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**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PARENTS AND PARENTS' KNOWLEDGE ON IMPORTANCE OF PLAY MATERIALS ON DELIVERY OF QUALITY SERVICES BY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OFFICERS IN KWALE COUNTY, KENYA**

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**Abstract**

Provision of early childhood services begin with the parents i.e. mother and father and at pre-school level teachers and other stakeholders in education get involved. This study sought to find out whether capacity building of parents influence delivery of quality ECDE services, and determine whether parents' knowledge on importance of play materials influences delivery of quality ECDE services. Descriptive Survey Design was adopted targeting parents from ECDE centres and ECDE officers in Kwale County. The study population comprised of nine hundred and fifteen (915) parents from all ECDE centres and twelve (12) ECDE officers in the county. Purposive sampling was used to select the county while stratified random sampling technique was used to select the parents from the sampled ECDE centres. A sample size 120 parents was therefore selected from the sampled ECDE centres while all twelve (12) ECDE officers were selected. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data from the ECDE officers and parents respectively. A pilot study was conducted in Kwale County for the parents and in Mombasa County for the ECDE officers. The test-retest method was used to test the validity and reliability of the instruments. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data. The analysis was aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The quantitative data was presented in percentages, tables and graphs while qualitative data was categorized in themes then reported in prose form alongside the quantitative data. The study found out there was no capacity building for the parents. This had a negative impact on delivery of quality services. It was also established that the parents knew the importance of play materials and how beneficial they were to their children. They knew that provision of play materials had effect on child development and that is why they availed them. The study therefore concluded that capacity building did not take place and therefore did not benefit the parents to enable them give quality services. Majority of the parents did not attend any meetings or workshops organized by ECDE officers. The failure of parents' attendance to workshops shows that there was no effective capacity building for the parents as indicated by the ECDE officers. The study concludes that parents in Kwale know the importance of play materials in influencing delivery of quality ECDE services. The study revealed that majority of the parents knew the importance and benefits of play materials and therefore made sure they were available for their children's use. The study recommends that, to ensure that quality ECDE services are delivered efficiently and effectively at all times, both the County government and the National government should provide adequate funds for ECDE services. The funds would also help to organize for meetings and workshops to empower parents and other stakeholders on matters of ECDE in the area. The government should consider increasing its commitment to early childhood education by encouraging parental involvement in pre-school education through home visits or community based training. In addition, the parents and other stakeholders in ECDE in the community should provide necessary support to the ECDE officers so that they can deliver quality services.

**Key Words:** *Capacity Building, Parents, Parents Knowledge, Importance of Play Materials, Early childhood education, Delivery of quality services*

## **1. Introduction**

Early childhood Education and care is very important in child development. This is especially so because it is during the early years of learning that holistic development of a child takes place. Could, Briedly and Mohammed (2012) noted that the period from birth to 5 years is an optimum time of rapid growth both physically and intellectually and the right kind of provision through a high quality learning environment can help to bring about highly beneficial outcomes for all children. Research has shown that the early stages of development are critical as it is during this time that the future personality of a child is determined. Child development experts indicate that the early years of a child between birth to 5 years of age are seen as critical as it is throughout these years, children develop vocabulary, mental, social, emotional and regulatory skills that predict their future functioning in many areas (Travick-Smith, 2014; Woolfolk & Perry, 2012).

It has been established that children who receive psychological stimulation in their early stages have high self-esteem and do better in school (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vahs, 2003; Mruk, 2006). Research for instance by Oke (2016) has also shown that the quality of services children receive in an institution depends entirely on the training of the instructor /caregiver and the efficiency of supervision. In this regard the services given by parents, ECDE teachers, ECDE officers and other stakeholders are critical and should not be taken for granted.

Quality Early Childhood Development and Education services refer to basic services offered to facilitate holistic development of a child. They include the provision of basic health facilities, proper care, quality food and a clean, safe and stimulating environment for optimal growth and development. Thus, it is important for Early Childhood Education officers to be equipped with skills and knowledge on early stimulation so that they can be able to effectively train teachers who educate parents on psychosocial skills that will help them give psychosocial stimulation to their children. To offer this service effectively the officers need a suitable environment, adequate resources and support from other ECDE service providers.

