



# Investigation on Learning Activities and School Environment Factors Influencing Learning Retention in Public Pre-Schools in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Pre-school education is fundamental in providing foundation for learning. In the recent years, there has been noted decline trend nationally in the transition of learners from Early Years of Education (EYE) to primary schools in Belgut Sub-County as per 2018 published Sub-County Education Office report. This study investigated school-based factors influencing learner retention in public pre-schools. The study specifically sort out to; find out the learning activities influencing learner retention and explore the school environment influence on learner retention in public pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County. The study was anchored on Maslow theory. Descriptive research design was adopted. The study targeted 326 respondents comprising of head teachers and pre-school teachers. Sample size for the study was 95 head teachers and 127 pre-school teachers. Questionnaires were utilized for pre-school teachers and interview schedules for Head-teachers. Observation checklists were also utilized. The study yielded both Quantitative and qualitative data which was analyzed thematically and by use of SPSS version 22. Data was presented by use of figures and tables. The study established that there is need for pre-school learners to enjoy free movement rather than having them confined to one place. Further, the study revealed that the school environment is crucial for learner retention thus need for sufficient pre-schools amenities. The study is significant to stakeholders in positioning themselves to ensure that they maintain retention of learners in pre-school, managers and proprietors of pre-schools in devising better approaches that enable retention of learners and Ministry of Education in crafting better policy framework that clearly stipulate the roles of all the stake holders in Early Years of Education.

**Keywords:** Pre-school, Learning, Environment, Factors, Retention, Belgut, Kericho

## 1. Introduction

Learner retention is a critical phenomenon in Early Years of Education (EYE). Retention is the school's capability to have a learner from enrolment all the way to graduation (Seidman, 2005). Learners who successfully complete their initial years in school are said to be more likely to complete the entire education levels with no difficulty, therefore retention is the school's duty (Tinto, 2005).

According to Gananathan (2011), the United States and its governments have long been paying attention to their little children's welfare by continuously reviewing the program to address the needs of kindergarten. Nursery schools have been there since early years of 1850s and it became useful in the 18th century with establishments like Montessori

schools which emphasize on the mental growth of a child. Pre-schools in Europe were established to offer humanitarian services to those children who were affected by civil wars and those from slum situation (Jay, 2012). The middle class took control of pre-school education by enrolling their children, despite initially being for the poor, hence, hampering access of the poor to EYE. This change of focus affected the program from the dimension of welfare and play as advanced by Froebel to that of wellbeing, education and imaginative expression (Ausin, 2010).

The socio-cultural settings of the African people have drastically influenced children's education. There is a drastic variation of dimension, economic organization, stages of growth and the education systems in place (UNESCO, 2010) in Africa's diverse countries.

Nevertheless, the continent is faced with a lot of challenges as it tries to tackle the tribulations of providing and sustaining fundamental education.

According to UNESCO the Paris report of 2015, Kenya had about 48,000 EYE centers with 5,000 teachers, these centers registered about 200,000 children. The government’s own figures showed a Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of forty-eight percent in 1998, declining to forty-one percent in 2002. Kenya’s statement on Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 2005, confirmed that while registering rose significantly from 1,076,606 to 1,281,846 between 1998 and 2004, there was only an insignificant downcast in Gross Enrolment Ratios in the years 1998 and 2004. The statistics at a glance, nevertheless, imply two worrying inclination. First, Gross Enrollment proportions in pre-school went down as from 1998 from forty-eight percent to forty-one percent with the main decline taking place in the years 1998 and 1999 before the introduction of Free Primary Education (UNESCO, 2015). According to the Kenyan Report (2005), a slight increase occurred after Free Primary Education was rolled out in 2003.

In Kenya children who come from pastoralist communities and urban informal settlement areas, accessing EYE centers were inequitable (UNESCO, 2006). Underprivileged children from these areas post low enrollment and retention in pre-schools. The main being pre-school appeared to be a liability to the lives of the low-income earners than for those children who are more privileged. According to the report, pre-school attendance can be of importance in reducing achievement gaps faced by the underprivileged children, especially those who come from humble backgrounds (UNESCO, 2012).

