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Teachers' Competencies and the Implementation of Islamic Integrated Education Programme in Lagdera Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya

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Abstract: **Though it was intended that secular and Islamic curricula be integrated in Kenya, the implementation of the Islamic Integrated Educational Program in the pre-schools in Ladgera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya has faced some challenges. Consequently, this study assessed association between teachers' competencies on the implementation of the Islamic Integrated Education Program in public pre-schools in Ladgera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya. This study is based on Curriculum Implementation Theory. The study adopted descriptive survey design on a target population of 1019 preschool teachers in Ladgera Sub County. The study used purposive sampling for the respondents and key interview informants which resulted to 102 teachers and 12 seem headteachers. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used for data collection. Pre-test for validity of the questionnaire was done by content validity and reliability was done by internal consistency with the reliability value of Cronbach's alpha at 0.7. Verbatim was applied to the qualitative data to analyse the data and descriptive statistics was applied to the quantitative techniques. The strength and direction of the linear relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable were quantified by Pearsons (r) correlation coefficient. The study concludes that; teachers' competencies have a significant influence on implementation of IIEP in Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya ($r = 0.651$, $p<0.01$). The study recommends that highly qualified and skilled scholars should be hired and that they should have a long experience in the teaching field and should participate in teacher trainings to enhance implementation of. the implementation of the Islamic Integrated Educational Program in school curricula..**

Keywords: **Curriculum Implementation Theory, Islamic Integrated Education Program, Teachers' Competencies.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Education is one of the major pillars that help in bringing about development through developing an individual and his community and progressing towards development (Gulo., 2024). On this basis. Islamic education is marked by creation of people with positive characteristics that help in developing their community and society (Shah et al. 2024).). This led to the development of Islamic Integrated Education Program (IIEP), which helps in integrating Islamic values into the curricula of the country (Abdinur, 2022). The objective of this program is helping in promoting the development of individuals morally, spiritually and intellectually according to Islamic values. It helps the students in developing the religious identity and connecting it with their academic studies, ethics and morality. Globally, the model of IIEP has become an irreplaceable one when integrating various aspects of the educational institution with its basics (Syaifuddin, 2020). It helps in bringing about harmony between the implementation of curriculum and other parts of the educational system. (Sheikh, & Ali, 2019). For example, in Indonesia Islamic values are emphasized in Islamic integrated schools. The implementation of the model

of integrated curricula involves integrating Islamic values into teaching and learning process. In the same manner, the Ministry of Education in Brunei adopted Islamic values (Ferranco, 2023). The country strives to develop its programs that develop academic skills and Islamic values (Hassan & Lim, 2021).

In Africa, IIEP was developed in order to solve the dualism between secular and religious education, which was noticed in the past in Africa, leading to the separation of the curricula (Abdulrasaq & Gambari, 2026). This approach was taken to address the educational dualism that was experienced in the period of colonialism, where the secular education was not valued as much as the religious education (Adigun, 2025). Mostly, IIEP has been used in West African countries, especially Nigeria, which deals with the issue of integrating Islamic values with the modern education concepts. The IIEP in East Africa, including Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were meant to help to solve the challenges that Muslims face in education (Abdinur et al. 2022). To address these challenges, the Madrasa Early Childhood Program was introduced with the contribution of various organizations including Aga Khan Foundation (Ndzovu, 2023).

The curriculum, which is derived from western education systems, is formulated in such a way as to ensure that pupils learn in a manner that does not deny them their identity (Taylor & Francis, 2018; Nimulola & Akbar, 2024).

In Kenya, the incorporation of the content of the Koran and the secular subjects in the IIEP curriculum ensures that the learners gain knowledge and spiritual enlightenment in the process of learning (Abdinur et al., 2022). Thus, teachers form an integral component in the implementation of the IIEP curriculum (Gulo., 2024). This is due to the consideration that there must be skilled and experienced teachers in order to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the IIEP curriculum. Teacher competencies may be described as the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional attributes required in performing a teaching activity appropriately (Nasim et al., 2022). The competencies are of great significance when it comes to curriculum implementation because it is the teachers who are mainly responsible for the realization of the aims of curriculum. Therefore, the successful implementation of a curriculum program in the school is dependent, among other factors, on the teacher's skills, abilities, attitudes and capacity to apply the demands of the program effectively.

