

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUPILS IN LOWER
PRIMARY. A CASE OF RUGUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL KIKUUBE DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of early education on the academic performance of pupils in lower primary of Ruguse Primary School in Kikuube District. The study was based on the results from 70 respondents who presented accurate data to the researcher out of the sample size of 80 respondents. The study was guided by the objectives for example to examine the effectiveness of curriculum implementation in Nursery Schools, to examine the relationship between Nursery Education and academic performance of children in primary one and finally to assess the significance of Nursery Education to child's intellectual development. Data was collected from the Head teacher, teachers, pupils, PTA/SMC and Opinion leaders of Ruguse Primary School in Kikuube District. According to the findings of the study, majority of the Non Graduate Pupils at Ruguse Primary School scored above 70% in the Primary one compared to 50% of the Pupils who never attended Nursery School scored above 70% in Primary one, curriculum implementation in Nursery Schools is good followed by a few respondents who instead urged that curriculum implementation in Nursery Schools is very good, majority of the respondents stated that the intellectual development of pupils who undergo Nursery Education is very good followed by a few respondents who urged that it is good and the rest of the respondents informed the researcher that intellectual development to the Nursery education is fair.

Key words: early childhood education, academic performance, pupils and lower primary

Background of the study

Education, which is an indispensable tool in nation building, is a process of systematic training and education designed to impart knowledge and acquire skills, potentials and also abilities that will enable individuals to contribute effectively to the growth and development of their society and nation (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara et al., 2023). According to Feeney et al. (2018) early childhood is of immense value in a child's later academic pursuits and more recently in life. This early experience exposes the child to all the areas that give him an advantage over those who attended kindergarten in elementary school, because the confidence in his ability to learn, which he gained in kindergarten, rises to elementary school (Mercy et

al., 2023). This ultimately helps and facilitates his learning (Damasus et al., 2023). The early childhood institution focuses on the development of the child's cognitive and affective potential at an early age. Anderson (2014) argues that when children are exposed to education in early childhood, they develop excellent communication skills, the necessary physical abilities and social unity needed in adulthood, and increased cognitive and effective educational balance (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023). After realizing the importance of maternal education (Victoria et al., 2023), the government supported private efforts to establish this institution. Kindergarten is a type of teaching and learning

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provided to children who are not yet old enough to enter primary school (Joventa et al., 2023). Broadly speaking, the purpose of kindergarten is to supplement and expand early home experiences and

environments to further plan each child's development through living and learning with peers and lay the foundations for the development of intellectual capacity (Emmanuel et al., 2023).

Problem statement

In an effort to improve its education status, the government of Uganda has implemented an early childhood education policy where every government-supported primary school in the country should have a nursery section and promote education as a basic human right to be provided. to all children or citizens of the country (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). The Ugandan government has sought to make education accessible to all and improve the quality of education at all levels by revising the curriculum, utilizing teaching and learning resources, and recruiting and staffing qualified teachers (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022b). Despite these efforts, however, there are still factors affecting the performance of lower primary children during the transition to pre-primary education in primary schools (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). For example, the lack of qualified early childhood education teachers disrupts the smooth transition of children, low involvement of parents and communities (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022a), lack of material and financial resources, long distances that children travel, poor health and above all, no transition policy. In Kikuube District schools, due to the lack of a transitional framework to guide stakeholder review of pre-primary education with regard to curriculum content and quality, teaching methods, facilities, age for entering primary school and the quality of teachers and their training programs (Emmanuel et al., 2023). This situation needed to be changed to provide a conducive environment for laying a solid foundation for the nation through pre-primary education in Kikuube District. It is against this background that this study is conducted on the effects of early childhood education on the school performance of pupils at the lower primary level (Micheal et al., 2023).

Specific Objectives

- To examine the effectiveness of curriculum implementation in Nursery Schools
- To examine the relationship between Nursery Education and academic performance of children in primary one
- To assess the significance of Nursery Education to child's intellectual development

Methodology

The Researcher adapted to a quantitative research design. The study was on examining the effects of early childhood education on the academic performance of primary school pupils in lower primary. The Study was conducted at Ruguse Primary School in Kikuube District. The choice of the study area was because the researcher was part of the teaching staff of the above-mentioned study area which will make data collection easy and concrete. This included the description of the population that was studied and the sampling design that was followed during the study. The targeted population was on 96 with 75 pupils, 01 head teacher, 05 teachers, 10 members on Parent-Teacher Association/ School Management Committee of Ruguse primary school in Kikuube District and 05 opinion leaders.

