



Factors Affecting Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education in Public Centres in Imenti South District, Kenya

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Early Childhood serves the critical role of preparing young children for subsequent levels of Education. The study sought to determine the factors that affect the implementation of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) Programme in Imenti South District. Data were collected from a sample of 297 respondents comprising of ECDE teachers and CMC members. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires for ECDE teachers, focus group discussion for CMC members and observation schedules. The validity of the instruments was established through piloting and expert opinions. A reliability coefficient of 0.81 for ECDE teacher's questionnaires was obtained using Spearman Brown Formula. The findings indicated that parents had a positive attitude towards ECDE programmes. The study recommends that the Government should provide the required physical facilities and teaching and learning materials to enable proper implementation of ECDE programme and ensure that the centers have the required ECDE teachers. The findings will also help the education managers to understand the challenges faced by ECDE sub-sector and help it to acquire its rightful status.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a key determinant of learning and an important exit route from poverty. The ECDE programme provides children with high quality care and prepares them for entry into formal school programme. They also foster language and cognitive development; promote social development and well being of the child [1]. ECDE also promotes continuity of learning under a cohesive educational plan [1]. This shows that ECDE plays a critical role in laying a foundation for future learning.

Research findings by Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report of 2007 indicate that ECDE is still not a priority in most of the developing countries. This state is attributed to slow response to social and economic trends, and to the role of the family and the state in the management of ECDE. Other contributing factors include lack of knowledge on child development research results, lack of rigorous studies in developing countries, governments prioritizing primary education and international aid focuses on other educational levels [2]. This implies that ECDE has not been given a lot of emphasis in developing countries which gave impetus to the current study.

The Kenya National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework encompasses sector policies for early childhood services and programmes in Kenya for all children, including the vulnerable and marginalized, from zero to eight years [3]. The policy empowers the communities to support ECDE centers. The Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) 2005-2010 strategized to address issues and constraints in the ECDE sector. This was done through strengthening of National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE), District Centre for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) and mobilizing the parents through awareness programmes. Enrolments into these ECDE programmes have remained low raising concerns on the implementation of the programmes.

Imenti South District has about 180 public ECDE centres [4]. Imenti South District report (2008) indicates that some centres operate in open air, others in religious buildings while others operate in classes which were previously owned by primary school and were dilapidated. The District

Education (2008) report also shows that 75% of children sit on the floor, bricks or wooden objects. Those in permanent classrooms use desks that belonged to older children not suitable for their age and heights [1]. These observations are not based on any empirical research which raises the concern that the current study sought to address.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

ECDE plays a crucial role in the education of children because it lays the foundation upon which all other subsequent levels of education are based. Despite the critical role that ECDE plays in learning, the implementation of ECDE programmes is still not satisfactory. The current study sought to determine factors affecting the implementation of ECDE in Imenti South District, Kenya.

2.1 Objectives

2.1.1 This study sought to achieve the following objectives

1. To determine factors affecting implementation of ECDE programme.
2. To determine the strategies that could be adopted to promote ECDE programmes.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Imenti South District which borders the Mt. Kenya forest to the North Maara District and Meru Central District to the west and east respectively. The district has 180 public ECDE centres. The target population for the study was 1,260 subjects made up of 360 teachers in the public ECDE centres and about 900 CMC members [5]. Forty five public ECDE centers were randomly sampled from where 85 and 212 teachers and Centre Management Committee (CMC) members respectively were purposively sampled. Data were collected from 85 public ECDE teachers and 212 CMC members in 45 public ECD centres. Data were collected using questionnaires, observation schedule and focus group discussions (FGD). The instruments were constructed on the basis of the research objectives. Validation of instruments was done in consultation with research expert at Chuka University. A reliability coefficient of 0.81

was obtained using the Spearman Brown prophecy formula by Split-half technique. Instruments were personally administered by the researcher. Confidentiality and the right to non-participation were observed during data collection. Two focused group discussions were conducted with 10 informants each one. Informants were selected through informal interviews during questionnaire administration. The focus group discussions were audio recorded to enable the researcher to recollect on the conversations and details of the deliberations. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using tables. Information generated from the focus groups was qualitatively analyzed by categorizing the information around thematic areas pertinent to the objectives of the study.

4. FINDINGS

The study sought to establish the academic qualifications of the ECDE teachers who were sampled. Data indicate that 62.50% of teachers were holders of certificates in ECDE whereas 28.11% were diploma holders. 3.13% of teachers had P1 certificates, form four leavers or Bachelor of Education (BED) ECDE holders. The recommended level of education of an ECDE teacher is an ECDE certificate level [4]. The findings indicated that most of the teachers qualify to teach at this level of education.

