



Level of Support Accorded to ECDE Teachers by Parents and Ministry of Education in Nandi County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The devolution of ECDE education in Kenya came with a myriad of challenges ranging from unclear policy framework on issues of management, underfunding of ECDE programmes, to lack of preparedness of county governments to implement the devolved ECDE system of education. The purpose of this study was to examine the Level of Support Accorded to ECDE Teachers by Parents and Ministry of Education in Nandi County, Kenya. This study adopted descriptive survey design using mixed methodology and pragmatism paradigm. The study found out that majority of the pre-schools in the study area lacked adequate pre-school teachers, textbooks and play materials. Majority (72.0%) of the employed pre-school teachers had undergone pre-school teacher training courses therefore they had adequate and current pedagogical skills which allowed them to effectively handle pre-school learners. Majority of the pre-schools lacked adequate teaching and learning materials. Parents provided learning materials and feeding programme for ECDE learners. Majority of the pre-schools had inadequate infrastructure. County government have constructed 30% of classrooms in the study area. The study therefore recommended that there is need for county government, parents and other education stakeholders to provide instructional materials and construct more classrooms for efficient and improved service delivery in all the pre-schools in the study area. Further it was recommended that there is need for employment of more trained pre-school teachers by the county government to improve learning.

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1.0 Introduction

Historical development of early childhood development education dates back to the ages of Aristotle. From the global perspective, Plato 428 and Aristotle 384-322 BC were great Greek philosophers who wrote about children's development. Both of them recognized the importance of beginning education with young children. Plato specifically found that, if we educated children as early as possible we would have "Good Citizens". They considered human beings as good and they emphasized the development of the children's mind and body so that they could create a society in which good people followed "good laws" (Kanga, 2011).

In Europe before the turn of the century, nursery education program for the under-five in most countries remained poor, as it continued to be incorporated in the general elementary schools, except for a number of schools started by individuals mainly inspired by foreign educationists like Frobel and Pestalozzi (Kanga, 2011). The development of pre-school in Europe, and America was greatly influenced by the need to provide health, welfare and care of poor children from war and slum conditions (World Bank, 2014). In United States of America (USA) ECDE covers 0 – 8 years. Previously, in USA, they had to cover from 0_5 years but changed later because of various reasons:

According to research findings, significant developmental changes in children's intellectual, social

and physical powers occur around 7 – 8 years more than when they are 5 years old. This brought about increase in actual number of children who were enrolled in Early Childhood Education (ECDE) after finding out that ECDE had long term benefits specially children from poor environment. So, in USA, they started a programme known as Head Start.

This was a programme which sought to ensure that children were familiar with concepts they were supposed to have when they began schooling. For example, children from good environment knew something about computers than those from poor environment. So, they could be helped to know these fundamental actions and computers. When they did this, they found that the children from poor environment did the same as children from good environment (UNICEF, 2011).

Early childhood education programme implementation in Kenya has a long history. Although in Kenya and Africa, institutionalized pre-school education is relatively a new phenomenon in general Early Childhood Education (ECDE) itself was not a new phenomenon in our society. In the Kenyan traditional societies, children in ECD receive adequate care, stimulation and socialization from parents and other community members. Intellectual needs were also met through stories, riddles and games just to mention but a few. Institutionalization of preschool education is a byproduct of colonization (Kenya Institute of Education, 1992; UNICEF, 2011). As a colony many changes happened in the social, cultural and economic set up of communities that affected the way children were socialized giving birth to institutionalized pre-school education. The forces that influenced the commencement and development of ECDE in Kenya to its current status trace its roots in the colonial period.

According to Ocholla, (2009), the main objective of pre-primary education in Kenya presently is to provide an all-round or integrated development of the child from birth to the age of entry to the primary school. This source also asserts that “all-round” or integrated development in this case means nurturing the whole personality of the child encompassing the growth of the child’s physical, mental, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and sociological attributes. To realize the main objectives of pre-primary education, MoE developed curriculum guidelines at the national level that allows early childhood care and education (ECDE) to address the natural cultural, and socioeconomic of each area (World Bank, 2009).