Early childhood education in Kenya has existed for decades. This education is offered in institutions which are referred by a wide range of terms which include day care centres, nursery schools, kindergartens, pre-schools and so on. Provision of ECDE services is the government's commitment to promoting the rights and wellbeing of children and their families as stipulated in the Children's Act (2010) and the Constitution of Kenya, Cap 4, Article 43 (f), 53b, (2010). It is also a commitment in the implementation of some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international conventions on children which Kenya is a signatory. These conventions are the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA, 1999) and the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) (Hyde and Kabiru, 2003).

Pre-school education was initially the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the national government (MOE, 1996). The ECDE program is currently under County Governments as this function was devolved as per the new constitution (Constitution of Kenya Cap 11 Article 174 (f), 2010). The Basic Education Act 2013 Article 189 (2) provides for cooperation between the National Government and County Government. The department of ECDE

works closely with the County Director, MOE at the County level (Basic Education Act, 2013; Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The ECDE policy encourages partnership and collaboration (GOK, 2017). In Kwale County, the County Executive Committee (CEC) member in charge of ECDE has under him a number of officers. They include a chief officer, a director of ECDE and a number of Sub-county ECDE officers. There is also a Quality Assurance and Standard Officer to monitor ECDE standards.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics shows that pre-primary education has continued to receive a lot of attention in government policies and programmes. The government initiatives have led to remarkable improvements in access to pre-primary education services across the country. This is manifested in increased enrolment in pre-primary education from 3,019,865 million in 2014 to 3,390,545 million in 2018. Participation rates in pre-primary education also improved tremendously with Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) increasing from 73.6% in 2014 to 78.4% in 2018, while the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in the sector increased from 71.8% in 2014 to 77.2% in 2018 (GOK, 2019).

In spite of the tremendous achievement in access and equity in pre-school education provision of quality services in the section remains a challenge. This includes shortage of instruction and play materials which could impact on delivery of ECDE quality services. Meggit and Bruce (2014) and Could, Briedly and Mohammed (2012) emphasized that provision of play materials bring about beneficial outcome for overall development of children. Boke (2014) and Nafungo (2016) also established that inadequate provision of play equipment, learning aids and physical facilities impacted negatively on quality. Capacity building for ECDE service providers is also important for acquisition of relevant knowledge. It can also enhance skills and competencies of individuals (Rohdewald & Poppe, 2005).

This study sought to determine whether capacity building for parents and parents' knowledge on the importance of play materials influence delivery of quality ECDE services in Kwale County. A review of the various studies carried out, for instance, Nafungo (2016; Boke (2014; Makoti (2005), among others show that most of them have focused on implementation of early childhood development education Programmes, with no emphasis on how capacity building and involvement of parents in ECDE Programmes, and parents' knowledge on the importance of play materials influence delivery of quality ECDE service. Thus, this study sought to fill that gap.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

- i. To find out whether capacity building of parents influences delivery of quality ECDE services.
- ii. To determine whether parents' knowledge on importance of play materials influence delivery of quality ECDE services.

## **3. Review of Related Literature**

### **3.1 Parents' Capacity Building on Delivery of Quality ECDE Services**

Capacity building is a process that increases the ability of persons, organizations or systems to meet its stated purposes and objectives (Brown, Lafond & Macintyre, 2001). Capacity building can be seen as a process to induce, or set in motion, multi-level changes in individuals, groups, organizations and systems seeking to strengthen the

self-adaptive capabilities of people and organizations so that they can respond to a changing environment on an on-going basis (Morrison, 2001). Seen as such, capacity building is about creating a “learning” organization. Capacity building, like capacity, is task-specific, and while there may be common tools and instruments to be applied, capacity building programmes have to be tailored to the specific situation. It consists of phases (like assessment, formulation of strategies, implementation of actions, monitoring and evaluation, re-planning) which are closely linked, but do not necessarily occur in a linear sequence (Milen, 2001). Capacity building has to include different levels, like the individual level, the institutional/organizational level, and the systems level (UNDP, 1998).

Rohdewald and Poppe (2005) state that training is an important component of capacity building because training can enhance skills and competencies of individuals. Therefore, capacity building initiatives will have to address capacity building needs at all levels, otherwise the efforts will not be sustainable and will not achieve the intended results. In the ECDE sector, training should be open to all stakeholders involved in the welfare of children to adequately empower them so that they are able to render quality services.

