



**PRE-PRIMARY
CHILDREN
ASSESSMENT
REPORT**

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Photo credit: Uwezo Tanzania

Chalinze District Council, Coast Region, Tanzania.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is increasing evidence that investment in children under 8 years of age builds a better educated, prosperous and peaceful citizen in the future. Children who participate in quality Early Childhood Development and Learning programs, when compared with children who do not participate, are likely to enrol in schools, become productive adults, and educate their own children.

Tanzania recognizes that the first eight years of a child's life are very critical to their development. The child's early experiences and environment lay a foundation for his/her later development as well as success at school and in life in general. In this cognizance, in 1995, the government of Tanzania formalised and integrated pre-primary education in the formal education system to cater for children aged 5 and 6 years (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT, 1995). By that time, however, the 2 years of pre-primary education cycle were not explicitly stated as compulsory.

Nevertheless, the Education and Training Policy (ETP) 1995 stressed that children (aged 5-6) should have pre-primary education before they are admitted to Standard I. Furthermore, the ETP advocated each primary school in Tanzania to have a pre-primary class as an addendum. Later in 2014, the government declared a 1-year of pre-primary education as compulsory and fee-free for children aged 4 to 5 years. Children aged 3-4 years may be allowed to enrol in pre-primary classes if early assessment reveals that they are ready (demonstrate ability to be independent, ability to express themselves, and can follow simple instructions) for school.

The objective of the pre-primary education (PPE) in Tanzania is to prepare children for primary education. The PPE intends to promote overall personality development of a child, fostering his/her physical, mental, moral, and social characteristics and capabilities. Furthermore, the PPE aims at promoting early literacy and numeracy skills through playful and pleasurable activities to prepare children for primary education (United Republic of Tanzania (URT), 2016). To achieve the intended goals, pre-primary education content is organised into six learning areas/competences namely ability to relate, ability to communicate, ability to

care for his/her health, ability to care for the environment, ability to master artistic skills, and ability to apply mathematical concepts. Kiswahili is the medium of instruction in most public pre-primary schools. The pre-primary cycle lasts for 194 school days distributed in two terms. The allocated days are equivalent to 39 weeks per year. A total of 25 periods, five periods of 20 minutes per day, are covered in a week.

A pre-primary school day lasts for three and thirty minutes. In most schools, lessons start at 8:00 am and end at 11:00 am. Some schools, however, have afternoon sessions which start from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Children are expected to spend the first 25 minutes in a morning cycle before learning activities. During breaks pupils are expected to be served with breakfast, usually porridge, in morning hours, and engage in free play. Thereafter, pupils are expected to participate in a ten minutes reflection cycle.

The Pre-primary Education Curriculum and Syllabus (2016) advocates for individualised instruction. It advises teachers to use their knowledge, skills and experiences to make instructional decisions according to a child's ability and age, needs, available resources, and classroom situation. In general sense, the curriculum places the child at the centre of teaching and learning activities.

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RATIONALE FOR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

We learn from the background above that Tanzania recognises the importance of pre-primary education. Pre-primary education aims at promoting holistic development and child's readiness for primary education. However, we have limited information on whether the PPE goals are actualised to the expectations. Besides, knowledge about children's learning is scanty. To narrow this gap of knowledge, Uwezo Tanzania conducted a pre-primary assessment to examine pupils learning outcomes. The pre-primary assessment was conducted at Chalinze district, Coast region, from 25th – 27th November 2021. Schools and villages of Chalinze district were randomly selected to participate in the study.



UWEZO TANZANIA

Uwezo refers to a Kihwili word meaning "capability". Uwezo Tanzania is a Non-Governmental Organisation based in Dar es salaam. Uwezo Tanzania is committed to improve competences in literacy and numeracy among children in Tanzania through an innovative, citizen-driven and public accountability approach to social change. Currently, Uwezo Tanzania is in its third year of implementing its strategy for the period of 2020-2023. The strategy has four goals namely insight, evidence, communication and engagement and institutional development. Evidence focus is in generating data, which can be shared with different stakeholders and policy makers to advocate change/improvement in the respective policy and teaching practices.

