

Preparation and Teaching in Primary School: A Case Study of a Private School in Eldoret Municipality

J.K. Too & P.A Kafu

Abstract

Good planning involves collecting, organizing, and preparing information in the form of subject matter for pupils. But its success will largely depend on the teachers' attitude and initiative. What motivated this investigation is the near unanimous concern by parents, educators, and other stakeholders in the education sector about the quality of teaching in Private academies which have proliferated in Kenya. Serious allegations have been made about such academies only concentrating on drilling pupils to pass exams without much regard to teaching concepts, imparting knowledge, skills and desirable values.

The main objective of this study was to establish how teachers in private schools prepare and conduct their lessons. A leading private school in Eldoret, well established, excelling in KCPE and with over a thirty year period of existence, was purposively selected for the study. All the 27 teachers in the school participated in the study. Their teaching documents were examined and they were observed while teaching. Data was collected using an Observation Schedule that was developed and piloted in a similar private school but in a different municipality. Data collected was analyzed and presented in frequency tables. The hypothesis was tested using One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings of the study revealed that teachers in the school presented their lessons poorly and did not have a proper storage system for their documents as well as learning materials. Questioning skills, use of resources and class control were also found wanting. It was recommended that teachers in Private Schools need induction and should be frequently monitored to maintain high standards.

Introduction

Planning in teaching is absolutely essential. Teachers are important and make a difference. The quality of teaching is a crucial factor in promoting effective learning in schools. Effective teaching requires individuals who are academically able and who care about the well-being of children and youth (Smith, 2001). At the beginning of the school calendar year a teacher has to think ahead and map out what he plans to do with each of the classes he is going to teach. Teachers who show enthusiasm for subject, professional area and teaching role motivate pupils as they look forward to coming to that class. Effective teachers make purpose and content explicit, plan carefully, use systematic assessment and feedback, make connections, encourage children to think about thinking and model what they want the children to do (Farrant, 2006, Nacino-Brown et. al., 1994).

In spite of the seriousness attached to planning during the training, reports about teachers in the field have raised concern teacher competence; especially with regard to planning and readiness to teach (Aduda, 2000).

Private schools in particular, have been accused of not adhering to the professional demands of planning for instruction. The purpose of this study was to establish whether teachers in private schools plan for instruction and conduct their class sessions professionally.

Busara* School is a private institution located in Eldoret town in Uasin Gishu District. It was established in 1985 as a Children's Home for orphaned, street children and other kids who are vulnerable. Later, as the school expanded, it admitted children from families who would pay. The reasoning behind that shift in policy for admission was that parents who were able to pay fees would subsidize the cost of running the Home. Further it would assist in integrating the vulnerable children with those from typical family set-ups. The school was initially run as a primary school but has now expanded to Secondary level; all under one administration. It is managed by the Principal, Deputy and Heads of Departments. The idea of undertaking an Inspection of the school arose when the principal researcher was collecting data for another study involving classroom observation of Mathematics lessons.

It was during that interaction that the Principal noted that the school had never been inspected by the Inspectorate from the Ministry of Education nor any other professional body. The inspection envisaged was one that would focus on Curriculum and Syllabus coverage, pedagogy, Classroom process, availability and use of learning resources, school organization, Time Tabling and co-curricula activities. The Principal also noted that despite having made requests to then District Inspector of Schools, no positive response had been received. It was therefore against that background that the management approached the researchers for a through inspection of the School to establish her status quo in respect of the issues raised above and other parameters of efficiency required of a school. The name Busara is not the real name of the School studied. It has been used to keep confidentiality of the School.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

- i. To find out whether teachers in private schools in Eldoret Municipality planned for teaching.
- ii. To establish how teachers in private schools in Eldoret Municipality prepare their teaching documents.
- iii. To find if there is any difference in teaching at lower, middle and upper primary class levels.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Bruner's constructivist theory which articulates that Learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current/past knowledge. The learner selects and transforms information, constructs concepts, and make decisions, relying on a cognitive structure to do so. Cognitive structure (i.e., schema, mental models) provides meaning and organization to experiences and allows the individual to "go beyond the information given". This is what a teacher should be cognizant of in planning to teach. <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/bruner.htm> Emanating from this Theoretical Framework, the following null hypothesis was constructed: Ho there is no difference in the teaching approaches used by teachers in Lower, Middle and Upper classes in privately run primary schools

* Not real name

Methodology

A descriptive case study design was adopted for this study. This involved the use of an Observation Form, and interview to obtain data about teacher preparation and classroom teaching. These instruments were designed to gather information on: preparation of teaching documents, classroom profile and actual classroom teaching.