Okumu Bigambo (2005) explains that capacity building is a popular concept in human resource development which puts men, women and children at the centre of development. As a process it is an intergenerational phenomenon that draws on human communication ethics. Effective capacity building should aim at enabling the actors to use their capabilities and resources to the fullest without destroying the richness of their culture and natural environment. This therefore requires proper communication so that the stakeholders can change their capabilities, choices and opportunities to achieve a common goal. Capacity building in Kenya as in many developing nations has usually turned out to be expensive and painstaking due to lack of appropriate communication ethics (Okumu-Bigambo, 2005).

Further, Okumu-Bigambo notes that capacity building is a function of community development. It involves focusing on a community as a unit of action with organised local self determination and effort to stimulate initiative and leadership for efficiency in service delivery. The community should be informed of their roles in the day to day running of the ECDE centres. If the community i.e. parents and other stakeholders are well informed on the importance in facilitating the success of ECDE in their centres, they will contribute positively. They should have the knowledge on the importance of ECDE in overall development of children. They should also know what input is needed from them.

Kangara (2010) conducted a study to investigate factors influencing parents participation in ECDE in pre-schools in Githunguri District. The study established that the factors that enhanced parents participation in ECDE programmes emanated from the parents level of education, socio-economic and marital status. The study also observed that parents in public pre-schools did not take the education of their children seriously. With this observation it can be concluded that meetings and workshops to empower the parents on importance of ECDE are critical. The study recommended that there was need for the government to provide free ECDE, parents be involved in assessment of ECDE programmes so that they can own them and the government take over remuneration of ECDE teachers. The present research investigated capacity building in influencing delivery of quality ECDE services.

A World Bank Report (2009) stated that, for quality service delivery, technical and managerial skills should be available in plenty and human capital effectively harnessed would enable ECDE handlers to increase efficiency and maximize returns (good education). Through the application of knowledge the ECDE sector would be able to cope with potentially crimping threats. Human capital with secondary and tertiary level skills is important for quality performance. The human resource therefore must be equipped with relevant skills in ECDE. In ECDE the community will have their knowledge on the role and importance of this education. It will also be aware on what it is supposed to do to contribute in effective running of ECDE centres. In this case workshops, seminars and meetings are essential in capacity building.

Chikutuma (2013) conducted a study to establish the quality of early childhood development programmes in Harare, Zimbabwe. The qualitative design methodology was used in this study. Self-constructed observation checklists and in-depth interview guides were used. The participants in the study were 10 school heads, 10 ECD teachers and 10 ECD parents, one from each of the ten schools under study from Harare low and high density suburbs. Findings of the study revealed that the components of a quality ECD programme which included; nutrition, health and safety, parental involvement and stakeholder involvement were compromised. It was recommended that training of all stakeholders on ECD management and organization would bring about a better understanding of ECD programmes, mounting staff development workshops on practical skills training on ECD children, and inviting parents as resource persons when teaching certain concepts would improve the quality of ECD programmes.

### **3.2 Parents Knowledge on Importance of Play Materials and Delivery of Quality ECDE Services**

Children spend a lot of time with their parents in their early years of development. In this respect it is important that the parents are well versed with the needs of their children so that they are able to cater for them effectively. Meggit and Bruce (2014) states that children's development and learning can be greatly enhanced with the support of parents and availability of play opportunities at home. Some of these opportunities which include play in a safe environment, use of a variety of objects and materials and the presence of a caring adult to provide appropriate guidance and new experiences. This is supported by Could, Brevly and Mohammed (2012) who noted that the period from birth to 5 years is an optimum time for growth, both physically and intellectually, and the right kind of provision through a high quality learning environment can help to bring about highly beneficial outcomes for all children. Could *et al.* (2012) further suggests that children's environment should give them an opportunity to engage with objects and materials in a highly tactile and multisensory manner. By giving them the freedom to explore using not only their sight, but touch, smell, hearing and taste as well links and patterns of understanding in their brains are created.

Development and learning are complex and holistic, and yet skills across all developmental domains can be encouraged through play, including motor, cognitive, social and emotional skills (Gleave & Issy, 2017). Play sets the foundation for the development of critical social and emotional knowledge and skills. Through play, children learn to forge connections with others, and to share, negotiate and resolve conflicts, as well as learn self-advocacy skills. Play also teaches children leadership as well as group skills. Furthermore, play is a natural tool that children

can use to build their resilience and coping skills, as they learn to navigate relationships and deal with social challenges as well as conquer their fears, for example through re-enacting fantasy heroes (Milteer & Ginsburg, 2011). Anderson-McNamee (2010) acknowledges that, parental involvement in a child's world of play is beneficial for the child. Play is essential for a child's development and for learning life skills since it fosters cognitive and socio-emotional development.