Early childhood education is one of the research programs aiming to generate data on provision of pre-school education in Tanzania and the learning outcome. In 2021 Uwezo planned to conduct different assessment for children of age 4-6 years for pre-primary education, age 6-16 years for learning outcome on literacy and numeracy and age 16-20 years for functional literacy assessment to generate evidence on the young adults learning environment and preparedness for the working and employability.

This report presents the implementation and execution of pre-primary children school readiness assessment, challenges and recommendations for improvement. The child readiness assessment was focused on diverse milieu that a child grows in. Child development occurs through a contribution of different players ranging from human, physical, and financial players. Therefore, in order to understand their development, the assessment focused on understanding their development patterns. Thus, the assessment focused on systems where a child develops such as; school, classroom, and household. Children development was assessed at the immediate setting at the family level, parents, and home environment were assessed. Classrooms level assessment involved teachers and classroom activities. Furthermore, assessment was carried out on the interaction of the larger environment at school.





2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Villages, households, and schools

The study was conducted in Chalinze district. A total of 30 villages were randomly selected to participate in the study. Twenty households were recruited from each selected village. Furthermore, one school was randomly picked from each selected village. Thus, a total of 30 schools were involved in this study.

Participants

A total of 30 village executive officers (VEO) were recruited and participated in this pilot study. Of all participated VEO's 21 were males and 9 were females. VEO's were recruited in the sense that they are the overall leaders of the community and possess the demographic information's of the community where children live. Furthermore, in order to access households VEO have played a vital role in taking volunteers through all sampled households and introducing them.

Selection of pre-primary pupils

Five hundred (500) pre-primary pupils were randomly selected to participate in the assessment. Of pupils, 248 were boys and 252 were girls. A stratified simple random technique was employed to select the pupils. This involved grouping pupils by sex. From each sub-group, 10 boys and 10 girls were randomly picked. Table 2 describes the age and sex of children who were assessed.

Table 1: Children Assessed By Age and Sex

Child Age	Sex		Total
	Boy	Girl	
3 years	2	0	2
4 years	23	24	47
5 years	108	114	222
6 years	81	78	159
7 years	29	21	50
8+ years	5	15	20
Total	248	252	500

As shown in Table 500 children were assessed. Children were aged around 5 years to 8 years while majority were 5 years old. Furthermore, the sample included 30 head teachers. Head teachers were recruited in the virtual of their position as custodian of the primary schools which a pre-primary class is part of, therefore they possess the custodianship of all children at the school on behalf of parents. Of all participated head teacher's males were 22 and females were 8.

Assessment Procedures

Tools Development and Pre-test

A team of panellists with a background in early childhood education were recruited and engaged to support adaptation of tools. These panellists included the followings: pre-primary teachers, heads of schools, pre-primary focal person from Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), MoEST, PO-RALG, and school quality assurers (SQAs). Adaptation of tools was informed by a Pre-primary Curriculum and Syllabus (2016), and pre-primary education operational guidelines, and best assessment practices including MELQO, Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA). Following a review of guidelines and policies, the following tools were developed: school and classroom observation guide, children's assessment tool, head teacher and pre-primary teacher tool. In addition, assessment protocol was developed. The tools and protocol were pre-tested at Mlimani pre-primary school, a demonstration school of the University of Dar Salaam School of Education, conveniently selected for accessibility reasons.

Recruitment and Training of Volunteers

Recruitment of Volunteers

A total of 10 volunteers were recruited to participate in the pilot study. These volunteers were recruited from the sample villages and attended teachers training from Chalinze district where the Pre-primary assessment study was conducted. The assumption was that individuals from villages where the pre-primary assessment will be conducted were familiar with the communities. This made it easy for the volunteers to navigate from one household to the other, during assessment. Besides it was cost-effective to engage volunteers from the villages from Chalinze district. The following criteria informed recruitment of volunteers:

- Residence at the village where the assessment was conducted.
- Holder of a certificate of Ordinary Secondary Education level with division I to III with passes in English and Mathematics subjects.
- Holder of a Certificate in teacher education was an added advantage.
- Fluence in English and Kiswahili.
- Own a smartphone and demonstrate enthusiasm in community sensitization on education, especially early childhood education.