Retention of learners has continued to be very low in Kenyan rural areas and Kericho County is not an exception as there has been a public outcry from the Ministry of Education with a focus on Belgut Sub-County, which has had a declining trend as shown in table 1 that is according to Belgut Sub-County education office (2019). Therefore, this necessitated the inquiry to school factors affecting retention of learners in public pre-school education centers in Belgut Sub-County.

**Table 1 Enrolment and Graduation of Pre-school Learners in 2016-2019**

YEAR	2016	Term	Term	2017	Term	Term 3	2018	Term	Term	2019
Enrolment and Transition	Term 1	2	3	Term 1	2		Term 1	2	3	Term 1
EYE	8304	8300	6819	9594	9368	8801	1097	9685	7368	10153
GRADE 1				16183			16547			15547

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Early childhood education is essential in training learners in physical, mental and social growth. This sets them to transit to formal education which prepares them for their future roles by furnishing them with relevant expertise, attitude and aptitudes. The constitution of Kenya 2010 grants each child a right to obligatory basic education. Despite the constitutional entitlement, most of the children do not complete early childhood education due to various reasons with the school being one of the factors. Basic Education Act (2013) lays emphasis on provision of Early Years of Education (EYE) and points out that the cost of provision of EYE is the duty of the County Government, the guardians and the larger society, who are tasked

differently to ensure the success of early childhood education. The Kenya government tasked itself to attain EFA by 2015, and has put in efforts to address the issues related to access and retention in education, EYE included. The government policy maintains that each public primary school should have a pre-school section to amplify access of children to EYE. However, the data from the ministry of education has proven otherwise to the government policy as it shows a declining rate in the retention of learners over the years. This unstable enrolment and declining numbers throughout the years led this study to look into the school factors affecting learner retention in public pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County. Therefore, the study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To find out the learning activities influencing learner retention in public pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County.
- ii. To explore the school environment influence on learner retention in public pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored by Maslow’s Hierarchical Needs Theory of 1970. Maslow saw human needs to be ascending from the lowest to the highest in a hierarchical way. He affirms that, when one set of wants are fulfilled it stops to be a motivator and that human beings are persistently in quest of unsatisfied goal. Human wants are set in the order of strengths and the strongest ones are satisfied first. These wants are; basic needs, security or protection, social, self-regard and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1970). Pre-school learners require nutritive food, water, haven, medicine, sleep, warmth and education as biological needs. These basic needs are supposed to be provided by the parents and government. It is the duty of the caregivers to make sure that their children get medication, provide sufficient diet, comfortable shelter and warmth. Caregivers have the responsibility to ensure the child is enrolled to pre-school. The government and

caregivers should also ensure that relevant education is provided to these children. The school should have a feeding program.

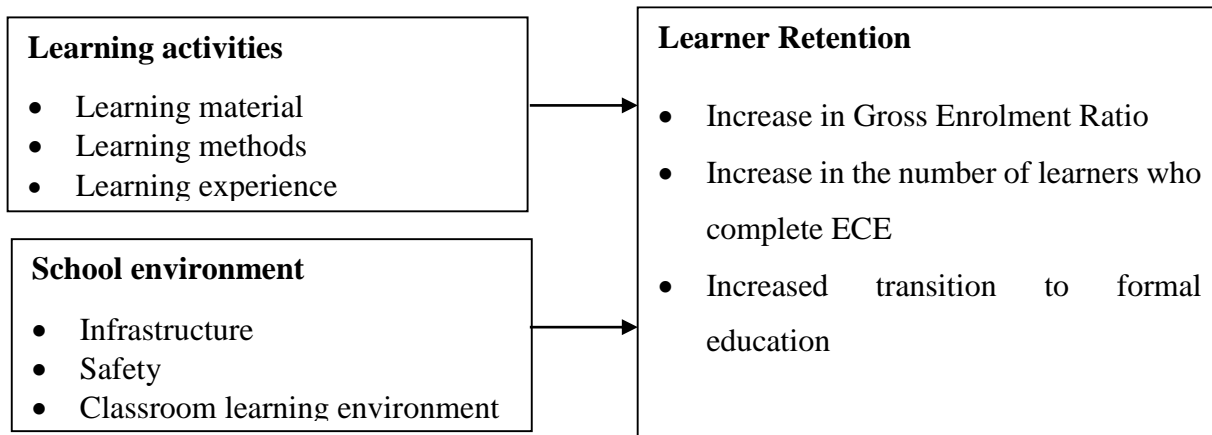
Children are social beings; they need to be accepted and belong to a group. Teachers and parents should try their best to ensure that children are accepted irrespective of their abilities. Esteem needs is the next level in the hierarchy. Self-confidence, prestige, power and status are satisfaction produced by esteem needs. It involves both internal and external esteem. Inner esteem factors comprise of self- respect, independence and fulfillment while external esteem factors include recognition and attention. Children are proud to belong to a family and a school. Once people gratify their self-regard needs, they move to the subsequent stage in the ladder, self-actualization need. In this case once a child has all the other needs, they are prepared to complete the EYE class and transit to formal education (Deckers, 2018).

