parents, teachers and MOE officials. I have used study methodologies used in my study (2010). I used descriptive research study where a total of 135 parents were sampled from Kapseret Division and Kapsoiya Division. A total of 60 teachers were sampled, out of whom 26 teachers were from Kapseret Division and 34 from Kapsoiya Division. A total of 10 Headteachers were sampled from Kapseret Division and Kapsoiya Division. Five Ministry of Education Officials were also sampled at the district level and four at the national office. This was 55.6% and 44.4% respectively of the officers at the district and national level. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of Parental Involvement explains that parents may decide to participate in the partnerships when they understand that collaboration is part of their role as parents, when they believe they can positively affect their child's education and when they perceive that the child and the school want them to be involved. Katz (1984) asserts that stakeholders may hold conflicting perceptions about their roles and the roles of other stakeholders. Powell (1995), Hughes and MacNaughton (2002) suggest that the success of parent-teacher partnerships strategies will be inadequate until parents' and teachers' understand their roles. Wambiri (2006) and Ngugi (2000) suggest that parents were not aware of their roles in stimulating young children and believed they are teachers who are solely responsible for children's academic development. This lack of awareness may contribute to low involvement and ineffective partnership. Reviewed literatures have shown that parents' and teachers' and other ECD stakeholders may have conflicting views about parents and teachers roles. What is not known is how stakeholders define parents' and teachers' roles. The question that I ask is, how do parents, teachers, Headteachers and MOE officials define parents' and teachers' roles in children's education? Wambiri

(2006) and Ngugi (2000) suggest that parents were not aware of their roles in stimulating young children and believe it is the teacher who is solely responsible for children's academic development. This lack of awareness may contribute to low involvement and ineffective partnership. Thus, research was important to be conducted in this area also.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study tried to answer, how do parents, teachers, head teachers and MOE officials define parents and teachers roles in preschool children's education?

III. METHODS

This study explored parent-teacher partnerships in pre-school and how various stakeholders define teachers and parents roles in the partnerships. A total of 135 parents were sampled from Kapseret Division and Kapsoiya Division. A total of 66 parents were sampled in Kapseret Division and 67 in Kapsoiya Division, which formed 49.6% and 50.4% of the sample, respectively. Based on sex, a total of 67 male parents and 66 female parents were sampled for the study, out of whom 50.4% and 49.6% were males and females, respectively. The percentages for private and public schools were 48.9% and 51.1%, respectively. From the 133 parents sampled, 66 were from the rural area and 67 from the urban context, constituting 49.6% and 50.4%, respectively. A total of 60 teachers were sampled, out of whom 26 teachers were from Kapseret Division and 34 from Kapsoiya Division. Teachers from Kapseret Division were 43.3% and those from Kapsoiya Division were 56.7%. The male and female teachers sampled were 38.3% and 61.7%, respectively, twenty-five teachers were sampled from private schools and 35 from public schools, constituting 41.7% and 58.3%, respectively. The percentage of teachers from the urban context was 40% and that of teachers from the rural context was 60%. Descriptive statistics used included the following: frequencies, means, standard deviations and percentages.

IV. RESULTS

How parents view their role in relation to school also affects parent-teacher relationships. Parents Role construction may be described as parent focused, school focused, and/or partnership focused. In the parent-focused construct, parents consider that they have primary responsibility for their children's educational outcome. In the school-focused construct, parents feel the school is primarily responsible for the children's

educational outcome, and in the partnership- focused construct, parents believe that teacher and parent working together are responsible. It seems apparent that how parents interact will vary based upon the construct the parent holds. Teacher's role construction has developed primarily outside the formal education arena and is less clearly documented in the literature but is evident in the field. Teachers may view their role as parent focused, school focused, and/or partnership focused. The parent-focused view evolved out of the parent cooperative movement. In that movement, teachers and parents worked side by side, empowering parents.

Based on the study questions, the study looked at how stakeholders defined parents and teachers roles. That is what parents' and teachers' should do and should not do in the partnerships. Parents' and teachers' role definition is a very important factor in the partnerships that had not been discussed in the last section under factors. The defined roles for parents and teachers within parent-teacher partnerships are described in the following sections. Parents' and teachers' were asked to define parents' roles in parent-teacher partnership. Table 1 shows the overall means for the parents' role definitions.