The school was purposively selected from three that have a long history of establishment and development. Case study design was used because the study was in-depth; and interested in investigating the micro details of teacher preparation and classroom discourse. This design was deemed valuable as it brings out a relatively accurate qualitative report about a given phenomenon.

Consequently all the twenty seven (27) teachers in the school participated in the study. All the teachers were trained except one who was teaching a foreign subject (French) had undergone training. The instruments used in the study were piloted in Private Schools in a different Municipality. This was done to guard against interaction of the pilot group and the study sample, which would compromise the results. A test re-test method of establishing the reliability of an instrument was used and a reliability index (0.67) obtained for the questionnaire was modest and acceptable. According to Koul (1984); reliability index of 0.50 and above is acceptable.

Results and Discussion

The data obtained from the school are now discussed under the following three sections namely: Preparation of teaching documents, Classroom profile and Classroom teaching.

Preparation of Teaching Documents

The study revealed that generally the preparation of teaching documents was not satisfactory. Noticeably, the weaknesses observed were in the Schemes of work, Lesson Planning, Record of Work, Course Outline, Filing and Storage There was a general scheme of work format adopted by the school but lacked essential information in columns like **Activities, References and Assessment** that support effective teaching. The school has also adopted the traditional lesson plan format which is teacher-centered. Other weaknesses observed were in the stating of lesson objectives .The three main components should state the level of students learning, conditions under which the planned instruction will take place and the performance level of the learner are supposed to be reflected in the objectives stated (**Hayes, 2000**). This was not the case there. In the case of lesson introduction and conclusion, there were observed weaknesses in the manner in which these two elements of lesson preparation were done. A few lessons had no lesson introduction while almost all lessons lacked lesson conclusion.

Time tables and registers are the two teaching documents that are regularly maintained however, the documents which recorded poor preparation and maintenance were records of work covered, course out-lines and filing as well as storage systems (Table 1). This finding does not reflect well on a private school that is supposed to be well established in terms of facilities and staffing. It also happens to be very popular with parents in Eldoret Municipality.

Table 1: Summary of the Preparation of Teaching Documents

Documents	Adequate	Not Adequate	Not Available	Total
Scheme of work	19	2	6	27
Lesson Objective(s)	15	12	-	27
Lesson plan	16	11		27
Record of Work	2	2	23	27
Progress Records	21	-	6	27
Course Outline	1	4	22	27
Class Registers	24	3	-	27
Personal time table	25	-	2	27
Class time table	27	-	-	27
Filing and storage	3	2	22	27

The Classroom Profile

Organization and management of learning areas is an important component of effective teaching since it provides a conducive atmosphere for students learning. A creative and imaginative teacher with an open attitude to change is more likely to succeed in the class. Equally important is that he should be systematic, well organized, focused, determined and hardworking (Smith & Call, 2003).

Normally this process involves development, maintenance and utilization of specific facilities and resources in the classroom, among which are furniture, display areas and storage facilities (Nsubuga, 2000). Increasing attention is being paid to research aimed at discovering ways of producing low cost educational materials and using a greater proportion of local materials in the construction of items for learning and teaching (Farrant, 2006).

The study found that all the rooms were well designed, secure and appropriate for learning. However the student population in some of these rooms was found to be higher than the space provided. The learning rooms were ideal for a student population of 30, which seem not to be the case. The enrolments in some of these classes were 40 to 45 on average, which is high. This makes it difficult for the teachers to conduct their teaching effectively and also supervise the students' class work efficiently.

In the case of display areas, the study found that the school has installed suitable chalkboards for use although all of them had no permanent lines for teaching certain specialized subjects in the curriculum. Similarly the chalkboards had no accessories like hooks for hanging charts, wall-maps and templates. Further, nearly all the classrooms in standards 1 and 2 classes had bulletin

boards which were not utilized. This observation was very interesting in that these are learning resources which teachers use to provide for students extended learning. While emphasis is placed on activity learning in lower and middle primary levels, there was little evidence in the observed classrooms of facilities developed for that purpose; such as *nature tables*, *centers of interest*, *mobiles* and *nature charts*. The absence of these learning materials denied the pupils at this level, wholesome learning since the children do not get the opportunity to develop all the aspects of learning (cognitive, physical, emotional and social).