2.0 Literature Review

According to Muriu, (2013) the efforts of the various stakeholders culminated in the development of national Early Childhood Development Policy Framework. The structure offers principles of ECD and outlines duties of partners in the delivery of services to young children. The implementation of the policy aimed at ensuring heightened access, equity, quality, financing and effectual management of ECD amenities. As a result, Kenya as a nation has prioritized development of infants and young children. Several global policies point out the importance of early years and Kenya has ratified these policies by signing, showing its commitment and willingness to promote wellbeing of young children. National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework target groups were all children, primary caregivers and the community. The structure also is responsible for the social, emotional and physical environment of the child.

They can either create a conducive or unconducive environment for young children. In Kenya, Murundu, Indoshi, and Okwara (2010) sought to establish the school factors influencing implementation of ECDE Curriculum in Emuhaya District. They found that lack of suitable teaching and learning resources, inappropriate diet, understaffing, inappropriate medium of instruction and teacher-child ratio, and poor grouping practices were the factors hindering effective implementation of the curriculum in ECDE centres. Similarly, Rotumoi and Too (2012) investigated the influence of resource availability on the choice of teaching methodologies by pre-school teachers in Baringo District (Kenya). The data revealed that availability and adequacy of space and number of ECDE children had a great influence on the teaching methods teachers adopted. Inadequate finance, poor storage facilities and lack of commitment were cited as reason for failure of the use of child centered methods of teaching. It is therefore emerging that implementation of ECDE programmes by devolved units remained unfocused upon ever since the management of the same were devolved to county governments in Kenya.

Thus, it was interesting to compare the level of investment in infrastructure among counties in Kenya, and to compare teaching quality as well as the teaching and learning materials that have been acquired by different county governments for ECDE programmes. According to UNESCO, (2012), despite the state's achievements in policy implementation, there are still obstacles that stand in the way. Challenges experienced include limited technical/ human resource capacity which has led to delays in meeting some targets such as completion of various building projects by public works department, the movement of key personnel through transfer, retirement or voluntary departure, lack of appropriate institutional framework which makes inter-sectorial collaboration difficult and funding by donors. Cuts in funding from major donors contributed to delays.

The devolution of ECDE education came with a myriad of challenges ranging from unclear policy framework on issues of management, underfunding of ECDE programmes, to lack of preparedness of county governments to implement the devolved ECDE system of education (Elimu-Yetu Coalition, 2015). In addition, a study by Kanga (2011) indicated that County Governments are ill prepared to manage ECDE programmes, that they lack elaborate framework that make ECDE work well under their management.

Moreover, World Bank report (2014) indicate that most public ECDE centres in Kenya have stalled programmes marked by irregular and delay of teachers' salaries, inconsistent feeding programmes, poor infrastructure and unclear policy guidelines. However, the constitution of Kenya 2010 bequeaths the management of Early Childhood Education to County Governments. The 47 County Governments are expected to put up adequate infrastructures, recruit qualified teachers and provide enough teaching and learning materials for the enhancement of quality ECDE in public pre-schools. On the other hand, constitution of Kenya (2010) has established two levels of government, the National and the County with each given specific role to perform as far as managing education is concerned. The National government is concerned with curricula, examinations, policy, standards, granting charters to tertiary institutions, universities and other learning institutions dealing with research, secondary education, special needs education, employment of teachers and management of co-curricular activities.

The county government on the other hand handles village polytechnics, pre-primary education, homecrafts and other learner care facilities. The basis of such devolution is hinged on the basic education Act, 2013 and the Sessional Paper No.14 of 2012 on educational reforms and trainings. With these principles in place there was need to readjust the education structure so as to meet the requirements in the constitution (Ministry of Education, MoE, 2005). Throughout the world, nations aspire to create sturdy and operative policies for learners' education through decentralization of education in order to improve the progress of vulnerable needy learners. This can only be achieved through policy planning strategies that need to be utilized to take full advantage of resource available, improved and coordinated comprehensive programmes and increased national and international investments in children

(Rossiter, 2016; Powers, 2016). This has not been different in Kenya and Nandi County in particular. In 1985 District Centres for Early Childhood (DICECE) which actualized the decentralization of the ECDE program to the district level was founded.