Training of Volunteers

Before actual assessment, Uwezo Tanzania in collaboration with the University of Dar es Salaam and ICE conducted a training workshop on 25th – 27th November 2021 at Chalinze district. The training involved 19 participants (10 volunteers and 9 supervisors). The main purpose of the training was to orient the participants to the pre-primary children's Uwezo Tanzania assessment and to equip them with necessary knowledge and skills for assessing young children, use of Kobo toolbox to collect data. The trainees were also introduced to ethical considerations including but not limited to protecting child's rights and observing recommended COVID-19 protocol to protect each other throughout training and during assessment. On day two, participants were provided with an opportunity to practice (described further in the sub-sequent section) by visiting and conducting assessment at school and household levels.

Pre-primary pupil assessment

Following pupil's sampling, the trained volunteer conducted the assessment with children. It was one on one assessment between the sampled child and a volunteer. The assessment was conducted in a secure place, comfortable to a child. Prior to assessment the volunteer ensured all materials were in place and orderly organized based on assessment tasks.

The pre-primary children assessment included items pertaining to early learning that are globally comparable. Overall, the assessment measured constructs related to school readiness, or the set of fundamental skills and competences contributing to children's school success. The domains of the child-direct assessment align well with the national pre-primary curriculum of Mainland Tanzania. The child readiness level was assessed with a tool that exhaustively stem from the six competences prescribed in the PPE curriculum.

The competences are expected be ready at completion of PPE year. The developed child assessment tool has taken into consideration the competences and performance indicators from each competence covered in the PPE curriculum for assessment. Data were analysed by age and sex in two levels, which are overall performances on all tasks and specific scores on each subtask.

A three-level scale was computed using percentage scores to rank competence levels. Competences that scored less than < 30% were ranked unsatisfactory, scores between 40%-60% were ranked satisfactory and scores between 70%-100% were ranked excellent. Table 4 presents the scoring of overall tasks in the Pre-Primary Children Assessment.

Table 2: Overall Scoring of Tasks in the Pre-Primary Children Assessment

Administered Items per Curriculum Competence/Domain	Correct Response	Score
Self-Awareness 6 items	3 >	High level of self-awareness
	< 3	Low level of self-awareness
Mathematics concepts/ pre-numeracy 15 items	7 >	High level of mathematical concepts
	< 7	Low level of mathematical concepts
Communicating/ Pre-Literacy 27 items	13 >	High level communication skills
	< 13	Low level communication skills
Relating to each other 4 items	2 >	High level ability to relate to each other
	< 2	Low level ability to relate to each other

As shown on Table 4 overall scoring regarded the number of items administered per section. Whereby, children who scored half and above the number of items were regarded as possessing high level of competence and those scored below half were regarded as possessing low level of competence.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical issues were adhered to: obtaining research permit to conduct the study from the University of Dar es Salaam; asking and obtaining participants' informed consent prior to their participation in the study. Besides, participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study, privacy and confidentiality, and potential harm and benefits of the study. This information helped the participants to make informed decisions to participate or not participate in the study.



Photo credit: Uwezo Tanzania



3. FINDINGS

School Background Information

Pre-Primary Education Enrolment Status

The study reveals that a total of 1,407 children were enrolled in the pre-primary classes visited. Of the enrolled children 52% were boys while 48% were girls. Table 5 presents the enrolment by age and sex.

Table 3: Enrolment Status by Age and Sex

Children Age	Boys	Girls	Total
4	80	63	143
5	256	322	578
6	264	279	543
7+	128	15	143
Total	728	679	1407

Table 5 shows that, most enrolled children enrolled in the pre-primary classes visited were aged 5 and 6 years, whereby in both age 5 and 6, girls outnumbered boys while in age 4 and 7+, boys slightly outnumbered girls. Overall, boys' enrolment was slightly higher (52%) than girls.