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Data collected was selected using simple random and purposive sampling technique to make the results objective. Therefore, the researcher used a sample size of 80 respondents who are the targeted population using a simple random sampling method as shown in the table below:

Table 1 Sample Size

Category of respondents	Target population	Sample size	Sample techniques
Head teachers	01	01	Purposive
Teachers	05	03	Purposive
Pupils	75	70	Random
PTA/SMC	10	04	Random
Opinion leaders	05	02	Random
Total	96	80	

The researcher developed primary data collection instruments. In collecting Primary Data, the researcher used questionnaires as tools for collecting the data. This choice of tool was used due to the fact that the targeted population was literate and therefore capable of filling-in the questionnaires. It gave the respondents adequate time to give well thought out answers. Questionnaires were also be self-administered and provided a quick means of collecting data from a large population sample. Data analysis involved editing, measuring and tabulation of the collected data. A quantitative method was used in computation of percentages and totals usings SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). Tables were used to present and summarize data for easy interpretation and display of information.

RESULTS

Table 1: Respondents views on the effectiveness of the new implemented curriculum in Nursery schools

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good	25	36
Very Good	20	29
Excellent	10	14
Fair	10	14
No idea	05	7
Total	70	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

Figure 1: Respondents views on the effectiveness of the new implemented curriculum in Nursery

Source: Field Data (2021)

According to the table and figure above, the findings of the study indicated 36% of the respondents informed the researcher that the nursery curriculum is good followed by 29% of the respondents who however urged that it is very

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good, 14% showed that it is excellent, 7% presented results showing that they have no idea and 14% of the respondents also presented findings showing that it is fair (Moses, 2022).

Table 2: Relationship between Nursery Education and Academic performance

Range of Scores in Primary one	Nursery Graduates		Non-Nursery Graduates	
	Nursery Graduates	Percentages (%)	Non-Nursery Graduates	Percentages
90 - 100	10	33	04	13
80 - 89	05	17	05	17
70 - 79	05	17	6	20
60 - 69	03	10	9	30
50 -59	05	17	3	10
Bellow 49	02	6	3	10
TOTAL	30	67	30	50

Figure 2: Relationship between Nursery Education and Academic performance

Source: Field Data (2021)

The results in the table above showed that out of 30 Nursery Graduates in Primary one, 20 Students scored 70% and above in the exams making it a percentage of 67% of the total number of pupils in class and the table also showed that 15 Non-Graduate Pupils in primary one scored 70% and above in exams making a percentage of 50% of the total number of pupils in primary one (Seth & Ntirandekura, 2022).

Table 3: The significance of Nursery education to the child's intellectual development

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good	20	29
Very Good	30	43
Excellent	5	07
Fair	10	14
No idea	05	07
Total	70	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

Figure 3: Respondents views on the significance of Nursery Education to the Child's intellectual development

Source: Field Data (2021)

According to the table and figure above, the findings of the study indicated, 43% of the respondents informed the researcher that Nursery education develops a very good intellectual development in the pupils followed by 29% of the respondents who urged that Nursery Education develops good intellectual development to the pupils (Victoria et al., 2023), 14% of the respondents presented results showing that Nursery education fairly affects the intellectual development of pupils and finally according to the findings of the study, 7% of the respondents suggested that it is excellent and other 7% that they do not have any idea about the influence of Nursery education on the intellectual development of pupils in primary (Brighton et al., 2023).

Discussion of findings

According to the findings of the study, 36% of the respondents informed the researcher that the nursery curriculum is good followed by 29% of the respondents who however urged that it is very good, 14% showed that it is excellent, 7% presented results showing that they have no idea and 14% of the respondents also presented findings showing that it is fair (Mark et al., 2023). The findings of the study also presented results indicating that out of 30 Nursery Graduates in Primary one, 20 Students scored 70% and above in the exams making it a percentage of 67% of the total number of pupils in class and the table also showed that 15 Non Graduate Pupils in primary one scored 70% and above in exams making a percentage of 50% of the total number of pupils in primary one (Cand et al., 2022). Finally the findings of the study also presented results showing that 43% of the respondents informed the researcher that Nursery education develops a very good intellectual development in the pupils followed by 29% of the respondents who urged that Nursery Education develops good intellectual development to the pupils, 14% of the respondents presented results showing that Nursery education fairly affects the intellectual development of pupils and finally according to the findings of the study (Richard et al., 2022), 7% of the respondents suggested that it is excellent and other 7% that they do not have any idea about the influence of Nursery education on the intellectual development of pupils in primary (Richard et al., 2023).

Conclusions

The findings of the study also concluded showing that majority of the Non-Graduate Pupils at Ruguse Primary School scored above 70% in the Primary one compared to 50% of the Pupils who never attended Nursery School scored above 70% in Primary one. This clearly indicated that pupils who attended Nursery education performed highly in Primary one compared to those who never attended Nursery Education. Finally in conclusion, the findings of the study were presented showing that majority of the respondents stated that the intellectual development of pupils who undergo Nursery Education is very good followed by a few respondents who urged that it is good and the rest of the respondents informed the researcher that intellectual development to the Nursery education is fair and lastly most of the respondents informed the researcher that they have no idea on Nursery education affects Pupils intellectual development.

Recommendations

Children/learners should be given the necessary individual assistance necessary in order to benefit from this study.

Teachers should improve on the quality of teaching nursery school pupils that include providing sufficient teaching/learning aids which are appropriate for the level ability and interests of the pupils.

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