

Full Length Research Paper

Gender Inequalities in Early Childhood Development Education Teaching Profession in Kenya

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Gender imbalance in the pre-school teaching profession and feminization of the profession has been a common practice world over. In Kenya, there is an emergent trend of men training as professionals in Early Childhood Development Education but they are underrepresented. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing the gender imbalance in pre-school teaching workforce using a case study. The research sample comprised of 108 pre-school in-service teachers in teacher training institutions in Narok Municipality. Stratified followed by random sampling techniques were employed. The research methodology was qualitative. Focus Group Discussions followed by Key Informant Interviews were used to generate data. This study revealed that culture is the main determinant of feminization of pre-school teaching profession. Men were getting interested in pre-school education but to perform administrative duties not necessarily to teach. Additionally, male parents reported that they were uncomfortable in involving themselves in pre-schools.

Keywords: Gender, early childhood education, teaching, profession, feminization, culture.

INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of men in early childhood programs has garnered considerable attention over the years. This interest is due to three related trends: 1) the lack of men—usually fathers—in the lives of many young children, 2) the dearth of men in the early childhood field, and 3) an increased interest in father involvement in early childhood programs. While almost everyone agrees with the need to get men involved in the lives of young children, solutions to this dilemma are few and far between. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 97 percent of teachers in pre-K programs are women; the same figure was reported in a Center for the Child Care Workforce study (2002). And, according to the National Education Association for Elementary Teachers, only 13 percent of elementary school teachers are men, and these men mostly teach in grades 5 and 6 (Cunningham and Dorsey, 2004). Early childhood education remains one of the most genders –swerved of all occupations. In attempting to solve this problem,

there is no empirical evidence that can be relied upon. This scenario raises a number of questions such as (a) Are we providing positive role models for girls and boys? (b) Are we responding to concerns of fathers and mothers in families we serve? (c) Are we inclusive and diverse as it should be? In this article, three related issues that affect this problem will be discussed: the female culture and feminist politics of the early childhood field, what men, both teachers and fathers, really want, and the debate regarding whether men are suited to be good teachers of infants and young children. Specific suggestions for incorporating men and fathers into early childhood programs will also be included.

Early childhood programs and schools, serve children and people from a variety of racial, ethnic, and gender backgrounds. As Kay Sanders so accurately points out, “They (men) enter a zone of difference when they take early childhood classes and when they are hired to work with young children” (2002, p 45). This cultural conflict can result in men experiencing a sense of difference and isolation on a daily basis. The field of early childhood is an overwhelmingly female one (Sanders, 2002). How does this create a female culture,

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beyond the obvious? Some indications are: Many people in and out of the early childhood field deeply believe that women are naturally predisposed to caring for young children, and men are not (Neugebauer, 1999; Sanders, 2002; Cunningham and Dorsey, 2004). This belief is because in most cultures, including Kenya, women have been charged with the responsibility of raising children, both in the home and in collective approaches (Wardle, 2004). Males bring more play, active movement, entertainment, and rough and tumble play to the way they interact with their own children and the way they interact with children in a program (Fagan, 1996; Parke, 1996; Lamb, 2000). While some female teachers are also very active and physical, many are not (Fagan, 1996). I believe this male approach challenges the way many early childhood programs operate: quiet, sedentary activities that create a minimum of mess (Wardle, 2004).

Early childhood programs are used to working with mothers and not fathers (Mukuna, 2008). What adds to this reality is that there are far more single-female headed households than male-headed households for a variety of legal and cultural reasons. Further, as already suggested, the significant male in the child's life may not be the biological father. All of these factors make it much easier for program staff to work closely with the child's mother and simply ignore the father or other significant men in the child's life. Women are more comfortable working with women. Also some indication that there is a certain level of tension between men and women exists in early childhood programs due partly to the number of single mothers in our field who resent the lack of support from their own children's fathers (Mukuna, 2008). Sanders (2002) suggest that all male early childhood teachers have to defend their choice of a profession to family, friends, and female teachers in their own profession. Clearly, some women teachers have more trouble relating to fathers than to mothers and to male colleagues rather than female colleagues (Neugebauer, 1999; Mukuna, 2008).