Generally all the learning areas had the right type of desks for students. In addition, the sitting pattern was of the column format which in some cases restricted the teachers’ movement in the classrooms when supervising the student’s work. It is noteworthy to state that all the desks were designed to provide security for the students’ property.

The last consideration in the classroom organization and management is the development and maintenance of class library facilities. This is an essential facility in that it provides students in upper classes with reading materials that are intended to enrich their learning. In spite of this importance, the study did not find any class library in the school. The details of the observations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of the Classroom Profile

Facility/Resource	Available	Not Available	Total
Collections- Objects, Specimens, Models	1	13	14
Display Areas	3	11	14
Bulletin Board	10	4	14
Flannel Board	0	14	14
Class Library	0	14	14
Storage	3	11	14

Teaching

This section of the study presents the core component of the research conducted in the school. It involved observing “live” lessons as conducted by all the teachers in the school. Among the things considered in this observation were lesson presentation, personality and the use of media resources.

Table 3 shows how teachers performed in the classroom as measured on a rating ranging from ‘very good’ to ‘very poor’. The first column contains the six elements examined in the classroom plus a general comment on the overall impression the assessors had on the teacher’s presentation.

Table 3: Teacher Performance in the Classroom Instruction (%).

Skill/Rating	V.good > 4.4	Good 4.5-3.6	Average 3.5 – 2.6	Poor 2.5-1.6	V.poor 1.6 >	Total
Lesson Introduction	7(25.9)	11 (40.7)	7(25.9)	2(7.4)	0	27 (100)
Questioning	2(7.4)	19(70.4)	3 (11.1)	3(11.1)	0	27 (100)
Use of Resources	2(7.4)	8(29.6)	4(14.8)	12(44.4)	1(3.7)	27(100)
Personality	5(18.5)	15(55.6)	4(14.8)	3(11.1)	0	27 (100)
Conclusion	0	4(14.8)	4(14.8)	9(33.3)	10 (37.0)	27(100)
General Comments	2(7.4)	5(18.5)	14(51.8)	6(22.2)	0	27(100)

From that observation, it is apparent that the performance of teachers in this School is generally satisfactory. However there were a number of weaknesses in some areas. Among the noted shortcomings were lesson introduction, lesson conclusion and the use of learning materials.

Generally, lesson introduction was well conducted by teachers, although a few (32%) of them were not. The most prevalent weaknesses in the aspect of lesson presentation were lack of variety in the lesson introduction activities: often less inspiring to the learners, conducted abruptly or ambush sort of manner and in some cases no introduction at all.

In the case of lesson presentations, the researchers noted weaknesses in the following major areas namely; instructional procedures, questioning techniques and use of resources by the teachers. Generally, teachers demonstrated competence in lesson presentation; they used appropriate methods of teaching; used examples that were relevant and familiar to the learners. The content was suitable and within the learners' level. Most of the responses were reinforced accordingly. However weaknesses were noted in the questioning techniques. More often than not, questions were of general nature, not appropriate for the class level or individual learner. The distribution of questions around the class was skewed as some particular pupils tended to respond repeatedly.

As for the use of learning resources in teaching; many teachers were found not making use of these materials in their teaching. But the few teachers found using these items did so inappropriately. For example they tended to withdraw them before students had sufficiently studied or displayed them too long after their necessity on the chalkboard was required. Generally, there was inadequate use of learning resources in all the observed lessons. One could

discern an attitude among teachers of not attaching much importance to the use of instructional media.

Concerning the personality of the teachers; the study found that all the teachers had pleasant personality. That is; they were confident, well groomed, warm, receptive and supportive to their students. In addition, most of them had good mastery of content.

Although the teachers had a generally good image their lesson conclusion was not professionally conducted as indicated in Table 3. The majority (63%) of the lessons observed had either poorly conducted lesson conclusions or there was none at all. Teaching being an interactional activity requires that one ends properly by providing a summary of what has been learnt; giving an assignment, readings or previewing what will follow in the next lesson.