Research has indicated that competencies of the teachers are an important factor in the process of curriculum implementation. As indicated by Adhiambo et al. (2024), teacher competencies play an important role in the process of the implementation of the competency-based curriculum. Likewise, Kalunde (2023) established that the competencies of the teachers positively contribute to the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in public primary schools. In the same line of thought, Nasim et al. (2022) established that the teachers need to have the knowledge and skills in their professions for effective teaching. The findings clearly show that competencies of teachers are some of the key factors in implementing the curriculum policy and program objectives within the school. This is because the right teacher competencies will be able to assist in implementing the curriculum since they will be able to understand the requirements of the curriculum and teach in the right way among others.

Statement of the problem

The Islamic Integrated Education Program has made great advances in promoting equity in education through incorporating Islamic teachings into the curriculum to ensure balance in education for the Muslims (Abdinur et al., 2022). Nevertheless, there are some major challenges facing many schools in Muslim-dominated areas, including the Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, which make it difficult to provide quality secular education and Islamic studies at the same time (Sheikh, 2015). Although the IIEP requires teachers to be competent in both secular subjects and Islamic teachings, there are a few teachers competent enough to teach both subjects. Hence, Muslim children enrolled in Kenyan pre-schools do not get comprehensive education combining both academic excellence and religion; thus, their chances of becoming successful academically and economically in the future are restricted (Gulo. 2024). For this reason, the current study evaluated the impact of teachers' competencies on the IIEP in the Lagdera District among public pre-schools.

Although considerable achievements have been made in the application of Islamic teachings along with regular school education in order to provide comprehensive education to the Muslims, the implementation of the Islamic Integrated Education Program still faces a number of barriers on the path to becoming a reality in some areas where there is Muslim majority, including the Lagdera sub county in Garissa County. The first barrier that stands on the way to ensuring quality secular and Islamic teaching at some schools is the shortage of qualified teachers (Sheikh, 2015; Abdinur et al., 2022). While in spite of the fact that the IIEP implies that teachers should be skilled in both secular and Islamic subjects, the shortage of such teachers results in the fact that some Muslim children in Kenyan pre-schools do not receive comprehensive education that will combine both success in studies and religion. In other words, it may result in the failure of these children

to become successful in their life both in academic and socio-economic terms. Thus, the current research aimed to fill the gap through investigating the influence of teachers' competencies on the implementation of IIEP in Lagdera district among public pre-schools.

Objectives of the study

The objective was to assess the relationship between teachers' competencies and **I**mplementation of Islamic Integrated Education Program in Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

Based on empirical evidence, the success of implementing an educational programme is closely related to the competency of the teacher, one of the programmes in question is the Islamic education programme. For example, Kikomelo (2024) studied on the role of teachers in the process of learning, and the results showed that the role of teachers has a strong correlation with the construction of effective learning environments, because teachers' professional competence and commitment to the work are strongly correlated with the construction of effective learning environments. Therefore, teachers become facilitators of learning process but also became the main actors in realizing learning objectives in the classroom. The mentioned finding is particularly significant for IIEPs where teachers are required to incorporate Islamic aspects and knowledge into the entire curriculum. Further, Gulo (2024) pointed out that the competence and experience of educational personnel have a huge influence on the quality of educational experience. The researcher determined that teaching effectiveness in implementing the curriculum basically depends on the teacher's knowledge about the curriculum content, the approach and the skills needed to implement the curriculum goals. Research on specific pedagogical skills also can provide additional evidence of the relationship between teacher preparation and teaching implementation. Ali et al. (2018) indicated that inadequate training is the biggest obstacle to the implementation of the methods. This is an example of the mismatch between awareness of the pedagogical expectations and implementation of the expectations. However, the research was carried out in the education system in Malaysia which makes it challenging and difficult to transfer the research findings to other educational systems. Similarly, Radzi and Muzammil (2018) discovered that integrated education for the purposes of teaching still required more dynamic and student-centered learning techniques, where many teachers are still using traditional ones. The research emphasizes that the teaching method to be applied in the integration process is student-centered. It indicates that knowledge of the subject matter will not suffice in implementing an integrated curriculum of Islamic education.