## 1.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual structure clearly shows how the independent variable affects the dependent variable of the research as shown in in figure 1.

### Independent Variables

### Dependent Variable



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Learner Retention**

Learning activities entail materials used for learning that incorporate learning and learning experiences. Active learning is emphasized through key experiences. These experiences are: Making the learner imaginative through drawing, painting, role playing, pretending and making models; Learning language and literacy by talking, describing and writing; Being innovative and social by making plans, decisions, and solving problems; Exploring with objects, singing and developing melody in music and movement; reason logically by classifying, arranging, comparing, counting and turn taking (Hohmann and Weikart, 2002). Learning materials should be presented at

eye level so that learners do not strain. Environmental factors include infrastructure, safety, and classroom presentation of learning materials. What the learners do should always be displayed so as to enable learners develop sense of ownership. Organization of furniture should provide for all the learners. All these independent variables when observed lead to increase in Gross Enrolment Ratio, the number of learners who complete EYE and increased retention.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Learner Engagement Practices

Learner engagement is defined as learner involvement with active conditions that is likely to generate quality learning (Coates, 2009). For this study the researcher looked at the learning activities with the learner as the scope. For a learner to enjoy education and hence be retained till the completion of a learning circle, they should be given autonomy. Learners' contribution and connection to school is paramount fundamental arrangement for helpful learning and retention in education (Department of Education and Early Childhood, 2009). The characteristics of learner taking part in the school activities are of great importance. These attributes include the activities that which pupils take to school from their home and societal environment. They have an emotional impact on how well a learner reacts to the learning setting.

Research has shown that school's ability is to provide learning materials and stipulate the activities to engage learners, is time bound and again linked to learner retention (Woolley and Bowen, 2007). They amplify skills in learning, input communication that go along with them all through adulthood. Behavior, emotional and cognitive engagement contributes to full engagement of learning and aiming of educational latency for the learners. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development shows how a detached student who demonstrates none of the personalities aforementioned will have a very poor turnout record (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009). Learners in pre -school ought to be given an opportunity to be actively engaged in their learning if they have to get pleasure from their education in EYE since children at this stage are still egocentric. Children's activities should be in line with their capabilities and past familiarity (Durlak et.al, 2011).

Equipment and activities at the learners' disposal ought to be suitable and significant (Cobb, 2001). He further states that knowledge on handling the equipment and the activities is supreme among caregivers and educators. This will support children fine tune easily to the new settings by linking the new familiarity with their past known knowledge. Successful learning is realized when assortments of experiences are promoted. Backgrounds that have affluent, diverse equipment and abundance of chances for mutual learning are essential for both children of different aptitudes and with adults. A study by Wawire (2006), confirmed that, there is inadequate apparatus and resources in a number of pre-schools, he established insufficient physical settings, play devices, education content and hygiene in Machakos District, which depicts what is going on in all public pre-schools in Kenya. Wawire conducted his study in Machakos district, which

is assumed to be a less endowed county, therefore, the current study was conducted in Belgut Sub-County a more endowed county but still experience the challenge of learner retention.