Due to the need to achieve social competence, a school needs to provide an atmosphere for holistic development of the child. The pre-school teachers are expected to continue providing warmth, tender touches, instruct children and symbolize authority, strength and security. However due to feminization of the pre-school profession, there is a great gender imbalance leading to concerns and calls for male participation. Feminization of the teachers' workforce in ECDE was one of the most profound transformations because women were willing to work for less pay than men because they had fewer employment opportunities. Women were also said to be nurturing than men and were viewed as most suitable for basic education. Women are docile, dutiful, obedient workers of male dominated administrative positions (Johnson, 1989). Bradley (1989) adds that "teaching of children was seen as a natural part of motherhood." Many educators as well as the public share these beliefs. It is therefore feared in Kenya that

boys are likely to lack the experience of men who are caring and nurturing and will learn early in life that child caring is not for men.

Today, there is an upsurge of men training in diploma and degree programs in Kenya as ECDE professional. Most of them have been interested in ECDE as administrators but not as caregivers of children. The socio-cultural orientations, political and economic structures entrench gender roles (Mac Naughton and Newman, 2001). Community is uneasy and suspicious about men who choose to work with young children in preference to entering higher status and better paid occupations. Society refers to them as men who have not got their gender right (Yelland and Grieshaber, 1998). As such they are unlikely to be agents of gender reform. From this perspective, the presence of more men in ECDE would do very little to change existing dominant gender views.

Another school of thought assumes that a higher male participation rate will benefit the early childhood profession, first by enhancing its status and the status of these within the profession (Lyons et. al, 2003), and secondly by improving workplace dynamics and staff relationships (Jensen, 1998). However, this nation is criticized because when men enter female dominated professions they quickly rise to more highly paid administrative positions (Murray, 1996). Further male teachers' presence in ECDE programs could help to compensate for the absence or marginality of men in many children's home lives as a consequence of single-parent family structures or long working hours (Jensen, 1996). The male teachers induct boys into masculinity (Mac Naughton and Newman, 2001). Moreover, there are essential gender differences between boys and girls. Accordingly, male early childhood teachers are more able than their female counterparts to identify with and respond effectively to boys because they share an essential masculinity and an understanding of boys' perspectives and experience (Jensen 1996). The current gender imbalance in ECDE programmes in Kenya is therefore to the detriment of boys.

Children will benefit from the participation of men in early childhood education if the men involved can counter children sex-stereotypes views about Kenya. However, only male early childhood teachers who actively challenge traditional gender power structures are likely to challenge children's traditional and limiting construction of gender. Gold and Reis (1982) posit that male and female teachers differ in their characters. Children value their contact with males other than female teachers. It is against this background that this study is hinged.

Statement of the Problem

A fundamental relationship with both men and women to a principle in child development underpinning early

childhood practice is that children need stable, nurturing to develop strong gender identities. More than 60% of the young children in the Sub-Saharan Africa have non-parental care during most parts of their day. It is of serious concern that less than 5% of the early childhood workforce is comprised of males. The low wages typically paid to early childhood teachers is often cited as the reason for this under-representation (Mukuna, 2008). However, this explanation only partly explains the phenomena as there are numerous low paying occupations in which both men and women are employed. Factors that have led to gender imbalance in the ECDE programmes in Kenya are not clear. This research study endeavored to find out whether or not the gender imbalance is as a result of low salaries, gender stereotyping or other. A research of this nature and empirical findings in Kenya is yet to be done.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to find out the factors that influence the gender imbalance in the ECDE profession in Kenya. This study was guided by the following research questions;

- (i) What are the commonly held perceptions regarding the gender of prospective teachers in pre-school?
- (ii) What are the commonly held perceptions regarding the role of male and female teachers in ECDE?
- (iii) What factors are important in choosing to pursue a career in ECDE?
- (iv) What are the perceptions of pre-school parents towards male care givers of their children?

METHODOLOGY

Pre-service and in-service Pre-school teachers undertaking certificates, diploma and degree certificates in ECDE Narok town Council formed the sample population. 20 teachers per category were randomly sampled. Another 10 respondents taking Masters degree in Early Childhood and Primary Education from Narok University college were added. 50 pre-school parents were interviewed. The researcher visited ECDE training centers and Narok University College, institutions within the town, to get the respondent teachers. She attended parent-teachers conference in various pre-schools to get the targeted populations of parents. She had both in-depth interviews with parents. She gave teachers questionnaires. Data was analyzed using combined methods and presented.