Table 1. Overall Means for Parents' Role Definition (N=193)

Modes of Involvement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parenting	4.17	.59
Volunteering	2.77	.86
Learning at Home	4.36	.62
Decision-making	3.79	.85
Community Collaboration	3.58	.71
Communication	4.29	.63
Overall parents' mean	3.83	

According to table 1, the overall means for parents' role definition in Epstein's six modes of involvement was 3.83. This means that parents and teachers were unsure in their reporting about what parents should be doing in parent-teacher partnership. Specifically, they were unsure in volunteering, decision-making, and community collaboration modes.

Table 2 shows that overall means score as reported by the parents was 3.73 and those by teachers was 4.05. Parents overall means shows that parents are 'unsure' about their roles whereas teachers seems to agree in parents roles in the partnership.

Table 2. Overall Means for Parents’ Role Definition as Reported by Parents and Teachers

Modes of Involvement	Parents (N=133)		Teachers (N=60)	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parenting	4.12	.60	4.28	.56
Volunteering	2.58	.75	3.18	.94
Learning at Home	4.27	.66	4.56	.46
Decision-making	3.69	.88	4.03	.70
Community collaboration	3.50	.65	3.76	.81
Communication	4.19	.66	4.50	.51
Overall parents’ mean	3.73		4.05	

These results show that parents agreed on their roles in parenting, learning at home and communication. In the other modes, they were unsure or they disagreed. There scores ranges from disagree to agree. Teachers were also in agreement with the stated parental roles particularly in parenting, learning at home, decision-making and communication. Teachers were more in agreement with the stated parental roles suggesting that they understood parental roles than the parents. Based on the research questions, the study wanted to establish whether there was a significant difference between parents' roles as defined by parents and teachers. The following hypothesis was tested:

Table 3. Independent Samples t-Test For Equality of Means on Parents’ Role Definition

Modes of involvement	t	t-Test for Equality of Means	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Parenting	.640	0.523	.067
Volunteering	-3.019	0.003*	-.395
Learning at home	1.412	0.160	.161
Decision-making	2.071	0.040*	.313
Community collaboration	.454	0.651	.051
Communication	.598	0.551	.068

* Significance at $p < 0.05$; $df = 131$

Table 3 presents the findings on the t-Test computation of the significance level between means. It shows the mean differences in defined roles for parents. The findings show that there was a significance difference in Parents’ Role Definitions (PRD) held by parents and teachers in volunteering and decision-making modes.

Table 4. Mode of Involvement

Modes of Involvement	Mean		
	HT (N=11)	DEO (N=5)	NEO (N=4)
Parenting	4.06	4.10	4.75
Volunteering	2.65	3.60	3.68
Learning at Home	4.02	3.90	4.50
Decision-making	3.40	4.50	4.31
Community collaboration	3.09	4.15	4.31
Communication	4.49	4.30	4.43
Overall means for Parents’ role definition	3.60	4.09	4.33

The null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant difference between Parents’ Role Definitions (PRD) held by parents and teachers at .05 level of significance was therefore rejected in volunteering and decision-making. There was no significant mean difference in parents’ and teachers views on parents’ role definition in other modes of involvement. It was concluded that parents and teachers differed significantly in the roles they defined for parents in volunteering and decision-making. In the volunteering mode, parents disagreed on parents’ roles while the teachers were unsure. On the other hand, parents were not sure about their roles in decision-making whereas the teachers agreed on them.

The overall means for Head teachers, district officials and national officials were 3.60, 4.09 and 4.33, respectively. The findings showed that Ministry of Education Officials at the district and national level always had the highest means suggesting that they agreed and identified numerous potential roles for parents. That is, they strongly agreed about many activities parents should do in parent-teacher partnerships. In contrast, Head teachers had the lowest mean scores particularly in volunteering. This suggests that they did not believe it was the role of parents to be involved in this aspect. The three groups also had the lowest scores in volunteering. This suggests that they were not sure about parents’ roles in this mode. In other modes, they were not sure while in some they believed that parents should be involved.

Table 5 shows ANOVA test findings of Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials at the district and national parents’ role definition in Epstein’s six modes of parent-teacher partnerships. The table shows that there was a significant mean difference in the volunteering mode of parental involvement. There was no significant means difference in the other modes of involvement.