The study further found that 14 children (11 boys and 3 girls) with disability were enrolled in pre-primary classes visited. Table 6 provides descriptions on the type of disabilities observed based on children sex.

Table 4: Children with Disability Enrolled by Sex

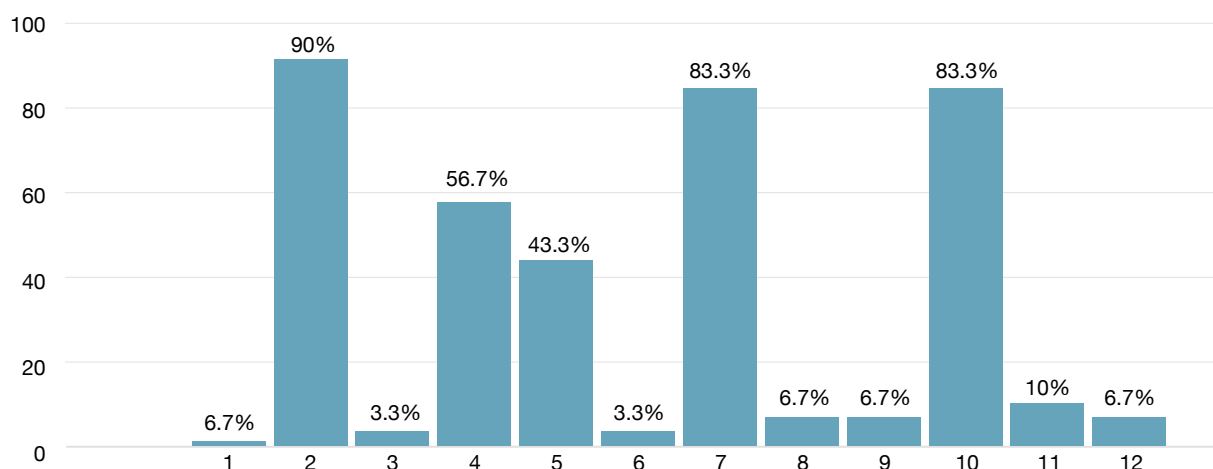
Type of Disability	Sex		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Autism	9	0	9
Low vision	1	0	1
Mental impaired	1	3	4
Total	11	3	14

Table 6 shows that the majority of children with disability were autistic followed by children with mental impairment and low vision.

Pre-Primary Teachers' Characteristics

Figure 1 presents the characteristics of teachers who were teaching in the pre-primary classes visited.

Figure 1: Characteristics of School Teachers



Data shows that 9 out of 10 schools which participated in the study have only one teacher teaching a pre-primary class. As Figure 1 shows, 6 out of 10 schools did not have teachers with a certificate in early childhood education. Teachers with special training to serve children with special needs were inadequate because 8 out of 10 schools had no teachers specialised in teaching children with special needs.

Availability of Electricity and Playground

The study shows that only 4 out of 10 school visited have electricity. Whereas 8 out of 10 schools have playgrounds. Table 7 presents data on electricity and playgrounds.

Table 5: Percentage of Schools with Electricity and Playgrounds

Schools	No Electricity Service	With Electricity Service
	56.3%	43.6%
Availability of playground at school	No Sports ground	With Sports ground
	14%	86%

Table 7 shows that, more than half of the assessed schools do not have electricity service. Therefore, out of 10 schools only 4 had electricity services. Furthermore, most of the schools have sports grounds for children to play, whereby out of 10 schools 9 had playgrounds.



Photo credit: Uwezo Tanzania

Availability of Toilet Facilities

In all the schools, there were 192 pit holes for boys and 196 for girls. Only 3 out of 10 schools did not have a toilet at all. The study further reveal that of all the toilets available there were no specialised toilets for pre-primary children and children with special needs. This implies that pre-primary children and children with special needs shared toilets with other children in a school. Figure 2 presents the nature of toilets available at all visited schools.