Literature Review

Gender and Stereotypes

Teacher's gender has been a topic of discussion for most of the past two centuries. Gender plays a decisive role in how the teacher defines their profession. Most societies prescribe different activities and characteristics for male and females which come to be seen as natural by the people involved. Gender stereotypes are cultural constructions. Debora Cameroon (1998) states that gender is not merely a biological divide but is a social construct. It is culturally created by the engagement in communication of those involved. This means that male teachers in ECDE are perceived to be women because culturally child care is the domain of women. Women are expected to do lower cadre jobs as a social construct. Men in ECDE are therefore taking the women's position.

On average, men teach older children, teach more boys than girls and teach harder subjects. Most men decide to enter teaching later than women and concentrate on subjects required for satisfaction as administrators (Lortie, 1975). Mason (1961) found out that of the men he studied, 75% planned to leave the classroom, 51% of them hoped to go into higher position in education while 20% wanted to go outside the education field. Pay, salary and standard of living were among the factors that they cited. Married men expressed their concerns more. Robinson (1988) found that two years after his study, 10% of the male pre-school teachers had left the profession. They reported that what would have kept them there was more money. Brophy (1985) suggests that male and female teachers are much more similar than different in their effectiveness in class; other factors influence learners' achievement other than sex differences. Further, there are many people who believe that the low status and abysmal benefits of the early childhood field are a direct result of it being a women's profession. It would make little sense for these feminists to support the emergence of men – including white men – in the early childhood field. There is alienation and pressure male early childhood professionals feel (Sanders, 2002). This view of institutions in our society reflecting and perpetuating the power structures within our society poses a strange dilemma regarding the early childhood field. Further, because of the lack of anything close to adequate wages and benefits, many of them are poor.

Why we need more men in ECDE

Researcher Sarah Farquhar, of Childforum Research

www.childforum.com outlined to the conference some of the arguments as to why we need more men in the workforce teaching and caring for children in these formative years. First, she argues, society has moved on and men are now more actively engaged in caring for their children with an increasing number taking over as the main caregiver as their partners choose to work fulltime. The absence of men in early childhood centers also means young children may be missing out on any substantial contact with male role models. For children in single parent families, that could mean they have virtually no contact with men at all. Sarah Farquhar also argues that while the early childhood sector, like other sectors of society, stresses non-sexist behaviors, attitudes and choices of play, the composition of the workforce is failing to "practice what it teaches. Farquhar also blames the preponderance of women in the early childhood sector for holding back pay rates for so long, although the recent move to pay equity with the primary education sector has now pushed those rates up. Down at the kindergarten, men involved in early childhood teaching strongly believe in the role both men and women play in educating the under-fives"(Farquhar, 2007).

A Christ church Head teacher, Duncan Fisher points to research that shows boys learn differently from girls – that they learn better from doing and when they can let off steam. The boisterous nature of boys' play does not mean, he says, that they are little monsters and a male teacher may pick up on that when a woman does not. As a result, he says, a male teacher might allow robust behavior to continue a little longer than a woman colleague.

For Tahu Loper, having both men and women on the staff is "the natural way to teach" with each bringing a different perspective to the job. He gives the example of a discussion with a female colleague about banning gun play. "I asked her what she objected to about guns and she said, 'guns kill.' When I was growing up we had a lot of imaginative play with guns." He says the boys at the centre were already biting toast to shape it into guns and his argument was that there could be value in imaginative play with guns that emphasized the sport of target shooting or hunting, and even the mechanics of building guns.

Why men are not in ECDE

Christchurch early childhood teacher, David Baxendell thinks one of the reasons more men are not attracted to a career teaching the under-fives is that it is not seen as a profession. *"That's been a hangover from the days when the work was voluntary - a job for girls in the gap between leaving school and getting married."* He believes developments such as the requirement that