A report by UNESCO (2015) on intergenerational approaches to literacy teaching and learning ECDE shows that parents can create a home environment suitable for learning by, among other things; designating an area to do homework, providing access to reading material, and assisting with the organization of homework and studies. Parental involvement at home seems to have a more significant impact on children than parental involvement in school activities. Helping with homework is a common strategy schools employ to engage parents. Supporting children's early cognitive, linguistic and pre-literacy development can be challenging for parents and caregivers who themselves experience difficulties with reading and writing. Schools must therefore be cognizant of parents' need for guidance and assistance in order to be effectively involved in this regard.

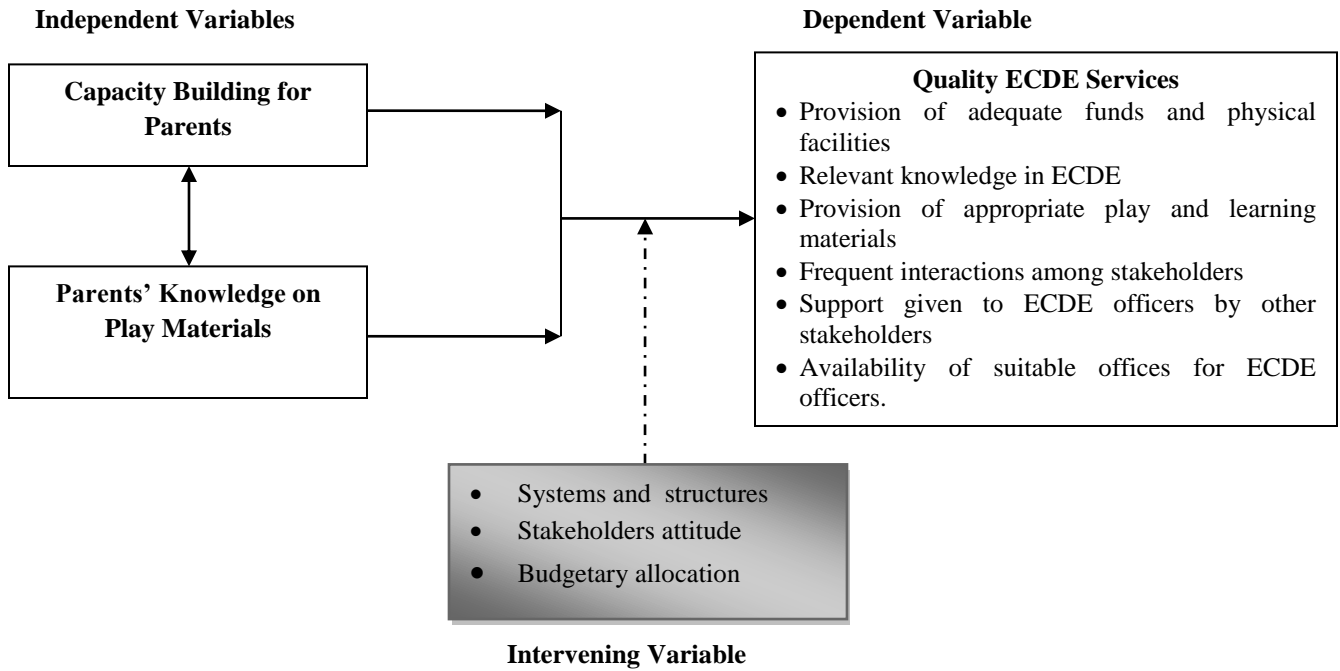
A study by Nwokah (2013) established that parents lacked an understanding of the value of play on children or even how to use play materials. Many parents did not seem to appreciate the role of play in child development, nor did they seem to know how to play with their children, especially when it came to shared-object play and pretend play. Many parents living in poverty and those without much education did not understand the benefits of age-appropriate play for child development. Moreover, parents of children with severe delay and disabilities such as visual impairment or physical limitations rarely knew how to adapt toys and play materials for their children. The study recommended that parents should be educated about play, and how to use play materials on early development of children.