Seman et al. (2017) revealed that the teachers who showed higher interactive pedagogical skills could integrate the the areas of knowledge better. The results provide empirical evidence that flor effectiveness of integrated Islamic education, teachers must also use pedagogical techniques. Pedagogical competence is then an important aspect of teacher capacity in the implementation of integrated curricula, Similarly, Ismail and Lubis (2016) revealed that Islamic education was well known to the teachers but there is problems in delivering the content of Islamic education. Osman and Basar (2015) provided more empirical evidence by exploring the relationship between pedagogical competencies of teachers and the quality of Islamic education. The results showed that pedagogical competencies were more effective when teachers were able to integrate religious and secular content into their teaching. These findings are complementary to that of Seman et al. (2017), which shows that the teacher should have the ability to organize and present the material in the way that will support the goals of integrated education.

This empirical evidence indicates that there is a significant relationship between teachers' competence and fulfillment of curriculum requirements in the classroom. The study findings of Ali et al, (2018) and Radzi and Muzammil (2018) showed that the shortcomings in teacher training, pedagogy and teaching competence hinder the implementation of the innovative and integrative approach to Islamic education. Seman et al. (2017) suggest interactive pedagogical approaches, Ismail and Lubis (2016) found that there was a gap between knowledge in Islamic and knowledge integration across the disciplines, and Osman and Basar (2015) showed the relationship between pedagogical competence and the quality of Islamic education. Concurrently, the literature available is concerned with the different dimensions of teacher competence and studies them individually, without paying attention to teacher competence as a general phenomenon that impacts the realization of IIEP. Moreover, the interrelation between teacher competence and other factors impacting the implementation of IIEP has not received sufficient attention. Hence, further research that would examine the effects of teacher competence on the implementation of IIEP is needed, particularly in the current study.

Theoretical framework

The research was anchored on Curriculum Implementation Theory which posits that a successful process of implementation is not simply the execution of a plan, but rather an interactive, dynamic process, with many players and situational factors (Snyder et al., 1992). Remaining responsive to success was essential as stakeholders understand, interpret and implement the curriculum in their context (Fullan, 2007). Theory of Curriculum Implementation itself directs us towards the need for curriculum clarity, types of implementation and implementer traits, particularly teacher traits (La Utu et al., 2023). In addition, the effect of Islamic Aqeedah based curriculum using discovery learning method was also studied by Ismail (2022) and the research concluded that there were several factors that would affect the effectiveness of the curriculum, namely the competence of the teacher. These assumptions have the impact of implying that both internal and external sources to a curriculum exert great power on how a curriculum is being implemented and these are inextricably linked with the very basis of Curriculum Implementation Theory. The theory stresses that teachers are the ones who are in the middle of the implementation of the curriculum; and that, teachers' competence can be complemented with the central axioms of this theory. To have a successful implementation, it needs teachers to be qualified in the field of teaching and learning as well as in the content field, both in secular and in Islamic studies. Low fidelity in practice typically is due to unpreparedness and lack of training for teachers (Snyder et al., 1992). Teachers are the main interpreters and adapters of the curriculum and therefore their perceptions and preparations greatly influence the implementation (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted descriptive survey design so that the competencies of the teachers as the factors for the effective use of the IIEP could be obtained. Orodho and Kombo (2002) report that this design is commonly applied in social and educational studies to obtain information on people's belief, attitude and practices. This study relied on descriptive survey design as it allowed to gather wide, detailed and practical information on the teachers' competency and implementation of IIEP.

A population is a total collection of people, things or events sharing the same characteristics and appropriate for a specific study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population for the study was the 34 primary schools in Lagdera subcounty with ECD wings. Across the 34 schools there were 1019 pre-school teachers. As such, the study's target population 1019 instructors in Lagdera Sub County. These pre-teachers were considered as the main respondents since they were directly involved in the day-to-day IIEP in public pre- schools. Teachers were involved in the delivery of the curriculum, classroom management and pedagogical practices meeting the goals of the IIEP at the center..