early childhood teachers must be fully qualified will help the sector be accepted as part of the education profession rather than as "care". But he thinks, even then, the acceptance of early childhood teaching as a profession will be slow. *"Some people really don't understand what's involved. [They think] it's not a real job, you're just playing with children. Men still don't understand just what's involved in the pedagogical aspect of the job because they haven't spent time with their children or visited an early childhood centre and seen what goes on."* Pay rates are seen as another reason why men have not been attracted to the early childhood teaching sector. David Baxendell recalls how hard it was when he began teaching more than two decades ago. *"Starting pay was not good. As a mature male and with small children and being the single income earner it was very difficult to keep the family going."* He believes, too, that had there been more men in the sector the pay rates would have improved much sooner. *"Women have always got the short end of the stick in terms of pay rates and I don't think the men in early childhood have been sufficient to drag that up."* The literature on what men want from their occupation also suggests career progression is particularly important. For David Baxendell it was the lack of hierarchy that attracted him into the job. He wanted to teach and was not interested in doing administration so the kindergarten structure suited him perfectly since there was no chance of being pushed into teaching older age groups or into administration as he had seen happen to male teachers in primary schools. *Within the "classroom" there is progression from teacher to head teacher, while the association has positions for education support managers and another tier of management above that. There are also opportunities for secondment to organisations such as the Education Review Office and the Ministry of Education as well as for lecturing about early childhood education.*

Another hindrance, men working in the system say, is the fact that the role of men in the early childhood sector is invisible and hence un recognized. Teacher of five years, Tahu Loper says all the photos in the training literature about early childhood teaching were of women; so were the brochures used to recruit students; and he says the same applies in the wider media, for example, nappy ads on television. *"They're not directed at fathers but they change nappies too!"* His colleague Duncan Fisher believes young men who might be interested in early childhood teaching simply don't even know the job exists. "How many school counselors have said in the past two-to-three years to their male students 'have you thought of early childhood?'. I'd suggest none." One exception, he says has been Rangī Ruru Early Childhood College in Christchurch, which photographed him for one of its

Table 1. Opinions Regarding Gender of ECDE Teachers.

Question	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Who is the most desirable in an ECDE classroom.	66	34	14	86
2. Most male teachers will choose to go into administration	79	21	79	21
3. Teachers are highly regarded as members of other professions	19	81	19	81
4. Male pre-school teachers are highly regarded by males in other professions	10	90	09	91
5. Female are give preference in living in ECDE programs	13	77	52	49
6. Education is a better career choice for a woman than a man.	33	67	14	86

career information packs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Opinions regarding gender of ECDE teachers

33% of male teachers felt that men were more effective in teaching in pre-school while only 14% of women agreed. Majority of the pre-school teachers felt that gender did not make a difference. 66% of the men felt that women were more desirable in an early childhood classroom while the majority of women said that gender did make a difference. 79% of the respondent agreed that most male teachers will choose to administration. 89% of the responded disagreed with the fact that teachers are highly regarded as members of other professions. 99% of the respondent disagreed that male pre-school teachers are highly regarded by males of other professions. 57% of the women thought that they are a preferred choice of a pre-school teacher. 39% of the respondents agreed that education is better career choice for a woman than a man while 14% of the women refused the same. Table 1.

Regarding commonly held perception on the role of male and female in pre-school teaching profession, both male and female pre-school teachers felt that the teacher's gender is a point of concern when parents choose schools for their children. The same question was posed to parents who agreed that they consider the gender of the teacher since young children need to be 'mothered'. They further added that male teachers may not be patient with them. The children may also be uncomfortable being escorted to the toilet by male teachers. The women teachers are care givers. 76% of the parents respondents reported that women are loving and tender while men are dispensed discipline, helped with coaching, breaking up fights, moving and repairing equipment.

Factors important in choosing an ECDE career

Factors important in choosing an ECDE career were ranked in a descending order as follows;

1. I wanted to help children succeed.
2. I wanted to make a difference
3. Teaching seemed like it would provide a satisfying career
4. I love kids and enjoy working with them
5. I enjoy the challenge of teaching
6. A career in teaching would allow me raise my family
7. Job skills learnt in teaching can be transferred to other professions
8. Teaching seemed like an easy job
9. I had no other choice after failing to get a better job

The above responses indicate that male teachers just as female ones want to teach young ones and think teaching pre-scholars is a worthy job. They also love children and enjoy working with them. Few thought that teaching pre-scholars was a last resort and that they had taken it for granted as an easy job. An X-ray into this ranking also reveals that even the male teachers in pre-schools have a low opinion of the job and regard it as easy. This could imply it is a career meant for women.