Kamau (2012) examined parental roles in provision of play and learning materials among children in Kiambu County. The study established that parental involvement in provision of play and learning materials was minimal. The major factors which influenced support offered by parents were inadequate finance and lack of knowledge on play and learning materials to suit the needs of the child. Another study by Ochanda (2015) investigated the effect of play equipment on pre-school children's participation in outdoor play activities in Suba East Division, Migori County. One of the findings was that children were engaged in outdoor play with inadequate play equipment. The study recommended that parents need to be sensitized on how they can avail play equipment through donations and improvisation. This study is in agreement with Meggit *et al.* (2014) who noted that children who are physically active usually have parents who transport them physically to areas of physical activity. The parents also participate in the children's physical activities.

Wathu (2016) conducted a study on the influence of play on social and emotional development of pre-school children in Kyangwithya zone, Kitui County. The study established that there was a strong positive correlation between availability of play materials and social skills development of children in pre-schools and that the availability of play materials influence social and emotional development significantly. The study concluded that

teachers and parents are required to provide playing materials to their children so as to help them get engaged in meaningful play which influences their social skills development. However, parents cannot provide play materials to their children if they do not have adequate knowledge about the play materials. Hence the need to investigate the parents’ knowledge on importance of play materials.

**3.3 Conceptual Framework**



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

**4. Research Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive survey design to investigate the factors influencing delivery of quality ECDE services in Kwale County. Descriptive studies portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations (Chandran, 2004). Descriptive research design was therefore appropriate and suitable for this study as the researcher wanted to establish through questionnaires and interview guides the factors that influence delivery of quality ECDE services.

This study was conducted in Kwale County. The population comprised of 915 parents in all the ECDE centers in Kwale County and twelve (12) ECDE officers in the County, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Target population for parents**

Sub-county	No. of Parents from ECDE centres	No. of ECDE officers
Matuga	213	6
Msambweni	400	3
Kinango	302	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>12</b>

The study selected a sample size of 120 parents from targeted ECD centres. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) proposed that when the target population is big, then 10-30% is enough as a sample size. The sampling technique for parents involved dividing the population into different stratum by some characteristics, in our case ECDE centre by sub-county. Stratified random technique was used because the parents were selected from ECDE centres in three sub-counties. Creswell (2005) states that stratified sampling involves dividing (stratifying) the population on some specific characteristics and then randomly select a sample from each sub-group of the population. Stratification ensures that the stratum is represented in the sample in proportion to that in the population. The various ECD centers in each sub-county acted as strata. A sample size of 120 parents was picked through stratified proportionate sampling technique, whereby, Matuga had twenty eight (28), Msambweni fifty two (52), and Kinango forty (40). A parent from each of the sampled ECD centres was then picked using simple random sampling (lottery method). On the other hand, a census method was used whereby all the 12 ECDE officers in the County were selected since the population was small. When the population is small and variable, any sample drawn may not be representative of the population from which it is drawn (Kothari, 2004); hence no sampling was carried out on the ECDE officers.

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through use of questionnaires and interview guides. Questionnaires were used to collect information from all the ECDE officers. The questionnaire had both open and close ended questions and was self-administered. An interview guide was used to collect information from the parents through face to face interviews. The parents were organized for the purpose of this study with the help of head teachers in each selected centre. The ECDE officers aided in the exercise by asking the head teachers to invite parents for the meetings scheduled by the researcher in their respective centres.

This study generated qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which included percentages/ frequency distribution tables and presented in tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The analysis was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21. The qualitative data which was generated from the open ended questions was analysed through content analysis whereby data was categorized in themes in accordance with research objectives and reported in narrative form alongside quantitative presentation.

## **5. Results and Discussion**

### **5.1 Capacity Building and Delivery of Quality ECDE Services**

The study sought to find out whether capacity building of parents influences delivery of quality ECDE services in Kwale County. To address this objective, the ECDE officers were asked to state whether they had attended any workshops on leadership and management. The study enquired on how often the officers held workshops with the parents, the parents were also asked whether they had attended any workshops, what was discussed in the workshops and whether the workshops helped them give better services to their children.

#### **5.1.1 Workshops Attended by the Parents**

The parents were asked whether they had attended workshops organized by ECDE officers. This was done to confirm whether the parents attended the workshops. The findings are presented in table 2.