Figure 2: *Nature of Toilets Available at Schools*

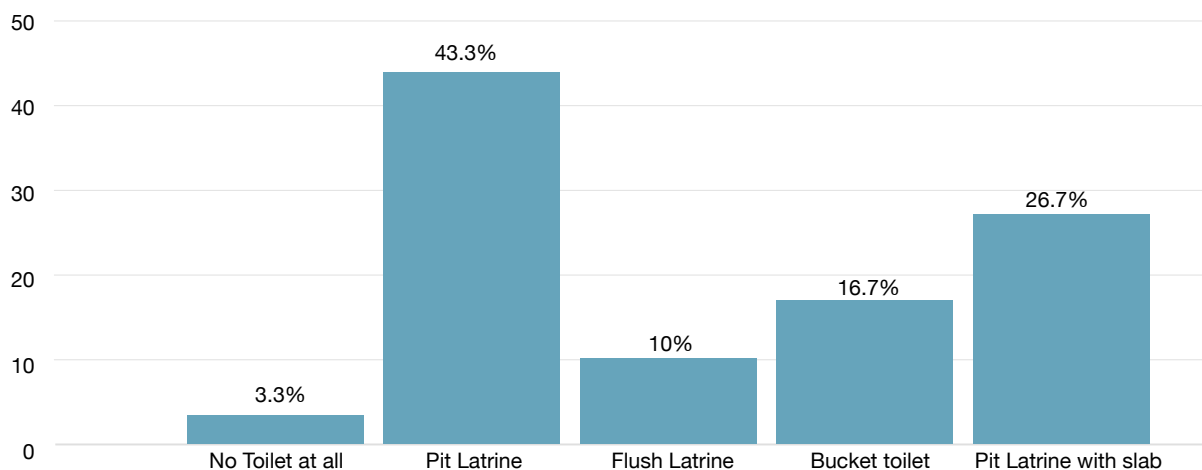


Figure 2 reveals the nature of the toilets available in all participated schools, whereas 4 out of 10 schools have pit latrine toilets, 3 out of 10 schools have pit latrines with slab. Only 2 out of 10 schools had a bucket toilets and flush latrine.

Availability of Pre-primary Education Curricular Materials

The study assessed whether pre-primary teachers have an appropriate and up to date pre-primary education curriculum and syllabus. Also, teachers were asked whether they have textbooks and storybooks from the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE). Findings reveal that nearly all, 9 out of 10 teachers have the pre-primary education curriculum and syllabus of 2016 whereas 8 out of 10 teachers reported to have textbooks. Table 8 presents the percentage of teachers who reported to have curricular materials.

Table 6: *Pre-primary education Curricular Materials*

PPE Curriculum	Have PPE Curriculum	Do not Have PPE Curriculum
	90%	10%
Year of Publication of the PPE Curriculum	2005 PPE Curriculum	2016 PPE Curriculum
	3.3%	96.7%
PPE Textbooks	Have PPE Textbooks	Do not Have PPE Textbook
	80%	20%
Communicating/ Pre-Literacy 27 items	Have 12 TIE Story Books	Do not Have 12 TIE Story Books
	7%	93%

As Table 8 shows, 8 out of 10 schools have textbooks for pre-primary education, and only 2 out of 10 schools have no textbooks for pre-primary education. However, the majority of schools, 9 out of 10 did not have storybooks.

Classroom Arrangement and Resources

The study found that furniture was largely lacking. Nine out of 10 pre-primary classes visited have no age-appropriate chairs, tables and desks classes visited. In most (70%) of the classes children were seated on desks. Only 7% of classes observed children were seated on a bare floor. Table 9 presents the classroom resources and arrangements.

Table 7: Classroom Arrangement

Children's chairs, table and desks which are age-appropriate	
No	90%
Yes	10%
Where do the children seat?	
On the mattress	13%
On chair and table	10%
On the desk	70%
On the floor	7%
Are the children sitting in a position where they can all see the teacher	
No	10%
Yes	90%

Table 9 shows that, 13% of the classes observed children were seated on mats. Furthermore, the study found that, nearly all, 9 out of 10 children were seated in a position where they could see a teacher during the teaching and learning process.