.... " I officially entered the field of early childhood when I decided to get a Masters degree in early childhood education. I have worked with children and infants through school age and directed a Primary school . Do I feel professionally fulfilled? Yes. Over the years I have greatly enjoyed working closely with children, parents, teachers, early childhood administrators, and college students. I feel I have grown a great deal professionally in regards to my understanding of what children need, how children learn, the critical importance of family-program collaboration, and the politics of early childhood care and education. I have also developed a deep appreciation of, and understanding for, the difficult task of raising children in today's society. As I look back over 15 years of working in the field, I deeply believe that men can find personal fulfillment in the field, and can contribute to its development and progress." (Male Masters Degree Student).

"No. One of my motivations in choosing an early childhood career was the goal of becoming a leader in the field, particularly a government leader in some capacity. Personally, I am not keen teaching pre-scholars but to get promotion and be a District Programme officer". (4th Year Male Teacher respondent).

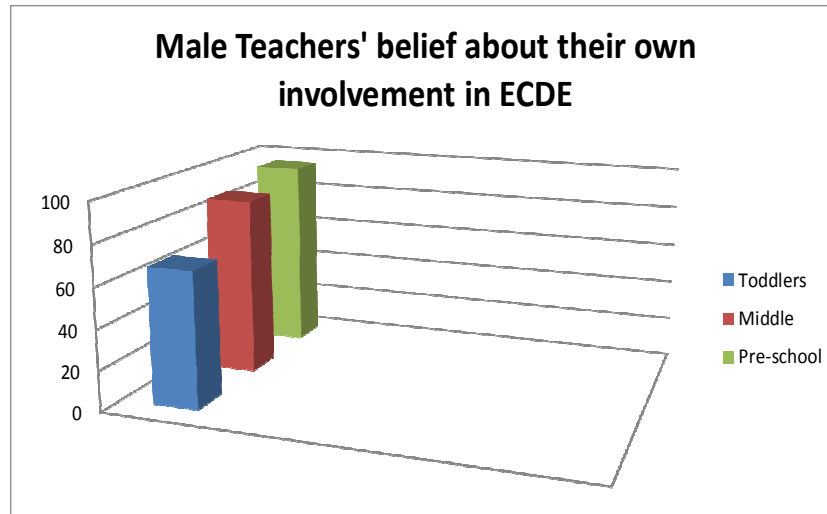


Figure 1

Male Teachers' Perception towards Their Own Job

86% of the male teachers reported to be comfortable with their teaching job in a pre- school while 14% were not. When probed further they said it was due to how society and parents view them with suspicion. When asked if they feel inferior to female counterparts 98% disagreed while a mere 2% were not sure of their feelings.

Majority of them reported that parents preferred them teaching older children than baby class. Parents also added that it is because of cultural orientations and socialization patterns that they preferred female teachers handling the very young children. Head teachers also placed them in the upper ECDE class or most were hired as assistant pre-school teachers. The pre-school male teachers reported to teach more boys than girls. When asked if their presence reduced boy's problems in pre – school, 53% agreed while 47% disagreed. This question was complemented by another one that sought to find out if the male teachers' absence would make children miss a male role model. 64% of them answered in the affirmative saying that their presence filled the missing gap for some of the children who came from single parent families or whose parents worked for long hours away from home.

Using the scale of Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5), male in-service pre-school teachers in colleges at Narok Town were asked what their beliefs were about their own involvement in ECDE. A survey soliciting their feedback about what they feel about getting involved in pre-school teaching elicited responses that are presented below Figure 1.

The results revealed that a majority of pre-service male teachers believe it is important for pre-school children to have male teachers. They however differed in their feelings regarding the age level of the child. 95% felt it was important for children in school age (pre-

school) to have male teachers whereas 67% felt it was important for children in the toddler/infant programmes to have male teachers. Nearly all the respondents (90%) believe that male and female teachers are equally capable of nurturing young children in educational settings.

An open-ended question was posed to these male pre-service teachers to find out why there are very few men in ECDE programmes in Kenya. Almost three-quarters in the sample (71%) believe that low wages are the primary reason why there are so few men working as teachers in early child care programmes. However, they added that individual and societal biases also accounted for the under-representation of males in the early childhood workforce.

The following responses suggest gender stereotyping and how it negatively impacts the professional involvement of men in the care and education of young children. Some respondents admitted to holding these personal biases, others expressed biases they have heard among parents and female colleagues.