**Table 2: Workshops Attended by the Parents**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Attended	7	6.4
Did not Attend	102	93.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study results show that majority of the parents (93.6%) did not attend workshops organized by ECDE officers. Only (6.4%) of the parents indicated that they attended the workshops organized by officers. The reasons given for not attending were that they never knew there were any workshops. Non attendance to these meetings denied the parents access to useful information that would help them in assisting their children. Training is an important component of capacity building because it enhances skills and competencies of individuals (Rohdwald & Poppe, 2005). When the parents are well informed of their roles in meetings and workshops, they will contribute positively.

**5.1.2 Frequency of Workshops with Parents as indicated by ECDE officers**

The ECDE Officers were asked to indicate how frequent they held workshops with the parents. The number of workshops organized would capture the number of workshops conducted for the parents. The results would then be compared with the responses from the parents to establish the number of meetings attended. This also would indicate whether capacity building took place. The findings are presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Frequency of Workshops with Parents as indicated by ECDE officers**

<b>Frequency of Workshops</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Every Month	0	0
After Every 3 months	1	11.1
Once a year	7	77.8
Twice a year	1	11.1
Never	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

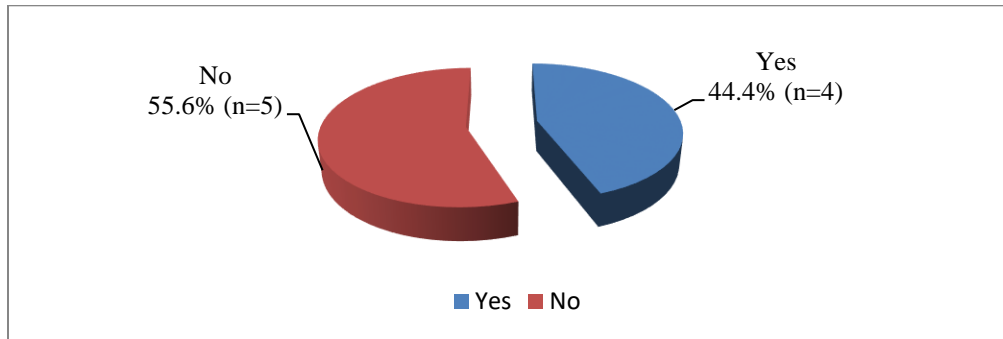
The study findings in table 3 show that majority of the ECDE Officers (77.8%) indicated that they organized and held workshops with the parents once a year. A further 11.1% of the ECDE Officers indicated they held workshops with the parents after every 3 months and twice a year respectively.

The responses from the ECDE Officers show that they organized and held meetings and workshops either monthly, quarterly or yearly. However, these responses greatly contradict with those of the parents, as only 6.4% of the parents (as indicated in table 2) attended the workshops organized by officers. Majority of the parents claimed they were not informed about the workshops. This shows that there were challenges of capacity building on the part of the ECDE officers as they did not organize for workshops and meetings regularly; and there was also poor attendance of the meetings and workshops. These findings are in agreement with those of Owino (2010) who established that the best strategy of improving ECDE is through collaborative partnerships among stakeholders. He recommended that education officials should collaborate with other stakeholders to provide holistic ECDE services. According to Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) adequate funds should be made available for provision of

resources and activities which include enrichment and sensitization of programmes through regular workshops, monitoring, and training manuals among others.

### 5.1.3 Attendance of Workshop in Leadership and Management

The ECDE Officers were further asked to indicate whether they had attended any courses or workshops in leadership and management. This information was sought to find out whether the ECDE officers had any knowledge on managerial skills. The findings are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Attendance of Workshop in Leadership and Management**

Results in figure 2 show that majority (55.6%) of the ECDE Officers indicated that they had not attended any course or workshop on leadership and management. Only 44.4% of the ECDE Officers had attended a course or workshop on leadership and management training. This therefore shows that majority of the ECDE Officers were lacking training on leadership and management. Even for those who had attended the training workshops, the duration of the workshops was not specified. Knowledge on management and leadership skills is critical for administration in any institution and ECDE is no exception. As stated by a World Bank Report (2009) technical and managerial skills should be availed for quality service delivery.

## 5.2 Parents' Knowledge on Importance of Play Materials and Delivery of Quality ECDE Services

The study also sought to determine whether parent's knowledge on importance of play materials influence delivery of quality ECDE services. The parents were asked to state whether they knew the importance of ECDE and whether they knew how play materials help their children. This was done to establish the parents' knowledge in use of play materials.