The learning materials and the activities stipulated by the school, to engage learners is time bound and again linked to learner retention (Woolley & Bowen, 2007). This will amplify skills in learning, input communication that go along with them all through adulthood. Engagement in learning and reaching an educational latent by the learner can be achieved if the behavior, emotions and being cognitive is engaged. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development states that a detached student who demonstrates none of the personalities said will have a very poor turnout record (DEEYE, 2009).Learners in pre-school ought to be given an opportunity to be actively engaged in their learning if they have to get pleasure from their education in EYE since children at this stage are still egocentric.

Learners should be given learning practices that are neither too difficult nor devastating lest they give up (McDermott, Leigh & Perry, 2002). It should also not be straightforward lest they ignore. These learners ought to be given an opportunity to engineer materials, solve issues by themselves, and try out by trial and error for them to learn. Learners ought to be included in gathering and creating teaching and material for learning for example; beads, costumes, counters, stories and any other material required in school that can be brought from the society. This enables them to own their class. Their creative work should also be displayed in class to encourage them do more and feel proud of their own work. The study by McDermott, Leigh and Perry gave the view of how young learner should be handled in developed countries, this study sought to find out how this is happening in the developing countries like Kenya.

Early childhood class should be lively and children given autonomy to take an active role in such a way that they initiate their own activities while their teacher acts as a guide. According to Thomas (2002) the learner in a learner centered classroom state assumes extra roles as a peer educator, a group participant, a learner accountable for their learning and well-being. Learners assume a dynamic role which rest majorly on the functioning with others without help. Learning takes place in these interactions, as learners with diverse potency care for their peers in developing knowledge and abilities. There are obvious benefits in such engagements for example; developments in literacy and problem-solving skills. Thomas study explains how learners should be used to develop each other, this study sought to find out the same happenings with the launch of the competency based curriculum (CBC) in the Kenyan system which bases education on the learners' ability.

These studies and others have brought out the importance of having a learner engagement practice to address the activities the learners are involved in; the materials

learners can use in class and the experiences of the learners. However, these findings are not applicable in developing countries since most public pre-schools lack adequate resources to fully engage these learners. In public pre-schools the teachers assume the lead role as the pressure is mounted on them by the parents who want to see a learner who is able to read and write, when the initial idea of pre-school is centered in play. The underpinning argument being that engaged learners are probable to develop liking and stay at school longer as they aspire to press forward to other levels of education.

## 2.2 School Environment

The crucial features in learner retention with regards to environmental factors include; infrastructure, safety and classroom presentation. Learning environments have been documented as scarce in the African continent owing to the low level of economic development and poverty (Nekatibeb, 2002). Most schools lack infrastructure such as classrooms, playground and play equipment with such environment being not safe for the preschoolers. Many preschoolers share the same compounds with the primary section and whenever there is an additional enrollment that require a classroom in primary section, preschoolers are pushed to old primary school buildings and sometimes made to learn in churches if any and if not, they are put to learn in one class regardless of congestion. Other extreme case is that in the absence of classrooms young children are made to learn under the trees. In some parts of Machakos and Nairobi counties, most pre-schools that function under primary schools share toilets, assemblies and the fields with the older children and sometimes preschoolers are given one common latrine to be shared among learners and teachers (Wawire, 2006).

Most EYE centers are in short supply of furniture while other centers have none at all. The furniture in most cases do not match the physical size of learners, which results to being uncomfortable which may cause postural distress and agony. Some centers use benches that are distant from the tables for the learners to use which results to stressing their arms when writing. This does not only jeopardize education for learners but also put their health at risk. Ngome (2002) found out that there are unsuitable and inadequate furniture in some public schools while in other schools children sat on the bare ground in Machakos County. Learning cannot take place at these environments and therefore the administration of schools ought to put more emphasis to the physical learning environment and create them enriching and motivating. Children who attend pre-schools with conducive environment, suggest quality basic classroom familiarity that is vital for upholding helpful effects of pre-school. The present study sought to establish if Ngome's findings which were conducted in Machakos is same as what is happening in Belgut Sub- County.