A sample size of 10% was used in the study which resulted to the selection of 102 respondents (1019x 10% = 101.9= 102) teachers as the respondents from the 1017 teachers in those schools. Gay (2006) stated that for smaller populations, a sample size of at least 20% is needed and for larger populations, a sample size as small as 10% is needed. The purposive sampling in this study was used because the study sought for teachers with significant knowledge or experience of IIEP. The researcher could obtain detailed and meaningful information easily. Additionally, 7 head teachers were purposively chosen for KIIs.

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used in gathering data for this project. The questionnaire was completed by the teachers and the headteachers participated in the interview. The questionnaire was developed to the maximum extent with an eye to retaining such crucial stakeholders' opinion, experience and expertise, a balanced and representative picture of the IIEP implementation from a range of different points of view was put forward. The interview schedules assisted to redraft all the essentials to the interview and outline a framework for the interviewer-respondent discussion. The interview protocol contained research questions for each of the research objectives.

In an effort to make sure that the items on the research instruments closely replicate what was being measured, content validity was employed in this study. The content validity was also improved using expert judgment. Their expertise played an important role in making sure that the research instruments were both academically sound and represented the important elements of the IIEP.

Internal consistency was used for testing the reliability which ranged between 0 and 1, with higher scores indicating higher reliability. If the Cronbach's Alpha estimated is ≥ 0.7, the instrument was deemed reliable and appropriate to collect data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This cut-off paved the way for the reliability of the tool used, which means that the instruments used in this study produced valid and reproducible data because they were highly reliable (Tavakol & Dennick,

2011; Bryman, 2016). It is important to ensure that the research results were valid and applicable in different contexts, and this consistency was crucial. The approaches that are applied to the data analysis.

Verbatim was used to analyze the qualitative results of the interviews and open-ended survey questions. The quantitative data obtained from the structured and measurable questions on the other hand, was analysed by the use of descriptive statistics. Pearsson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to ascertain the strength and direction of the linear relationship between and variables. For the analysis of quantitative data, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24.0 was used to help in efficient computation and analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative data analyses yielded results which were presented in frequency tables. This way of presenting the findings enabled an accurate and easy communication of the results, hence both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the research were analysed and communicated.

Ethical concern was a consideration throughout the research process as this was to protect the rights of the respondents and to ensure the validity of the research. The researcher acquired an introductory letter from Garissa University and applied for and receive ethical clearance from the Institutional Ethics and Scientific Review Committee (ISERC) Garissa University. Ethical clearance obtained by the Ministry of Education, County Commissioner and research permit obtained by NACOSTI. A consent form was given to the respondents before handing over the research instruments. Participants were informed that if they wanted to withdraw from the research at a later stage, they would not be penalized or lose privileges. Those who agree to give informed consent was enrolled in the study. The researcher has been very cautious in ensuring the respondents' data collected by him/her remains confidential. Questionnaires did not include questions asking for information about the identity of the participants (such as name or other information that would reveal the participants' identity). Throughout the study, the respondent's identity was kept confidential. All the data collected did not include the names of the participants. The appropriate referencing system was used to cite information sources, theories and empirical facts used in the study. Additionally, plagiarism checking on the research report was done by making use of the approved software.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Information

The study administered questionnaire to 102 respondents where 83 returned fully filled questionnaire, Thus, the response rate was 83(81.37%) which was reflective of the sample size (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) pose that a response rate of 49% to 59 percent is sufficient, 60 percent to 69 percent is good and a response rate of more than 69 percent is representative of the complete sample and leads to reliable results. Therefore a 81.37% response rate was considered adequate for obtaining valid and credible results. In this instance, there were more males than females respondents, showing that 57(68.67%) of the respondents were male and 26(31.33%) participants were female, indicating that men were more represented than females among the respondents who had been involved in implementing the Islamic Integrated Education Programme (IIEP).