"I don't think males have the nurturing qualities that females do. Women naturally nurture" (Male respondent 3rd Year).

"Many men don't just enjoy spending time with children or have the patience to do so" (Male respondent...4th Year).

"Society considers working with young children to be a woman's work so men who choose this work are looked down upon" (Male respondent...Certificate).

"Parents don't want male teachers, We will lose children from our programme if we employ men" (Female 3rd Year respondent).

"There are still strong cultural expectations that a man needs to be the primary wage earner and woman primary care-giver. Pre-school teachers earn very little which is demeaning to a man" (Male respondent...4th Year).

Table 2. Male teachers' perceptions towards their own role as pre-school teachers

Statement	Mean
I feel comfortable as a pre-school teacher	3.72
I feel inferior to my female counterparts in pre-school.	1.20
I am appreciated and accepted by pre-school parents as their children's caregiver.	2.90
I enjoy teaching in pre-school.	3.12
I was forced into this profession by circumstances.	4.31
I trained as a pre-school teacher.	2.40
I interact effectively with pupils in class.	3.87
I manage to regulate pupils' behavior effectively in classrooms.	3.65
I enjoy playing with the children.	3.02
I prefer teaching older pre-scholars.	3.98
I involve other staff members in what I do with pupils.	3.00
I prefer teaching boys than girls in my classroom.	2.94
I help children to learn tasks fast and effectively.	3.99
I adhere to small children's routines.	2.86
I prefer being an administrator than classroom teacher.	4.63

"My colleagues have told me that when people hear that you are enrolled in an ECDE programme, they think that you are a woman in men's clothing" (Male respondent...Diploma).

" I believe that many men worry about being subjected to unfounded allegations of child abuse" (Male respondent. ..Masters Programme).

Another important research question sought to find out what male teachers and Male parents felt about involvement of Male pre-school teachers in the ECDE programmes.

Fathers want to be respected as equal partners in raising their children. They also want teachers to talk to them about their children, rather than always referring to their wives. Fathers want strategies to use to work with teachers in the early childhood program and school when they wish to address a problem. They want strategies that won't intimidate the teacher or put the teacher on the defensive. Fundamentally, fathers want to be viewed as important people in the lives and education of their children.

Male teachers expressed a wish to want to work with young children without their motives being questioned and without being placed under constant scrutiny by administrators, other teachers, and parents for possibility of being abusers. Male teachers want to feel like they belong in the profession and the program.

Male teachers want to be treated equally in everything, including rules, expectations, and personnel policies. Men want to have the right to express their beliefs and opinions about various aspects of the profession without being considered aggressive, opinionated, and without being accused of trying to take over the field. Fathers and other significant men in a child's life want social activities that include the whole

family, as well as opportunities to talk to other fathers.

Men want training that highlights the importance of fathers and men in the lives of children and should not have to listen to presentations about men as being 'the oppressors and the enemy.' Fathers and significant men want specific ideas about ways to be engaged and involved with their children so male teachers want to believe they can have a career in early childhood education, if they so choose.

A questionnaire administered to pre-school male teachers elicited the following responses. Table 2

These findings reveal that the male pre-school teachers in Narok town have a positive attitude towards their profession as pre-school teachers. However, it came out clearly that most of them prefer being administrators than classroom teachers (Mean,4.63), prefer teaching older children (Mean,3.98), and were forced into pre-school teaching by circumstances(Mean,4.31).This could be due to stereotyping of early childhood profession that made men to look down upon this profession. The male teachers agree that they are comfortable teaching pre-scholars, help them effectively in class, and interact effectively with them. This shows that they feel they are just as good as their female counterparts.