Classrooms ought to be comfortable and safe for the learning course to take place. It should be well lit and aerated. The temperature ought to be favorable, space and furniture ought to be secure and suitable in terms of age Classroom presentation ought to have teaching and learning aids necessary for easy comprehension by the learners. They should be colorful, motivating for learners to feel eager about attending school always (Puri, 2004). Furniture ought to be aligned suitably to permit free movement, group activity, play and supervision of group behavior (Catherine *et al.*, 2009). The classrooms' setting should allow learners to have a clear view of each other. The arrangement should at all costs gather for children special needs children. It ought to be mindful of the fact that young children are inquisitive, energetic and their bodies are growing rapidly as a result, the furniture and equipment given should be adapted to sustain their healthy growth since hale and hearty learners are likely to perform better and attend school regularly. The structural organization of the classrooms needs to be a stimulant mentally, with eye-catching exhibits that comprises part of learners' work and attractive designs. Classroom layout has portrayed in the previous studies play a significant role in enticing the learner to take more interests in learning. Therefore, assessing the classroom layout in pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County to see if they meet the ideals standards was the concern of the study.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

Descriptive survey of the study was harnessed in the study with the aim of establishing social factors influencing learner retention in public pre-school education in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya. Descriptive survey research design permitted gathering of data which was, quantitative and qualitative used for unearthing reasons for exact events or happenings.

### 3.2 Target Population, Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

In Belgut Sub-County, there were 127 public schools complete with pre-schools. The study used the EYE teachers and the head teachers since in matter to do with school-based factors they are the knowledgeable lot. This study targeted 326 respondents that comprised of pre-school teachers and head teachers of all public pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County in Kericho County. The total population being 326 comprised of 127 head-teachers and 199 pre-school teachers.

This study utilized Morgan & Krejcie formula (1970). The study used random sampling to come up with 95 schools out of the 127 public pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County, this was the sample size for the head teachers which was

arrived at through random sampling. Random sampling was used when selecting sample respondents for pre-school teachers resulting to 127 pre-school teachers which

further gave a sample of 222 respondents as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Sample Size of the Respondents**

Category	Number of individuals	Sample size	Sampling Technique
Head teachers	127	95	Purposive
Pre-school teachers	199	127	Random
<b>Total</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>Total</b>

### 3.3 Instruments of Data Collection

Data for this study was gathered using the following instruments : Questionnaires , scheduled interviews and observation checklist. These instruments were used to measure learning activities , school environment . Environmental -related factors were measured through infrastructure , safety and distance from school. The behaviors that were observed included ; learner movements , learning activities , pre-school program , learning experiences for the learner extra-curricular activities and activities that meet individual interests and needs.

### 3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data was sorted, edited, coded and entered in the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive statistics were computed by use of means, percentages, frequencies and standard deviation from the quantitative data. Data analyzed results were presented through the frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs. Qualitative data from the interviews were categorized into themes based on the objectives of the study by the researcher depending on the frequency mentioned in the interview schedule. The researcher checked on the documents, such as; schemes of work, lesson plans, teaching and learning resources, registers and health records. These documents informed and gave further findings to support the research objectives.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Learning Activities Influencing Learner Retention

The first objective of the study was to find out the learning activities influencing learner retention in public pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County. It was found out that most of the participants agreed that schools allowed for the free movement of children rather than having them sit for a long time (38.3%). The study also showed that most of the participants disagreed that the activities were designed to accommodate children with varying abilities (38.3%). Furthermore, the study looked into how schools accommodate children with special needs, most of the participants agreed that the pre-schools try minimally to accommodate children with special needs this confirms the study done by Chick (2010) who postulated that in the administration of schools for young children need to factor in all the children despite their abilities.

In the light of the activities done in pre-schools being age appropriate majority of the participants agreed. Most of the participants agreed that the pre-schools learning materials should be a little bit challenging to have the learner’s cognitive abilities challenged with moderation. The study also established that majority of the participants agreed that opportune moments should be given to learners to explore learning materials.