Table 5: ANOVA Computation on Parents' Role Definition

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squeeze	F	Sig.
Parenting	Between Groups	1.448	2	.724	1.191	.328
	Within Groups	10.336	17	.608		
	Total	11.784	19			
Volunteering	Between Groups	4.769	2	2.38	8.057	.003*
	Within Groups	5.031	17	.296		
	Total	9.800	19			
Learning at home	Between Groups	.903	2	.451	.454	.642
	Within Groups	16.882	17	.993		
	Total	17.784	19			
Decision-making	Between Groups	5.103	2	2.55	2.876	.084
	Within Groups	15.081	17	.887		
	Total	20.184	19			
Community Collaboration	Between Groups	6.394	2	3.19	2.993	.077
	Within Groups	18.156	17	1.06		
	Total	24.550	19			
Communication	Between Groups	.127	2	.064	.235	.793
	Within Groups	4.603	17	.271		
	Total	4.731	19			

* Significance at $p < 0.05$

The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in Parents' Role Definitions held by Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials at .05 level of significance was therefore rejected in volunteering. The null hypothesis was accepted in other modes of involvement. It was concluded that the Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials' definition of parents' roles was significantly different in volunteering, but not in other modes.

A post hoc analysis was computed to establish the group that was significantly different in parents' role definition. The findings of the current study show that there were significant differences between Ministry of Education officials at the national level and the Head teachers. Ministry of Education officials at the national level and the Head teachers differed where it was $P=0.03 < 0.05$ and Head teachers $P=0.03 < 0.005$. Ministry of Education officials at the national level had more positive role definitions in volunteering mode.

In order to find out how parents, teachers, Head teachers and Ministry Officials defined teachers' roles, each group was asked to define teachers' roles in parent-teacher partnerships. Table 6 presents findings on teachers' role definition.

Table 6 show that the overall mean score was 3.93. The overall mean scores show that parents' and teachers'

were not sure about teachers roles.

Table 6: Overall Role Definitions for Teachers (N=193)

Modes of Involvement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parenting	4.12	.71
Volunteering	2.73	.80
Learning at Home	4.32	.56
Decision-making	4.11	.62
Community collaboration	4.01	.62
Communication	4.32	.51
Overall teachers' mean	3.93	

The findings also reveal that there was an agreement in all modes except volunteering. This means that parents and teachers disagreed with teachers' roles in this mode.

Table 7 presents findings on teachers' role definition in Epstein's six modes of involvement reported by parents' and teachers'. Table 7 show that the overall means score as reported by parents was 3.84 whereas that of the teachers was 4.15. This means that parents were 'unsure' about teachers' roles while teachers 'agreed' on their roles. The results suggest that parents were in agreement on teachers' roles in learning at home, decision-making and communication.

Table 7. Overall Means for Teachers' Role Definition as Reported by Parents and Teachers

Modes of Involvement	Parents (N=133)		teachers (N=60)	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parenting	3.99	.76	4.39	.46
Volunteering	2.56	.70	3.10	.88
Learning at Home	4.26	.58	4.47	.48
Decision-making	4.06	.58	4.23	.70
Community collaboration	3.91	.63	4.22	.55
Communication	4.25	.52	4.48	.43
Overall teachers' mean	3.84		4.15	

Parents disagreed with teachers' roles in volunteering. In parenting and community collaboration, parents were 'Not sure' about teachers' roles.

The findings show that teachers were in agreement on their roles in parenting, decision-making, learning at home, community collaboration and communication modes but they were unsure of their roles in volunteering where the mean score was 3.10. The findings reveal that parents and teachers recognize many of teachers' roles in all modes except in volunteering mode. Overall means shows that teachers had more positive role definitions than parents.

Based on the study research questions, the study wanted to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference between teachers' role definition as defined by parents and teachers. The following hypothesis was therefore tested:

Table 8: Independent Samples t-Test for Equality of Means Teachers' Role Definition

Modes of involvement	t-Test for Equality of Means				
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Parenting	-2.082	131	.039*	-.271	.130
Volunteering	2.593	131	.011*	.275	.106
Learning at home	.838	131	.403	.085	.101
Decision-making	1.469	131	.144	.146	.100
Community collaboration	-.223	131	.824	-.027	.122
Communication	-.828	131	.409	-.075	.090

* Significance at $p < 0.05$

The Table 8 shows the mean differences of defined roles for teachers. The findings showed that there was a significant mean difference in parenting and volunteering. The mean difference for parenting was -.27188 with a .039 level of significance. The mean difference for volunteering was -.27570 with a .011 level of significance. The findings also show that there was no significant mean differences in all modes of involvement.