The study also investigated whether there were differences in the way teachers in the school conducted their lessons in various class levels. For purposes of analysis, classes 1 to 3 was categorized as Lower; classes 4 to 6 as Middle and classes 7 to 8 as Upper. Table 4 provides the data which compares the performance of teachers in the three class levels of the selected primary school. From this table it is quite apparent that teachers teaching in Upper Primary tended to perform relatively better (3.6) than those in Lower (3.4) and Middle (2.8) primary levels. The overall mean performance of the teachers was 3.3; which is average as per the rating shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of Classroom Teaching Between Three Class Levels

Skill	Class Level			
	Lower	Middle	Upper	Mean
Lesson Introduction	3.9	3.6	4.3	3.9
Instructional Procedures	3.9	3.6	4.3	3.9
Questioning	2.8	3.0	3.4	3.0
Personality	4.0	3.5	4.2	3.9
Conclusion	2.5	1.9	1.7	2.1
<i>Overall</i>	3.4	2.8	3.6	3.3

Results obtained in Table 4 on performance of teachers in the three class levels were subjected to inferential statistical test to establish whether the differences observed were significant or not.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test because the measurement of the variable-performance was at interval level. This statistical test was also deemed appropriate because it tests whether differences in means is significant at a given confidence level. A summary of this analysis is presented in Table 5. This table shows that the calculated value of $F=0.66$ is less than the critical table value $F(2, 15)=3.68$, at 0.05 level of significance. This result supports the null hypothesis that ‘that there is no difference in the approach used by teachers in the Lower, Middle and Upper levels in Primary School. The small differences observed could have been due to chance errors. It is therefore safe to conclude that teachers generally conduct their lessons the same way irrespective of class level.

Table 5: ANOVA of Teachers’ Performance in Lower, Middle and Upper Classes

Source of variation	SS	d.f.	MS	F	Level (0.05)
SS Between	0.78	2	0.39	0.66	$F(2,15)=3.68$
SS Within	8.87	15	0.59		
Total	9.65	17			

One though, would have expected some significant differences, particularly in the Lower classes where age, maturation, socialization and motivation levels may dictate use of specific techniques that may not apply to Upper classes. Nonetheless this finding is not conclusive and may require further investigation with a larger sample and covering a wider area. Such an undertaking would perhaps lead to identifying the most appropriate way(s) of planning and teaching pupils at the various levels in primary school.

Conclusion

Although teachers were found having prepared and using the essential teaching documents, inadequacies were observed in the structure, maintenance, and presentation. Teachers are generally competent in their instructional performance although there were weaknesses in some aspects of lesson presentation, class control/discipline and use of learning resources which need to be addressed urgently.

Teachers of this school are quite confident in their work; perhaps derived from their mastery of curriculum areas they are teaching and efficiency in school management. The teaching of demanding subjects like Maths, Languages and Physical Education may not be effective because of the way in which these subjects are scheduled.

Recommendations

1. The school should adopt the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) scheme of work and Lesson Plan formats. These formats are in line with the new trends and philosophy in teaching.

2. Lesson objectives should be stated clearly in behavioural terms specifying the conditions of learning and level of student's performance in learning.
3. The class sizes be maintained at 30 pupils per class so as to provide adequate space for conducting various class activities with ease.
4. The sitting arrangement be adopted to activity learning pattern in lower primary School level (standards one to three). This facilitates easy movement in the classroom.
5. Teachers develop and use displays and class libraries to serve as learning areas for students. Any material used in teaching should be adequately displayed in the classroom for students to consult them. Besides, teachers should develop class libraries for use by students.
6. All lessons conducted should have appropriate lesson introduction and conclusion.
7. Teachers should develop and use a variety of learning resources in their teaching.

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Authors

Dr. Jackson Too is an Educational, Communication and Technologist in the School of Education, Moi University. His experience ranges from teaching, teaching practice supervision and research in Curriculum, Instruction and Media Technology. Currently he is the Head of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media at Moi University.

Prof. Patrick Kafu is a Professor of Educational Communication and Technology. He has a wealth of experience in teacher training and curriculum development. He has taught in a teacher training college, developed curricula at Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E.) and pioneered the establishment of then Faculty of Education in Moi University. Currently he is the Head of Centre for Teacher Education (CTE) in the same institution.