Most of the participants agreed that the main way children learn is through play, therefore play activities in pre-schools school be educative as this is the main learning avenue for learners as shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Learner Activities**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>
<b>Free movement of children is allowed rather than sit still for a long time</b>	25 (20.8%)	12 (10%)	13 (10.8%)	24 (20%)	46 (38.3%)	3.45	<b>1.576</b>
<b>The activities are designed to accommodate children with varying abilities</b>	46 (38.3%)	24 (20%)	13 (10.8%)	25 (20.8%)	12 (10%)	2.44	<b>1.431</b>
<b>The needs of special needs children are satisfied by the design program of the pre-school.</b>	-	24 (20%)	36 (30%)	25 (20.8%)	35 (29.2%)	3.59	<b>1.111</b>
<b>Activities scheduled by the school are age appropriate</b>	-	25 (20.8%)	12 (10%)	60 (50%)	23 (19.2%)	3.68	<b>1.014</b>
<b>Learning experiences shouldn't be too easy or too difficult</b>	-	13 (10.8%)	24 (20%)	60 (50%)	23 (19.2%)	3.78	<b>0.884</b>
<b>Opportune moments should be given to learners to explore materials</b>	12 (10%)	13 (10.8%)	24 (20%)	48 (40%)	23 (19.2%)	3.48	<b>1.209</b>
<b>The main way for children to learn is through play</b>	12 (10%)	13 (10.8%)	12 (10%)	60 (50%)	23 (19.2%)	3.86	<b>0.891</b>
<b>Engaging in learning activities should be encouraged for learners</b>	12 (10%)	12 (10%)	13 (10.8%)	23 (19.2%)	60 (50%)	3.58	<b>1.207</b>
<b>Learners are given opportunity to initiate their own activities while the teacher act as a guide</b>	42 (35%)	17 (14.2%)	8 (6.7%)	37 (30.8%)	16 (13.3%)	2.73	<b>1.527</b>
<b>Learning activities fulfill individual requirements and interests</b>	<b>28</b> <b>(23.3%)</b>	<b>40</b> <b>(33.3%)</b>	<b>7</b> <b>(5.8%)</b>	<b>32</b> <b>(26.7%)</b>	<b>13</b> <b>(10.8%)</b>	<b>2.68</b>	<b>1.372</b>

The findings in table 4 affirm the study done by Gananathan (2011) who stressed that play should form a better part of the early childhood pedagogy and practice. In Malaysia a study by Majzub (2014) found child play a useful method of teaching. In the study it was found that teaching learning climate was not the same in the preschool centers: play was only used as a method of teaching preschool children by those teachers who valued it. In United States of America Ramani, Siegler, and Hitti, (2012) and Anderson-McNamee (2010) recognized the role played by the play method in enhancing pupils' acquisition of mathematics skills, and stressed the fact that it was important for pediatricians to provide professional advice on the appropriate play materials or type of play to be used by families, school systems, and communities, and how best to protect play. The other aspect that was established by the study was that most of the participants agreed that learner engagement should be encouraged. The participants were divided on the issue of teacher being the guide as the learners initiate their way through the learning sphere. The study found out that the participants

were also divided on whether the learning activities fulfill individual requirements and attract interest as they could not agree on the basis of this.

## **4.2 School Environment Influence on Learner Retention**

The second objective of the study was to explore the school environment influence on learner retention in public pre-schools in Belgut Sub-County. From the findings in table 5 most of the participants were in agreement that pre-schools share amenities with primary section (45.8%). Further findings revealed that the county government were supposed to create amenities such as toilets for preschools but sometimes as they do this, the primary schools are in dire need of such facilities and end up being used by all the learners both in primary section and pre-schools. On furniture used in pre-schools most of the participants disagreed (30.8) that learners used furniture that were age appropriate as shown in table 4.