Teaching-Learning Materials

It is expected that every pre-primary education class have at least four basic learning corners. The study found that the majority of classes have no learning corners. Overall, only 17% of the pre-primary classes visited have learning corners. See Table 10.

Table 8: Learning Corners

Items Task	Yes	No
Does the class have a learning corner?	16.6%	83.4%
Mathematics learning corner	16.6%	83.4%
Sand and Water Corner	6.7%	93.3%
Shop Corner	6.7%	93.3%
Reading and Writing Corner	20%	80%
Sports Corner	6.7%	93.3%
Science Corner	10%	90%
Home Corner	13.3%	86.7%
Arts Corner	16.6%	83.4%

Table 10 shows that of the corners observed, reading, and writing corner dominated at 20%, followed by Maths and Arts learning corners, recorded at 17%. Only 1 out of 10 classes has a science corner.

Furthermore, the study found that classroom displays were largely lacking. Figure 4 presents percentage of classes with classroom displays.

Figure 3: Classroom Displays

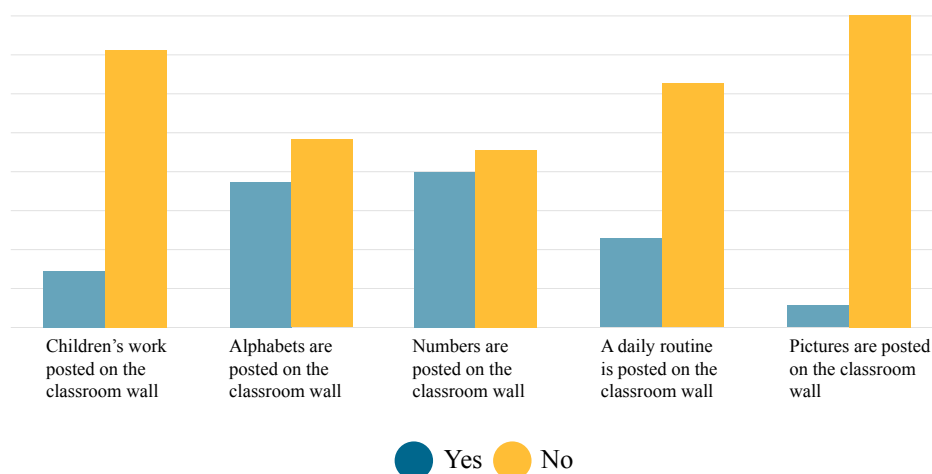
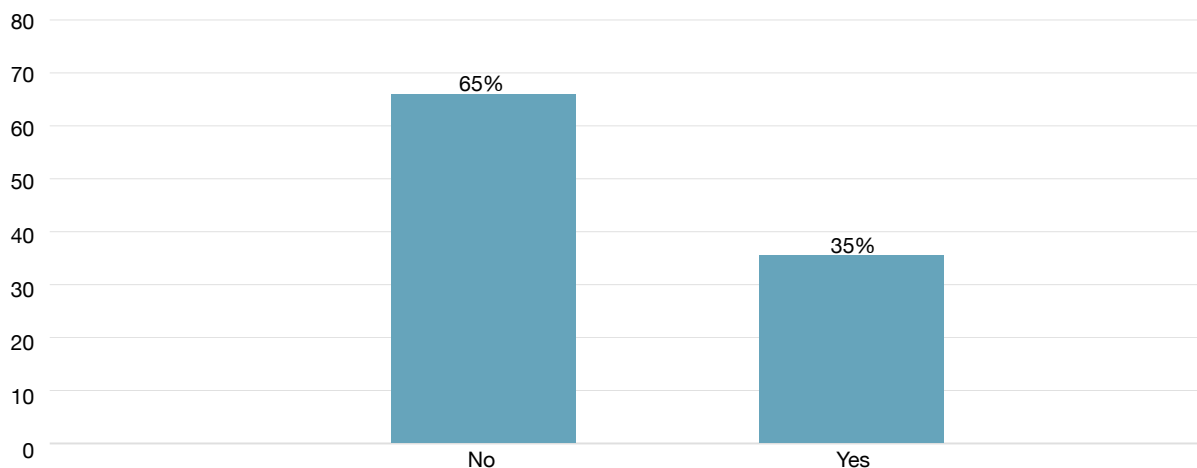