As far as age is concerned, the majority of the respondents, 28 (33.73%) were between 31 and 40 years, 23 (27.71%) were between 41 and 50 years and 20 (24.10%) were between 21 and 30 years. Only 10 (12.05%) respondents were older than 50 years and 2 (2.41%) were 20 years or younger. It is important to note that the respondents were from economically active and experienced age groups, therefore, they were mature and experienced enough to provide reliable information on the implementation of the IIEP. When it comes to the highest level of education of the respondents, it can be seen that 32 (62.75%) of them have obtained the Certificate/Diploma degree, 11 (21.57%) respondents have been awarded the Undergraduate Degree, while 8 (15.69%) respondents have attained the Secondary education. Means that most of the respondents are educated people with post – secondary educational level and have acquired some knowledge and academic skills to enable them to participate actively in the implementation of IIEP and give appropriate answers on the various issues raised in the programme. Based on the results, 23 (27.71%) of them have been trained in the field for 1-5 years; 22 (26.51%), for 6 to 10 years. Besides, 13 (15.66%) have received training for 11 to 15 years, 13 (15.66%) for more than 15 years; 12 (14.46%), for less than one year. It is clear that most of the respondents have received a great deal of training over many years in IIEP, thus have a solid understanding of the topic to be able to offer credible information about IIEP. When it comes to the annual number of national monitoring exercises of IIEP, the top percentage of participants (34, 40.96%) reported that none were conducted on a national level. However, 24 (28.92%) reported having six to 10 monitoring exercises per year, 20 (24.10%) reported one to five, and five (6.02%) reported 11 to 15 exercises per year. From the above results, it can be inferred that there was relatively less national monitoring of IIEP, which may indicate the weaknesses in the monitoring process.

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Descriptive Statistics

In order to assess the objective, the study used a 5-point Likert Scale to obtain descriptive statistics. The data was collected using the Liert Scale; 1 for Strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neural, 4 for agree and 5 for strongly agree. The statistics were important to describe the effect of IVs on the DV and to provide information on characteristics of the research variables. The study computed the Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the indicators teachers' competencies as they relate to implementation of IIEP in Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya. The results for the mean and standard deviation were transformed into scale; 1 to 1.8 for Strongly disagree, above 1.8 to 2.6 for disagree, above 2.6 to 3..4 for neural, above 3.4 to 4.2 for agree and above 4.2 to 5 for strongly agree to produce results in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of teachers' competencies Indicators

Teachers' competencies indicator	M	SD
Teachers possess the required professional qualifications to implement the Islamic Integrated Education Programme	3.66	1.06
Teachers have adequate teaching experience to effectively implement the Islamic Integrated Education Programme	3.78	1.01
Teachers have adequate knowledge and understanding of the Islamic Integrated Education Programme (IIEP) curriculum	3.41	0.96
Teachers have received adequate training on the implementation of the Islamic Integrated Education Programme	3.61	1.04
Teachers have the necessary pedagogical skills and capacity to effectively implement the Islamic Integrated Education Programme	3.49	1.01
Average Teachers competencies	3.59	1.02

Source: Research Data (2026)

The findings from the analysis underscored that the teachers involved in the Islamic Integrated Education Program (IIEP) had attained the necessary qualifications to effectively deliver the program (M = 3.66; SD = 1.06). This highlights that the majority of the teachers met the academic and professional requirements to ensure successful implementation of the program. Furthermore, the results indicated that all the teachers possessed sufficient experience relevant to the IIEP (M = 3.78; SD = 1.01). This suggests that the teachers had significant practical exposure and familiarity with the program, which is critical for achieving the program's educational objectives. In addition, the findings demonstrated that the teachers had a solid and comprehensive understanding of the IIEP curriculum (M = 3.41; SD = 0.96). This reflects their ability to navigate the program's curriculum content effectively and deliver it in a manner aligned with its goals and requirements. The study also revealed that all the teachers had participated in formal training sessions for the IIEP (M = 3.61; SD = 1.04). This emphasizes the commitment to equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to meet the unique demands of the program. Moreover, it was found that the teachers exhibited the capacity to manage and execute the IIEP effectively (M = 3.49; SD = 1.01). This finding highlights their preparedness and ability to address the various aspects of the program, including instructional delivery, classroom management and student engagement.

Overall, the teachers' competence in implementing the IIEP was rated as high (M = 3.59; SD = 1.02). This signifies that the teachers collectively demonstrated a strong capability to fulfill the program's objectives and contribute to its success.

Inferential Analysis

Using data collected using questionnaire was administered to the d preschool teachers, the study tested the hypothesis which was stated

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between teachers' competencies and implementation of IIEP in Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya.