When probed further over the biases in recruitment, male pre-service teachers indicated that there should be special incentives like scholarships to attract men into ECDE in Kenya. Others included encouraging male volunteer teachers to work in pre-schools, encourage male head teachers to recruit fellow men, and involving parents in recruitment of teachers in the pre-schools. The male teachers were of the opinion that they do not respond differently towards children than their female counterparts. This contradicts what is commonly believed that ECDE is predominantly a woman's profession. It instead confirms that both male and

Table 3. Pre- school female teacher's perceptions towards male counterpart effectiveness

Question/Statement	Female Teacher	
	YES	NO
Is he competent in classroom interaction with pupils	x	
In your view is he competent in helping children to learn tasks		x
Is he active when engaging in teacher initiated curriculum activities like outdoor play or modeling ?		x
Does he play with children? Which specific activities?	x	
Does he regulate the children's behavior like instructing them not to do what they are not supposed to do?	x	
Does he follow the daily schedule?	x	
Does he adhere to small children's routines?		x
Does he organize the environment like making the room beautiful?		x
Does he give children playing materials	x	
Does he involve other staff members in what he is doing with pupils?	x	

Table 4. Perceptions of Pre-school Parents towards Male Care- givers of Their Children

Statement	Mean
There is no difference between a male and female teacher.	2.56
I can only trust female pre-school teachers with my child	4.41
Male pre- school teachers lack patience with the children	4.02
Male pre- school teachers are effective classroom teachers	3.00
I chose this school because I wanted my child to be taught by both male and female teachers	1.84
I avoided a pre-school with a male teacher because I could not trust my daughter with him	3.53
Male teachers are important as roles models to the pre- school children	3.76
Prefer and desire female teachers in pre- school than male ones	3.94
I do not regard male pre-school teacher highly	4.51
I would give preference to women in hiring pre- school teachers into a program.	4.87
Education is a better career choice for a woman a man	4.93
Traditionally, children's rearing is a woman's job	4.89

female teachers should teach pre-scholars for both feminine and masculine personalities to form respectively and for social competence of children. Responses to *the question that asked male teachers why they think the ECDE profession is dominated by women* elicited the following responses:

- Low salaries
- Stereotyping
- Low respectability
- Fear of being accused of abuse
- Low status of the profession

This further confirms that feminization of ECDE profession has been caused by culture. The patriarchal society believes that women should take the second place jobs that have low respectability, low salaries and low status of the profession. Table 3.

69.2% of the above questions were answered in the affirmative. This implies that female teachers who observe professionalism have no problem working with male teachers in the ECDE programme. It also means that the female teachers have confidence in male teachers that the men too are competent ECDE teachers. This then removes the stereotyping attached to pre-school education and advocates for gender bala-

nce. Table 4.

These findings reveal that parents in Narok town have a negative attitude towards male teachers in ECDE programmes. They are strongly influenced by stereotyping especially due to the traditional culture. Most of them strongly agreed that traditionally child rearing is a woman's job (Mean,4.89); education is a better career for women (Mean,4.93); they do not regard male pre-school teachers highly (Mean,4.51); they cannot trust male pre-school teachers with their daughters (4.41) and the belief that male pre-school teachers lack patience with young ones. In the same vein, they agree that male teachers are important role models to pre-school children. However, these parents are not sure if male pre-school teachers are as competent as female ones.

Traditionally both men and women should nurture children. There should be an emotional connectedness with children and communication with parents through home visits, invites for parents to classrooms, field trips and parent – teacher conferences,. However, culture greatly affects the way parents perceive Male teachers. They are apprehensive about leaving their young daughter especially with the male teachers. However

the male teacher reads books to the children, helps them write their names, teaches them songs, shows them how to fix puzzles, skips ropes and models with the children, watches over them as they integrate or play, solves problems between them and teaches them to tidy up working areas;

DISCUSSION

There are, of course, many reasons to include men in the lives of young children. Foremost of these is the need for young boys and girls to develop positive relationships with men, and to develop positive views of maleness and masculinity (Cunningham and Dorsey, 2004; Mukuna, 2008). The overall positive impact of father involvement in the healthy development of young children has been well documented (MacDonald and Parke, 1984; Lamb, Pleck, and Levine, 1985; Gadsden and Ray, 2002; Mukuna, 2008). One way to increase the involvement of men in the lives of their children is to include more fathers, other male relatives, boyfriends, etc., into the early childhood education program (Fagan, 1996). And the best way to attract these men is to make them feel welcome. Research shows that fathers are more likely to become involved with their children when opportunities to do so are provided for them (Cohen, 1993).