The study also sought to establish the duration of time that the teachers had been teaching in the ECDE centers. At least 41.3% of the teachers' respondents had taught for a period between 0–5 years whereas 18.8% had been teaching for duration of 6–10 years, 13.8% had been teaching for duration of 11–15 years while 25% had been teaching for over 16 years. This indicates that the teachers who participated in the study had relevant experience on ECDE programmes.

4.1 Factors Affecting Implementation of ECDE Programme

The study sought to establish the perception of parents towards ECDE in Imenti south district. The teachers were asked to indicate the attitude of the parents towards the ECDE centres. Majority (78.8%) of the teachers reported that parents had a very positive attitude, 12.5% were positive, while 2.5% had no opinion and 6.3% felt that parents had negative attitude to ECDE. These findings indicated that most of the respondents felt that parents held a positive

attitude towards the implementation of the programme.

The study further sought to establish the parental financial contribution to the programme. The respondents were asked to rate the parental financial contribution. The findings indicated that the majority (52.6%) of respondents felt that parents contributed to a small extent, 38.8% contributed to a very great extent, while 3.8% did it to a great extent, 2.5% of teachers had no opinion on parent's financial contributions to ECDE. Schools sponsored by the local authorities have better physical facilities and furniture and a greater variety of learning and play materials for use by children than those sponsored by the communities [6]. This state may partially be explained by the financial contributions of parents to the ECDE programmes.

The study sought information from the focus group discussion on the adequacy of financial assistance from the parents. CMC respondents were requested to indicate whether the financial assistance received from the parents was adequate. Findings showed that 55% reported that it was inadequate, while 34% reported that it was adequate. These findings differ from Myers' who found that centres supported by the community faced financial problems especially when the parents were not able to raise such amounts [7]. At times, some teachers go for months without salaries. The situation was also complicated in those schools with poor enrolment because the salary comes from the fees paid by the children. Lack of financial support has also led to lack of teaching and learning materials which is a hindrance to implementation of ECE programmes. This affected teaching and learning hence hindering the programmes implementation.

The teachers were also asked to rate the parental turn out for the meetings when called upon. The findings on the turn out for parents once called upon revealed that 59.3% indicated that it was very good, 32.5% said that it was good. 5% indicated that parental turn out for the meetings was poor while only 1.3% of the teachers said that they had no opinion. The findings showed that the parents supported the implementation of ECDE in the district. Among the responses from the focus group discussions, data indicated that the parents financed the centres as shown by 88.4%. Asked whether the financial support provided was adequate, 55.8%

reported that it was adequate though a significant number 44.2% indicated that it was not.

The focus group discussions further sought information on the ways through which parents contributed in running of ECDE centres. The findings from the FGD on ways of supporting ECDE programmes indicated that the parents contributed by way of donations, harambees and payment of school fees. Asked whether the centres had feeding programme for the children, all the respondents indicated that there was. The teachers also indicated that the parents contributed to the feeding programme for the children. This implies that parents supported ECDE and had organized strategies that enhanced the implementation of the programmes. The findings further showed that parents played a significant role in the implementation of the ECDE programme.

One of the challenges that centers experienced was teacher turn over as reported by 56.3% with 23.8% reporting that they did not experience teacher turn out. The findings agree with Gakuru, who stated that lack of money led teachers not being paid and hence may at times leave for greener pastures hence affecting the implementation of the ECDE [6]. In this item, 20% did not respond. Those that reported that there were cases of teacher turn out indicated that lack of children in the centres, too many pupils, poor salary as some of the reasons, with the greatest being poor salary.

The study also sought to establish the issue of supervision of the centres. The respondents were therefore asked to comment on the supervision of the centres. Data on the supervision indicated that 47.5% of the centres were rarely supervised, 16.3% were thoroughly supervised. 22.5% were not thoroughly supervised while 8.8% was not at all supervised. 2.5% had no opinion on supervision. The reasons provided by the respondents indicated that the government officials rarely visited the centres and whenever they came they did not provide adequate guidance. The data therefore implies that there was a shortcoming in the area of supervision which could hinder effective implementation of the programme. The study also sought to establish whether the supervisors provided feed back to the teachers by giving supervision report. Data indicated that they always did as indicated by 75% of the teachers

interviewed. However 10% of the respondents reported that they did not give the supervision report. Asked the areas that the supervisors supervised, the teacher respondents indicated that the supervisors supervised classrooms as indicated by 77.5%, pupils work as shown by 15%, teachers work and feeding programme as shown by 2.5%.