In this research, the Pearson's Product-Moment (PPM) was used for the correlation analysis. This method used was for measuring the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the variables being examined, where 0.05 level of significance was used as the threshold. The analysis results are presented in Table 2

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Table 2: Pearson's Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between the teachers' competencies and implementation of IIEP

Correlations

		Implementation of IIEP	Teachers' competences
Implementation of IIEP	Pearson Correlation	1	0.651
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	83	83
Teachers' competences	Pearson Correlation	0.651	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	83	83

P<0.01; df= 81; r = 0.651; α=0.05

Source: Research Data (2026)

Founded on Table 2, it was shown that under the Pearson correlation at the 0.05 significance level, teachers' competencies had a l significant relationship with implementation of IIEP (r = 0.651, p<0.01). The p-values (p <0.01) for the relationship were less than 0.05 threshold to imply that implies that there was a significant relationship between teachers' competencies and implementation of IIEP in Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected for the study comprehended that there is significant relationship between teachers' competencies and implementation of IIEP in Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya.

The correlational analysis findings were triangulated with the qualitative results obtained from the interviews. Question1 assessed on whether the teachers possessed the necessary competencies and skills required for the effective implementation of the Islamic Integrated Education Program (IIEP). Meanwhile Question 2 was to find out specific competencies do you think are critical for successful implementation while Question 3 was adequacy of professional development and training programs in supporting teachers for this initiative.

On questions, the respondents gave varying but related competencies where KII said

"Teachers in our school have the qualifications and competencies needed to effectively implement the IIEP. They have received training both in secular education and Islamic education for effective delivery of the program. To keep them abreast of changing pedagogical practices, however, there is a need for ongoing professional development. (Headteacher 3, June 2026)

Another KII explained that

"*While teachers are competent, there are some challenges in implementing the program in new teaching methods that can be addressed by training. Respondent 2 said that to ensure the effective delivery of the program, teachers need more frequent training in all aspects. In the same response*" (Headteacher 8, June 2026)

They showed that teachers were generally competent in implementation of the IIEP, they had the basic skills and they have a clear understanding of the IIEP goals, but there is room for improvement, such as using technology as part of their teaching to make lessons more interesting to students.

A KII indicated that the

"*Teachers have a mix of experience and expertise, and are able to implement the IIEP successfully; they have a solid understanding of Islamic teachings and pedagogical practices; but occasionally, teachers should undertake refresher courses to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of their methods to current education practice*" (Headteacher 5 June 2026)

But a teacher talked about problems and responded,

"*IIEP competencies are well-trained in the teachers, but sometimes due to poor resources and large class size, teachers may find problems to apply their competencies to the best of their ability. With better resources, with better class size, they can get even better results*." (Headteacher 6, June 2026)

A teacher commented,

"*Our teachers are well grounded in the principles of the IIEP and they have the competencies needed to deliver a curriculum that integrates Islamic and academic knowledge, however, there is a need for regular training to further build their competencies and present them with new challenges in the form of innovative teaching methods that could improve the impact the program has on students*." (Headteacher 10, June 2026)

So teachers had the competencies needed to implement the IIEP and showed great dedication to the program; however, regular training was essential to build competencies and introduce them to new challenges in the form of innovative teaching methods that could enhance the impact the program has on students. Their commitment and work in presenting the program was outstanding. They had good skills, but would benefit from more support and exposure to good practice to improve their effectiveness.

In answering question no. a teacher shared his views saying that

"*Teachers need in-depth knowledge of the Islamic Integrated Education Program (IIEP) curriculum, which is an aspect of understanding how to balance and integrate secular and Islamic content, that is vital for the successful implementation of the program*." (Headteacher 4, June 2026)

Meanwhile another said

"*Strong pedagogical skills are essential; teachers must be able to employ diverse instructional strategies to meet the needs of students with varying learning styles and backgrounds. A solid foundation in Islamic teachings and values is critical. It is expected that teachers will be knowledgeable of religious knowledge in order to communicate knowledge within Islamic context in their lessons*. (Headteacher 2, June 2026)

The showed that Lesson planning and delivery should allowed flexibility for teachers to adapt lessons and strategies to students and resources as well as evaluations of the program. Moreover, competence in classroom management was important. Teachers needed to create a learning environment that supports learning. They argued that teachers needed to be proficient with digital tools to enhance learning outcomes in order to be effective in implementing IIEP, both suggested that academic and spiritual development must be combined.