### 5.2.1 Parents Knowledge on Importance of ECDE

All the respondents (parents) 90.8% indicated that it was important to know about ECDE since the knowledge helped them to know whether they were doing the right thing. The knowledge also assisted them in knowing how to help their children. This is likely to impact on the quality of services given by the parents. According to K.I.E (2005) parental awareness programmes are focused to help parents build confidence, self esteem and to empower them feel capable of providing care of their children.

### 5.2.2 Parents' Knowledge on Importance of Play Materials

The parents were asked to indicate whether they were aware of how the play materials helped their children. The parents indicated that they were aware that the play materials made the children active and helped them grow physically. The respondents also indicated that children learn a lot of things when they play with play materials. When the parents were asked how play materials helped their children one of them said this; *"We give our children dolls to play with, blocks of wood to ride on steep hills and swings to play with. As they play they feel happy and as they ride and run they become strong. When they play with dolls they learn to love babies and how to handle them"*.

This findings show that the parents are aware that play materials are beneficial to their children's development. Involving parents in their children's learning process promotes good relations between parents, teachers and other stake holders as stated by Milteer and Ginsburg (2011). Davies (2010) also noted that a parent is the most important teacher to a child because he or she provides early learning experiences that promote life skills, abilities and attitude that form a foundation of their future success in school. This point to the fact that in the absence of the parents' involvement on their children learning process, the quality of education may be compromised. These assertions agree with what Meggit and Bruce (2014) who stated that children's development and learning can be greatly enhanced with the support of parents and availability of play opportunities at home. Could et al also noted that the right kind of provision through a high quality learning environment that will give children an opportunity to engage with objects and materials in a highly tactile and multisensory manner can help to bring about highly beneficial outcomes for all children. This is also supported by Gleave and Issy (2017) who stated that by choosing to play with the things they like, children actually develop skills in all areas of development; intellectual, social, emotional and physical. The responses from the parents revealed that parents from Kwale County know the importance of ECDE and play materials and how they enhance delivery of services.

### 5.3 Quality ECDE Services

In this section, the study sought to assess the quality of ECDE services offered in Kwale County. This was done by enquiring from parents on how often they interacted with ECDE officers and their contribution as parents to improve delivery of quality ECDE services. They were also asked to rate the services given by ECDE officers.

#### 5.3.1 Contribution of Parents to Improve the Delivery of Quality Services

The parents were also asked to indicate their contribution to improve the delivery of quality services. All the respondents indicated that parents contribute financially in construction of ECDE classrooms, paying teachers and making porridge for the children. The parents also physically contribute in building classrooms, by supplying water, and assisting physically in the construction of classrooms. The parents also contributed in buying learning materials. These findings of parents' contribution towards physical facilities, teachers' pay and buying of learning materials confirm involvement of parents in provision of ECDE services in Kwale County. This is supported by Owino (2010) and Onyango (2015) who established that the best strategy of improving ECDE services was through collaborative partnership among stakeholders. A study by Wathu (2016) further established that there was a strong positive correlation between availability of play materials and social skills development and that the availability of play

materials influence social and emotional development significantly. In this case the parents involvement in ensuring resources required were provided in the ECDE centres was intended to improve on delivery of services.

### 5.3.2 Rating of ECDE Officers' Services by Parents

The parents were asked to rate the services given by the ECDE officers in their sub-counties using a five point scale of measure. This would help to establish the performance level of the ECDE officers. The findings are presented in Figure 3.