The study also sought to inquire from teachers about the government involvement in the implementation of the ECDE programmes. Majority (55%) of respondents felt the government involvement was inadequate, 26% indicated that it was very adequate as while 18.75% indicated that it was adequate. Among the reasons given were that the government did not employ teachers and did not organize seminars for ECDE teachers.

The FGD participants were asked to indicate the factors that affected the implementation of the ECDE programmes. Major factors affecting the implementation of the program was poverty in the community, untrained teachers, inadequate funds and lack of consistent provision of funds by the donors. Teacher respondents felt the major constraints to implementation of ECDE programme was inadequate funds as indicated by 59.3%, poverty as shown by 21.3%, drought 6.3% and poor infrastructure at 6.3%.

4.1.1 Strategies that could be adopted to promote ECDE programmes

The study sought to establish the strategies that were adopted to promote the ECDE programmes. The teachers were also asked to indicated the strategies they had put in place to ensure that they do not have financial problems. The teachers' responded as indicated in Table 1.

The findings in Table 1 indicated that one strategy employed was enlightening the parents on the importance of ECDE programmes as reported by a majority of 53.8% while others employed other strategies such as writing proposals for funding 10%, getting funding from church organizations 7.5%, having parents meetings to discuss delayed payments 11.3%, seeking CDF assistance 5.0% and also through fund raising 2.5%. Asked how the government was involved in the development of ECDE, the majority of the teacher respondents indicated that the government was not involved.

Table 1. Strategies mentioned by teachers with regard to handle financial problems

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Enlighten parents on the importance of ECDE programmes	61	53.8
Writing proposals to be assisted	8	10.0
Find church donations	6	7.5
Parents meeting to discuss on delayed payments	9	11.3
Seeking CDF assistance	4	5.0
Fund raising	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

An item was included on the teachers' questionnaire which sought information on the areas that the government should get involved to improve ECDE programme. Data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers responses on areas that the government should get involved

Areas of involvement	Frequency	Percentage
Employing teachers	9	11.3
Feeding programme	6	7.5
Buying books	2	2.5
Building classes	55	68.8
Government support	1	1.3
Total	80	100.0

Data in Table 2 show that the government should get involved in construction of classes as indicated by a majority of 68.8%, employment of teachers as reported so by 11.3% and involvement in feeding programmes as shown by 7.5%. Buying books was identified by respondents at 2.5% as an area of government involvement in ECDE. Data from the focus group discussion indicated that the government should get involved in provision of teachers, training of teachers, provision of teaching learning materials and allocating budget for the ECDE as it has with the primary education. Teachers were also asked to suggest ways that they could use to develop ECDE in their areas.

Findings indicated that feeding programmes, creating of awareness of the importance of ECDE, involvement of parents were some of the ways that could be used to promote ECDE in the centres. The focus group discussion members were also asked to indicate the strategies that could be used to improve financial status of the centres. Data indicated that the centre committees should source for financial help from the churches, donors, that they should hold harambees, empower the community to support the centres and write proposals for funding.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Based on the Findings of the Study, the Following Conclusions were Drawn

1. Most parents of ECDE learners had a positive attitude towards the ECDE programmes and their impact on child development. Good parenting practices suggest that parents should ensure quality time with their children for psycho/emotional balance [8]. It is important to note that if children are given proper care and support they will flourish physically, linguistically, cognitively, emotionally, socially and morally [9].
2. Parent's financial support towards the ECDE centres was low. Parents contributed by way of donations and payment of user fees. This implies that ECDE centres operate with inadequate financial resources.
3. High teacher turn-over in the ECDE centres was a major challenge to ECDE programme implementation. This was mainly as a result of poor pay and delays in salaries. Provision of teachers has an effect on programme implementation [10].

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Based on the Findings of the Study, the Following Recommendations were Made

1. The government should provide adequate funds to ECDE centres. Government financial provision will facilitate construction of permanent classes, provision of teaching and learning materials and other physical facilities that are required at the ECDE centres. Further, Government involvement in financial provision will ease parents' financial constraints and relief the burden of financial contribution from ECDE stakeholders.

2. The government, through its agent Teachers Service Commission should employ teachers to ECDE centres. This is in order to ensure that ECDE centres have the required trained teachers. Consequently, the Government should pay the ECDE teachers salaries as per their qualifications and education level. Adequate salary for the teachers will ease teachers' financial constraints and will improve work conditions at the ECDE centres for proper implementation of ECDE programme.
3. Government should supervise the ECDE programmes thoroughly in order to ensure that they adhere to the required standards. Thorough and constant supervision will improve the quality of ECDE programme implementation.
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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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