On the same question a teacher said "Commitment to lifelong learning and professional development is essential. Pupils must be knowledgeable about the latest educational trends and practices, along with those in Islamic studies. So, interpersonal skills were needed when working and building relationships with students, parents and community. These skills will enable teachers to develop a programmatic setting that is supportive and collaborative.

As to question 3, A TEACHER responded:

"*The professional development programs are regular, however, sometimes they are limited in scope; there is a need for more specific professional development in curriculum integration and new teaching methods. They offer basic understanding of the IIEP, but more advanced training is required on the latter*" (Headteacher 7, June 2026)

The results showed most trainings are about the basics of IIEP which was useful for new teachers, but there was need for higher level trainings and seminars to cover practical issues and innovative teaching methods. The programs are supportive but do not provide teachers with enough resources; there is a need for more training with a hands-on component, which include more updated guides, digital tools and expert trainers/ facilitators to enhance the effectiveness of the training programs. The training programmes offered good coverage of basic requirements of the IIEP but were missing in some advanced skills, such as the use of active teaching and learning in student engagement and the inclusion of students with disabilities.

On the same issue, Respondent 7: noted "While the initial training sessions are thorough, there is not much follow up to check whether the teachers can implement the skills they learned. Continuous training and refresher courses will be very helpful." While Respondent 4 noted "They are very encouraging and provide an excellent foundation. But they do not fit the specific needs of teachers in different schools or regions. If we customize the programs, it will make them more relevant and useful." While Respondent 2: noted "The professional development programs are very effective when they happen but are not often enough. Training sessions will help to keep teachers prepared to teach the IIEP.".

These cfidnings are in line with the results of the study carried out by in the study by Gulo. (2024) according to which the quality of the educational experience depends heavily on the qualifications and experience of the teaching staff. The key factor in the implementation of curriculum is to have the right qualifications and experience of teachers. Thus, it becomes vital to concentrate on developing the professionalism of teachers as an important factor that helps in refining their abilities and skills required for meeting the needs of the changing curriculum. In this regard, it becomes vital to develop the capabilities of teachers, making them ready to fulfill the goals established by the IIEP and help Islamic education systems in attaining overall success in this direction. At the same time, it should be noted that according to the study conducted by Haque and David (2022), experienced staff members have greater knowledge of the curriculum in question and have all the needed strategies for its effective implementation. According to the study, conducted by Ali Ahmad and Rahman (2018), teachers do not possess all the competencies required for integrating these skills into their practice successfully. As for the study of Radzi and Muzammil (2018), it became clear that many teachers use traditional teaching methods, which were ineffective in terms of introducing an integrated approach to Islamic education. In their study, Seman, Yusoff and Embong (2017) noted the widespread practice of using lecture-based teaching, which hindered successful integration of Islamic and secular education. Teachers who displayed higher competencies in the use of interactive teaching methods like discussion and projects, were better placed to do this, emphasizing the importance of developing interactive teaching styles to ensure successful implementation of integrated curriculums.

When it comes to sufficiency of professional development and training of teachers in support of IIEP, it was concluded to be adequate but needs more consistency, focuses on fundamentals, lacks practical approach, supportive but lacks sufficient resources, adequate for basic but not for advance needs, promising start but requires follow-up, encouraging but requires customization, and effective but not frequent enough. The findings revealed that teachers' competencies have an important influence on implementation of IIEP in Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya, where most competencies of teachers had significant influence. The competencies and skills needed for the effective implementation of the IIEP included; well-qualified teachers, highly skilled teachers, committed and knowledgeable staff, competence with room for growth, a combination of experience and expertise, well-trained, strong understanding of IIEP principles and exceptional effort and dedication. The specific competencies that were important for the effective implementation of the IIEP included; curriculum knowledge; pedagogical skills, strong understanding of Islam, communication skills, adaptability, classroom management skills, technological skills, continuous professional development and interpersonal skills.