**Table 4: Environmental factors**

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Deviation
Amenities are shared with primary school	3 (2.5%)	5 (4.2%)	4 (3.3%)	53 (44.2%)	55 (45.8%)	4.27	<b>0.905</b>
The furniture used by the learners is age appropriate	24 (20%)	37 (30.8%)	25 (20.8%)	23 (19.2%)	11 (9.2%)	2.67	<b>1.252</b>
There is appropriate teaching and learning materials and are displayed appropriately	-	12 (10%)	36 (30%)	60 (50%)	12 (10%)	3.60	<b>0.803</b>
The furniture is arranged that the learners can move freely	23 (19.2%)	25 (20.8%)	36 (30%)	36 (30%)	-	2.71	<b>1.095</b>
School is distant from most learner's residence (homes)	47 (39.2%)	13 (10.8%)	12 (10%)	48 (40%)	-	2.51	<b>1.360</b>
Are the learners accompanied by their parents to school	-	13 (10.8%)	36 (30%)	48 (40%)	23 (19.2%)	3.68	<b>0.909</b>
The school has an all-round for security reasons	-	13 (10.8%)	24 (20%)	60 (50%)	23 (19.2%)	3.78	<b>0.884</b>
The classrooms used by learners are adequate	23 (19.2%)	37 (30.8%)	24 (20%)	36 (30%)	-	2.61	<b>1.110</b>
The classrooms were specifically made for EYE program	13 (10.8%)	12 (10%)	72 (60%)	23 (19.2%)	-	3.88	<b>0.846</b>
The school atmosphere is clean and secure	-	<b>41</b> <b>(30.42%)</b>	<b>11</b> <b>(9.2%)</b>	<b>57</b> <b>(47.5%)</b>	<b>11</b> <b>(9.2%)</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>1.045</b>

This corroborates with the findings of the study done by Ntuli & Traore (2013) who found out that the presence of furniture that is not age appropriate serves as a challenge faced by pre-schools.

Concerning the fact that pre-schools teaching and learning materials were appropriate and were displayed appropriately, most of the participants agreed (50%) that they were displayed appropriately. The study also found out that most of the participants were not in agreement that furniture is arranged in a manner that the learners can move freely. The study also disclosed that most of the participants agreed (40%) that schools were distant from most learner's residence and furthermore most of the participants were in agreement (40%) that learners are accompanied by their parents to school.

Most of the participants (50%) were in agreement that the school had minimal security. It was realized in that study that most of the participants agreed (30.8) that the classrooms were not adequate. Smith (2003) outlined the lack of classrooms which seems to be persistent problem all through. Clements and Sarama (2014) noted the importance of space and spatial concepts in teaching mathematics. The study established that toddlers displayed more mathematical understanding in the areas of space and spatial concepts. Further findings indicated

that some schools (45.8%) are forced to even use borrowed vicinities such as the church to convert them into schools, which has a significant impact on the retention of pre-schools learners. However, further findings indicated that some schools are forced to even use borrowed vicinities such as the church to convert them into schools, which has a significant impact on the retention of pre-schools learners.

A big number of participants were neutral since the teachers do not have a say in matters infrastructure as the designs are decided by the county government. Further findings indicated that the plans are decided by the county government department of education which are executed by the county contractors. A big number of participants agreed (47.5%) that the school atmosphere is clean and secure.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1. Conclusion

The results show that school-based factors, that is, the learning activities and school environment are crucial for the retention of learners in public pre-schools.



On learning activities the study concluded that pre-schools should allow free movement of children rather than having them sit for a long time. This will make the pupils learn well since their concentration span is small. Also, activities should be designed to accommodate children with varying abilities so as to accommodate children with special needs and should be age appropriate. The learning materials should be a little bit challenging and learners should be accorded opportune moments to explore materials and most of the learning should be in play. This study also concluded that teachers should act as the guide as the learners initiate their learning activities so as to fulfill individual requirements and interest.

School environment was found to be crucial for the learner retention as this is what the study came to a conclusion on; pre-schools should have amenities of their own, the furniture used by learner should at all times be age appropriate and that it should be arranged that the learners can move freely. The study found out that the classrooms used for pre-school classes are not adequate.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that the learners in pre-schools should be subjected to learning activities that are play in nature and with lots of free movements and age should be factored in when such plays are being modified. They should also be all-inclusive to accommodate learners with special needs.

The county governments and other stakeholder should ensure that the school environment is very conducive for both learners and the teachers in terms of security and cleanliness. The designs of EYE classrooms also should be adhered to and that the amenities should be made exclusively for pre-schools.

The activities and practices teachers should engage more is appreciating and rewarding of individual learners with achievements with a careful usage of learning materials and facilities and developing developmentally appropriate learning material.

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