The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between Teachers' Role Definitions (TRD) held by parents and teachers at 0.05 level of significance was therefore accepted in learning at home, decision-making and community collaboration and communication modes. It was rejected in parenting and volunteering. This means that there were significant differences in parents' and teachers views on teachers' role definition in parenting and volunteering. The findings show that there was no significant mean difference in parents' and teachers' views on teachers' roles in other modes. Thus, it was concluded that

parents and teachers differed significantly in what teachers should do in the partnerships in parenting and volunteering but not in other modes.

Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials at the national and district levels were also asked to define teachers' roles. Table 9 shows the mean score of Headteachers and Ministry of Education Officials on teachers' role definition.

Table 9: Means Scores of Headteachers and Ministry of Education Officials' Teachers' Role Definition

Modes of involvement	Mean		
	HT (N=10)	DEO (N=5)	NEO (N=4)
Parenting	3.93	4.15	4.31
Volunteering	2.68	3.93	3.93
Learning at Home	4.18	3.90	4.31
Decision-making	3.47	4.40	4.37
Community collaboration	3.68	4.30	4.18
Communication	4.09	4.25	4.50
Overall means for Teachers' role definition	3.58	4.15	4.26

The findings show that Ministry of Education Officials at the district and national level always had the highest means suggesting that they agreed, and identify numerous potential roles for teachers. They strongly agreed about many activities teachers should do in the partnerships. The findings also showed that Head teachers very frequently had the lowest mean scores. This would be interpreted to mean that they did not believe it was the role of teachers to be involved in some of the activities in the parent-teacher partnerships. It would also be seen that Headteachers were not sure in

other activities while they believed that teachers should be involved in others. Head teachers had a narrower role definition for teachers in this area. The findings also suggest that Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials' views on teachers' role definition were similar in the other modes of involvement.

Based on the study research questions, the study wanted to establish whether there was a significant difference between teachers' role definition as defined by Headteachers and Ministry of Education Officials, the following hypothesis was tested:

Table 10. ANOVA Computation on Teachers' Role Definition

Modes of involvement		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Parenting	Between Groups	.476	2	.238	.201	.820
	Within Groups	20.133	17	1.184		
	Total	20.609	19			
Volunteering	Between Groups	5.042	2	2.521	4.178	.033*
	Within Groups	10.258	17	.603		
	Total	15.300	19			
Learning at home	Between Groups	3.926	2	1.963	2.546	.108
	Within Groups	13.108	17	.771		
	Total	17.034	19			
Decision-making	Between Groups	4.115	2	2.058	2.247	.136
	Within Groups	15.569	17	.916		
	Total	19.684	19			
Community collaboration	Between Groups	1.626	2	.813	.851	.444
	Within Groups	16.233	17	.955		
	Total	17.859	19			
Communication	Between Groups	.500	2	.250	.288	.754
	Within Groups	14.784	17	.870		
	Total	15.284	19			

*Significance at $p < 0.05$

Table 10 shows ANOVA test findings of Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials at the district and national level views on teachers' role definition in Epstein's six modes of parent-teacher partnerships. The table shows that there was a significant difference between Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials at the District and National level for teachers' roles in volunteering. There was no significant mean difference in other modes of involvement.

The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in Teachers' Role definitions held by Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials at .05 level of significance was therefore rejected in

Volunteering. The null hypothesis was accepted in other modes of involvement. It was concluded that the Headteachers and Ministry of Education Officials differed significantly in volunteering mode and not in other modes.

A post hoc analysis was computed to establish the group which was significantly different in parents' role definition. The findings of the current study showed that there were significant differences between Ministry of Education officials at the national level and the Head teachers. Ministry of Education officials at the national level and the Headteachers differed where it was $P=0.33 < 0.05$ and Head teachers $P=0.33 < 0.005$. This shows that Ministry of Education officials at the

national level had more positive role definitions in terms of volunteering.