As Kay Sanders suggests, "If we truly want to include men in the early childhood culture, we must create supports within the early childhood profession that allow male teachers to build a sense of belonging" (2002, p. 46). Paul Sargent adds, "Rather than confining our efforts to changing men, it is apparent that our profession must make some significant changes to the culture of teaching to recruit men and help them enter and remain in the field" (2002, p. 30). This requires a radical change of the culture itself, and it is unethical to attempt to attract men to our field until we make these changes. However, regardless of whether we really want men involved in caring for young children, we cannot ignore the importance of including fathers and other significant men in our programs. The research on the positive impact of father involvement on children's success is clear and definitive (Gadsden and Ray, 2002). Further, research also suggests that when mothers believe men are capable of nurturing and their involvement is valued, fathers devote more time to being with their infants and young children (Beitel and Parke, 1998). Here are some additional ideas, based on Neugebauer (1999); Sanders (2002); Sargent (2002); Wardle, (2003); Cunningham and Dorsey, (2004).

CONCLUSION

Determinants of gender imbalance are: Culture and stereotypes, perception of parents, Low salary, Low respectability of the profession, Fear of being accused

of abuse and Low status of the profession. Male teachers feel that they are as competent as female teachers in class management. They feel that a socially competent child is that taught by both male and female teachers. They feel that their presence in schools enhances boys' masculinity and prepares them to nurture children later in life. Half of female teachers supported male teachers in pre-school while only 27% pre-school parents were comfortable with male teachers as caregivers of their children. It also emerged that most pre-school male teachers took the job as a last resort or were interested in administrative duties. Generally gender is socially constructed and has dictated feminization and gender imbalance in pre-schools in Kenya.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Pre- school administrators should welcome male teachers in ECDE programs.
2. The vision, mission and policies of ECDE programs should reflect staff diversity and active recruitment of male staff.
3. Low status of the profession and issues of gender in the workplace can also encourage all staff to put aside pre-conceived notions about roles of men and women.
4. Men should be encouraged to exercise the full range of practices available to all teachers and be encouraged to apply for pre-school teaching jobs.
5. Teacher educators should provide education on ECDE to career counselors and guidance personnel. They should also recruit many men so that they form a critical mass for men in ECDE programs. Career teachers should introduce young to careers of working with children.
6. Teacher educators should assess the culture and environment of their classes.

To do the above, ideas to make ECDE programmes male friendly include

- Shift the view from biological fathers to fathering – men who nurture children, including but not limited to biological fathers. Reach out and support any man involved with the child. Let families know you expect both parents to be involved in program activities like conferences.
- Recruit male staff and volunteers. High scholars, senior citizens, community volunteers, scouts, and college students needing a practicum for a class or course, all enjoy working with young children.
- Examine your own biases.
- Help men find support outside your program: conferences, male caucuses, informal males in child care support groups, even Internet groups.
- Use training materials—books, videos, etc.—that include men routinely caring for children.

- Revise all policies and procedures that produce informally and formally different working conditions for men and women. Directly address any informal hidden agendas in the program that communicate a lack of welcome for men and unequal treatment.
- Provide ample staff training to explore anti-male bias and teacher and father involvement. Also, provide opportunities for staff—men and women—to explore their own feelings about men in child care, and discuss ways to avoid assigning responsibilities by gender.
- Encourage women staff to interact with children in ways they may be less comfortable doing: exploration, rough-and-tumble play, facilitating curiosity, digging in the garden, and working on the workbench and in the block area.
- Start a men's group at the program or school to enable male family members to discuss issues and find support. Ideas to make fathers and other significant men feel welcome in your program include:
 - Have pictures of fathers and male caregivers with young children in the entry hallway, in newsletters sent home, on parent boards, in advertisements, and in staff recruitment materials;
 - Specifically invite men to volunteer when you need volunteers; also ask men to suggest activities they would enjoy being involved in at school, and then solicit their help in developing the activity;
 - Help each family identify a man in the child's life, be it a biological father, uncle, or friend and work closely with that person (Cunningham and Dorsey, 2004);
 - Train staff on ways to work with fathers and other significant men;
 - Provide parenting activities that are of particular interest to men (Wardle, 2003);
 - Disseminate articles to families that support the many reasons men need to be involved with their children, and ideas of what they can do with their children;
 - Formally and informally recognize the involvement of men in your program. Another way to attract fathers and other significant men to become involved in the program is to have male staff. Recruit fathers to help build several playgrounds, teach the children wood-work, and collect wood for the woodwork learning centers. Attracting men to early childhood programs has, however, proved to be very difficult.

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