The competencies and skills needed for the effective implementation of the IIEP included; well-qualified teachers, highly skilled teachers, committed and knowledgeable staff, competence with room for growth, a combination of experience and expertise, well-trained, strong understanding of IIEP principles and exceptional effort and dedication. Competencies that are important in implementing the IIEP successfully in this case include the following: curriculum knowledge; pedagogy; solid Islamic background; good communication skills; flexibility; classroom management; technology skills; continuous professional development; and interpersonal skills. As far as the adequacy of professional development and training in preparing the teachers for is concerned, it was revealed that it was: regular but narrow in scope; adequate but should be more consistent; focusing on the basic issues; inadequate in terms of practical application; supportive but inadequate in terms of resources; adequate for the basics, not for the advanced ones; promising but lacking follow-up; encouraging but lacking customization; and adequate but infrequent.

The findings point to the crucial need for ensuring that the teachers responsible for the implementation of the IIEP are appropriately qualified for carrying out the program. It involves having the academic and professional qualifications for successful program implementation. The teachers should also have adequate experience relevant to the IIEP along with sufficient practical exposure and knowledge of the program's framework. A proper understanding of the IIEP curriculum is very important for teachers. It highlights the ability of the teachers to properly understand the curriculum and be able to deliver it in a way that fits the requirements and objectives of the curriculum. At the same time, attendance to formal training programs about the IIEP is crucial. It shows the willingness of teachers to become competent enough to handle the requirements of the IIEP. The teachers should also be able to prove that they can control and implement the IIEP effectively. It includes the ability of the teachers to prepare themselves and be ready to handle different sides of the IIEP.

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5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Inconclusion, teachers' competencies play a major role in the successful implementation of IIEP in Lagdera Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya. The success in implementing the IIEP demands that the teachers have certain essential competencies such as curriculum competence, pedagogic competence, Islamic competence, communicative competence, adaptability, classroom management, technology competence and interpersonal competence. The teachers must possess all these required competencies to fulfill the intended purpose. There are certain professional development programs conducted at regular intervals that are helpful but these do not provide the advanced form of customization along with follow up. Therefore, the success depends on the training programs customized for the teachers to develop their competency in delivering the IIEP successfully.

Policy Recommendations

The research recommends that to increase the program's effectiveness, the preschools must focus on recruiting competent and experienced teachers who have a solid understanding of IIEP principles. There are particular skills that include knowledge about the curriculum, pedagogical skills, Islamic background, classroom management, communication, flexibility, technology, and interpersonal skills. Professional development sessions should be consistent, repetitive, and customized in order to cater to basic and advanced needs of the teachers. It is also important to have follow up and customization to ensure that the training sessions are effective and relevant so that the teachers are able to handle the program efficiently.

Practical Implications

These results suggest that proper implementation of IIEP will require trained and competent teachers. Educational institutions should emphasize teacher professional development, especially in areas such as curriculum integration, student-centred teaching, technology, classroom management, and Islamic education. Teaching materials and follow-ups are also necessary during teacher training.

Social Implications

Proper implementation of IIEP will help in developing the learners academically, morally, and spiritually through combining Islamic teachings with secular knowledge. Competent teachers will build more trust among parents and other community members about integrated learning.

Theoretical Contributions

This study offers empirical evidence that supports Curriculum Implementation Theory through showing a strong positive relationship between teacher competencies and the implementation of IIEP ($r = 0.651$, $p < 0.01$). This research expands the scope of applicability of the theory in curriculum implementation to include the area of Islamic integrated education in public preschools in Kenya.

Limitations of the Study

This study was carried out in public preschools in Lagdera Sub-County alone and, hence, its generalizability could be hindered.

The study depended primarily on self-reports, purposive sampling, and cross-sectional design.

Moreover, correlation provided using the Pearson correlation does not show causation, and other variables such as resources, class size, school management, and monitoring have not been assessed quantitatively.

Recommendations for future Research

The research mainly depended on subjective views provided by the subjects as the main source of data. In order to ensure that the results obtained are reliable, future research work should use quantitative data that is sourced from secondary sources.

Additionally, since the research has only been conducted within one sub county of the total five sub counties in Garissa County, it is crucial to carry out the same research in other sub counties to be able to generalize the results.

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