Figure 4 demonstrates that, on average classes have limited learning materials displayed on the classroom walls. For example, only 6.7% of classrooms have pictures posted on the classroom wall. Furthermore, Figure 4 shows that only 47% of the classrooms have numbers posted on the classroom wall. The results suggest that less than a half of all pre-primary classes did not have learning materials displayed in the classrooms.

Availability of Feeding Programme

During the household assessment, parents were asked if they gave their children food (Breakfast) before they left for school. Results are summarised in Figure 5.

Figure 4: Child Feeding Programme



The results shows that 6 out of 10 households did not provide their children with breakfast in the morning before going to school. Similarly, data reveal that there was no feeding programme at school, only 1.2% of schools reported to provide lunch at school. See Figure 6.

Parents' Engagement

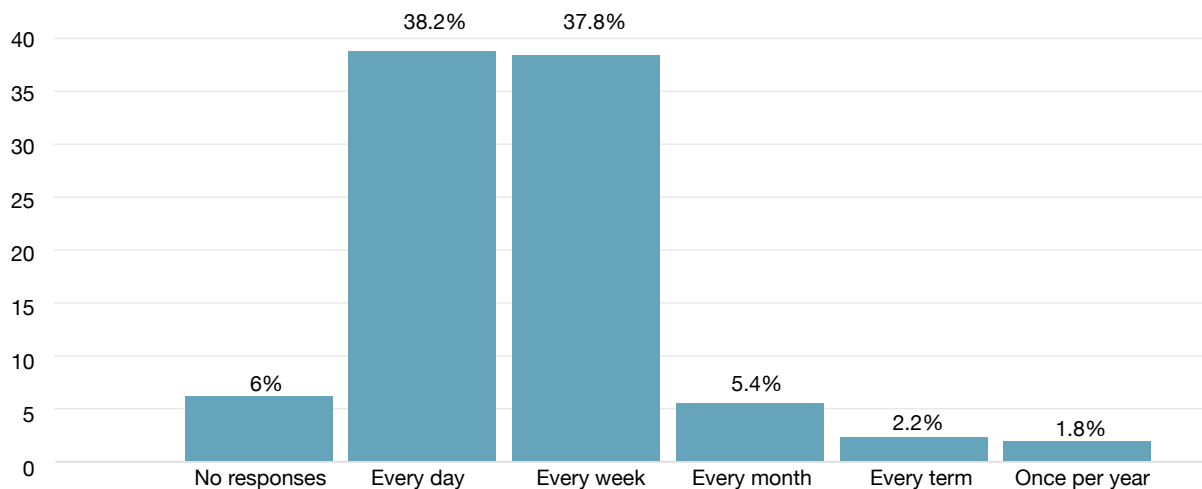
The study assessed whether the parents took time to read their children's books at least once a week and if they take time to check their child's exercise books at least once a week. Results are presented in Table 12

Table 9: Parents' Engagement in their children's schooling.

Items Task	Yes	No
Do you check your child's exercise books at least once a week?	84%	16%
Did you read with your child any book on the previous week?	27.8%	72.2%

Table 12 shows that, 84% (8 out of 10) of parents reported to check their children's books once a week. Only 28% of parents reported to have read with their child a book on the previous day. Figure 7 presents the frequencies of parents checking their children exercise books.

Figure 5: Frequencies of Parents Checking their Children's Exercise Books.



The results reveal that only 38% of parents checked their child's exercise book every day. Similarly, only 38% of parents checked their child's exercise book every week. These results reveal that parents' engagement in their child's schooling was minimal.

Parents were also asked whether they have ever been invited and attended the school meeting. Findings reveal that 65% of parents reported to have attended a school meeting.



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