V. DISCUSSIONS

In relation to the question which sought to establish the how parents, teachers, Head teachers and MOE officials define parents and teachers roles in children's education, the study established that how parents, teachers, Head teachers and MOE affects aspects of parent-teacher partnerships.

This study has established that parents and teacher's differed significantly in the roles they define for parents in volunteering and decision-making and not in other modes of involvement. The reason that could be bringing the difference in volunteering are: Parents do not volunteer in preschool activities, parents' and teachers' believe that they should not be involved, parents are busy, lack of understanding in preschool issues or cultural attitude about preschool education or parents' and teachers' may think that it is not parents' role to volunteer. In decision-making, the reasons for the difference would be because of the following: parents may be feeling that decision-making is the work of teachers; teachers may be feeling that parents should not be involved in decision-making as they are likely to interfere in school management; parents are busy and do not have time for PTA meetings; and teachers do not have time for meeting because school schedules are tight.

These findings are not consistent with Nicolau and Ramos (1993) study that established that parents and teachers believe that parents and teachers have a role to play in parent-teacher partnerships although they have limited roles. Parents see the roles of schools as those of instilling knowledge. Moreover, they explained that parents believed that one group should not interfere with the job of the other. These findings are also close to Wambiri (2007) who found that caregivers were largely unaware of their roles in children emergent reading development. She also found that caregivers had a negative role definition. She established that caregivers did not view themselves as having a role to play in children's emergent reading development. This appeared to be due to lack of knowledge about their role definition. The findings show that parents were unsure of some aspects of their roles and disagreed that they should be involved in other aspects. Ngugi (2000) also found that parents have a common belief that they have no role to play in stimulating their children's olfactory perception. Meighan (1989) found that parents who believed they had a role to play in their children's

education were more actively involved in parent-teacher partnerships than those who did not accept this role definition. According to Smith (2000), people act very frequently with their beliefs and feelings.

The findings of the current study show that there were significant differences between Ministry of Education officials at the district and national level and the Head teachers in volunteering mode of involvement. This may be because Head teachers were unsure about parents' roles in this mode. This may also suggest that Head teachers use few strategies in their school to strengthen parent-teacher partnerships.

These findings are consistent with Williams (1997) who established parents want to be more involved in parent-teacher partnerships and in a broader variety of ways, but educators sometimes were reluctant to have parents involved in modes of involvement like volunteering and decision-making because they do not understand their roles in them. These findings are consistent with Mwoma (2009) who found out that fathers who get involved in their children's education believe that they had a role to play in their children's education.

This study found that there were significant differences in parents' and teachers views on teachers' role definitions in parenting and volunteering. This means that parents and teachers differed significantly in what teachers should do in the parent-teacher partnerships in parenting and volunteering. This may suggest lack of knowledge in teachers' roles in this mode or differences in levels of education and knowledge in preschool education matters.

These findings are consistent with Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski and Parker (1999) who found that teachers often had limited knowledge of what parents' and teachers' roles at home should be to help their children. It can be observed from these findings that parents and teachers were unsure of the roles teachers should play in the parent-teacher partnerships. Powell (1998) suggests that the success of parent involvement strategies will be inadequate until parents and teachers understand their roles. Swick (1991) assert that parents and teachers can create viable partnerships by engaging in joint learning activities, supporting each other in their respective roles, carrying out classroom and school improvement activities, conducting collaborative curriculum projects in the classroom, participating together in various decision-making activities, and being advocates for children.

This study established that Head teachers and Ministry of Education Officials differed significantly in

volunteering mode of involvement and similar in the other modes of involvement. This may also suggest lack of knowledge in teachers' roles in this mode of involvement.

These findings are similar to those found by Katz (1994) that established that stakeholders of education may hold conflicting perceptions about their roles and the roles of other stakeholders. These findings are also consistent with Siu and Lo (1987) who established that students, parents, teachers and education officials had different perceptions of teachers' roles in education. The study thus suggests that role recognition is crucial in parent-teacher partnerships. Lack of awareness may contribute to low involvement and ineffective partnership.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicated that stakeholders (parents, teachers, Head teachers and Ministry of Education officials) significantly differed in the roles parents and teachers should play in parent-teacher partnership. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education define the roles stakeholders should play in preschools. Results showed that partnership in pre-schools was low. It is recommended that NACECE and KIE use the findings of this study as a basis for developing community mobilization.

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