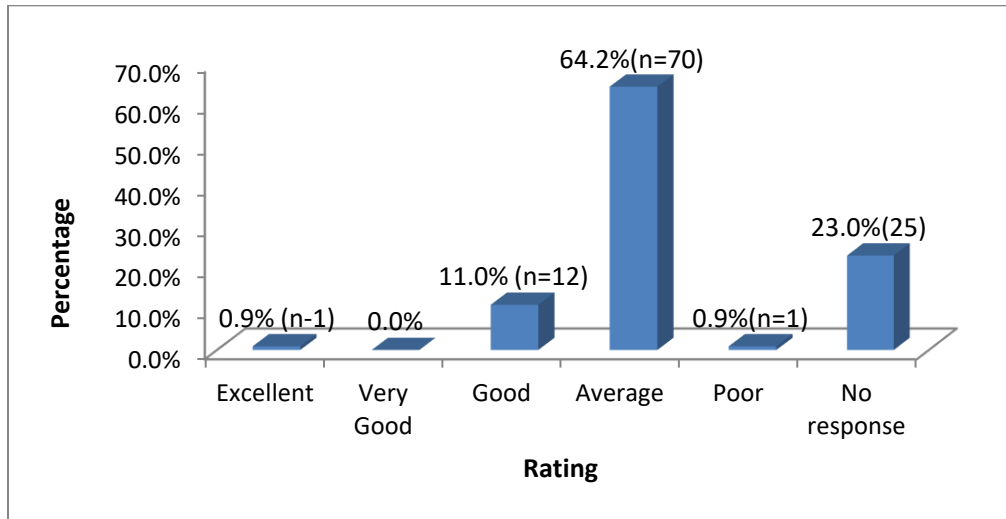


Figure 3: Rating of ECDE Officers' Services by Parents

The results in figure 2 show that 64.2% of the respondents rated services offered by the ECDE officers as average. On the other hand, 11% of the respondents rated the services by the ECDE officers as good while 0.9% rated their services as excellent and poor respectively. This shows that ECDE officers need to improve for better delivery of quality ECDE services. The study results also show that 23% of the respondents did not respond to this; probably they may not be aware of the services offered by the ECDE officers. This calls for increased meetings and workshops between parents and ECDE officers; so that parents can understand the role of the officers in delivery of quality ECDE services. These results suggest that provision of ECDE services in Kwale County need to be improved. This therefore means there is dire need to mount on capacity building programmes for the ECDE officers to improve on delivery of services. Rohdewald and Poppe (2005) stated that training is an important component of capacity building because it can enhance skills and competencies of individuals. Provision of quality ECDE services is dependent on a number of factors. These factors as established by this study, for example inadequate resources, lack of cooperation, among others need to be addressed. Ankrotimi and Olowe (2016) established that resources and funding were critical to successful implementation of any ECE programme. Berger (2011) also pointed out that collaboration amongst stakeholders in early childhood education is critical in determining its quality.

### 5.3.3 Suggestions to improve Delivery of Quality ECDE services

The study sought for suggestions from the parents on how to improve delivery of quality ECDE services. The respondents indicated that in order to deliver quality ECDE services, there was need to provide adequate learning

materials; quality textbooks as well as adequate school facilities. The respondents further stated that provision of play materials, employment of trained ECDE teachers, introduction or sustained feeding programmes and motivation of teachers could improve delivery of quality ECDE services. The parents further suggested that the ECDE officers should call for frequent meetings. The ECDE Officers need to work very closely with parents if quality is to be improved. As noted by Meggit and Bruce (2014) physical activity begins at home. Research suggests that parental physical activity impacts positively on how much physical activity their children participate in. The parents need to be empowered in more knowledge on how interaction between them and their children impacts on children's growth and development.

## **6. Conclusions**

The study therefore concluded that capacity building did not take place and therefore did not benefit the parents to enable them give quality services. While all the ECDE officers indicated that they held meetings and workshops with the parents, majority of the parents were not aware of such meetings or workshops. As a result, majority of the parents did not attend any meetings or workshops organized by ECDE officers. The failure of parents' attendance to workshops shows that there was no effective capacity building for the parents as indicated by the ECDE officers.

The study concludes that parents in Kwale know the importance of play materials in influencing delivery of quality ECDE services. The study revealed that majority of the parents knew the importance and benefits of play materials and therefore made sure they were available for their children's use. They were aware that play materials enhanced growth of their children.

## **7. Recommendations**

The study recommends that, to ensure that quality ECDE services are delivered efficiently and effectively at all times, both the County government and the National government should provide adequate funds for ECDE services. The funds would also help to organize for meetings and workshops to empower parents and other stakeholders on matters of ECDE in the area.

The government should consider increasing its commitment to early childhood education by encouraging parental involvement in pre-school education through home visits or community based training. In addition, the parents and other stakeholders in ECDE in the community should provide necessary support to the ECDE officers so that they can deliver quality services. The parents should offer support by attending meetings and workshops organized by the ECDE officers, this would enhance cooperation between ECDE Officers and parents, as well as other stakeholders.

The study recommends that the ECDE officers work very closely with the parents and other stakeholders to promote development of locally available materials for children's use. The ECDE officers and teachers should also be continuously trained on ECDE and development of play materials so that they can cascade the same skills and knowledge to the parents for effective delivery of quality ECDE services.

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