Through the Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 the Kenya government responded to the EFA policies by recommending the advancement of a comprehensive ECD policy Framework and service standard guidelines to ensure quality service and access to ECDE. In 2010 a new Kenyan constitution was enacted whose function was to devolve services to county governments, ensuring equity, access, quality and special attention to the minorities and marginalized groups. Despite the fact that the government through various policy framework has facilitated devolution, access and service provision in ECDE centers has not been fully realised. It is on this basis that this research investigated the challenges influencing devolution of education in Nandi County, Kenya.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design using mixed methodology and pragmatism paradigm. The target population comprised of 1387 pre-school teachers, 1 county Director of ECDE, 6 Sub-County ECDE Directors and 651 primary school head teachers in Nandi County. A sample size of 301 teachers and 208 head teachers was obtained. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to select teachers and headteachers while purposive sampling was used in selecting the county director of ECDE and 6 Sub-County ECDE Directors. Questionnaire and interview schedules were used for collecting data for the study. Validity and reliability of the instruments were determined before data collection. Quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages while content analysis was used to analyze qualitative information.

4.0 Findings and discussion

In order to achieve the objective, pre-school teachers were asked to rate their degree of agreement in a five-point Likert scale items in the questionnaire on support accorded to them by both the parents and the Ministry of Education. Their responses were tabulated and the outcome of the analyzed information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Pre-school teachers' responses on Support Accorded to Them

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
ECDE teachers are fully provided with teaching materials by the parents and county government	132	29.1	162	35.7	23	5.1	67	14.8	70	15.4
Pre-school teachers improvise teaching and learning materials	90	19.8	97	21.4	12	2.6	107	23.6	148	32.6
Parents have provided feeding programme for ECDE learners to enhance pre-school learner achievement	33	7.3	89	19.6	31	6.8	157	34.6	144	31.7
Play materials are usually provided by the parents	70	15.4	76	16.7	41	9.0	114	25.1	153	33.7
Teachers in our school have undergone in-service training courtesy of the parents	92	20.3	232	51.1	48	10.6	57	12.6	25	5.5
At the end of every term, parents provide teachers with incentives for performance	127	28.0	132	29.1	72	15.9	70	15.4	53	11.7
Pre-school parents usually fund extra-curricular activities in our school	15	3.3	76	16.7	39	8.6	126	27.8	198	43.6

From Table 1, the findings showed that 162(35.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement that ECDE teachers are fully provided with teaching materials by the parents and county government, 132(29.1%) teachers were strongly in disagreement with the statement, 70(15.4%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement and 67(14.85) teachers agreed with the statement while 23(5.15) teachers were neutral on the statement. The study found out that majority (64.8%) of the pre-school teachers in Nandi County reported that they were not adequately provided with teaching and learning materials by both the parents and the county government. This shows that most of the pre-schools lacked adequate teaching and learning materials thus hampering the pre-school curriculum implementation. This is in line with the findings of Abayomi and Olukayode (2006) who pointed out that educational resources are important for effective curriculum implementation.

Similarly, 148(32.8%) teachers were strongly in agreement with the statement that Pre-school teachers improvise teaching and learning materials, 107(23.6%) teachers agreed with the statement, 97(21.4%) respondents disagreed with the statement and 90(19.8%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 12(2.6%) teachers were undecided on the statement. The study showed that majority (59.6%) of the pre-school teachers reported that they were improvising teaching and learning materials. Due to the inadequacy of

teaching and learning materials in pre-schools, teachers are forced to use the locally available materials. This agrees with the findings of Bruce (2011) who pointed out that available resources can be made or improvised to become teaching and learning materials. The improvisation of locally available materials requires skilled teachers who understand the level of conceptual development of the children in ECDE centres. Thus, by improvising the teaching and learning materials, interests and concerns by teaching in the learning process increases, thus the scarcity of teaching and learning materials will be very minimal. However, this finding was found to contradict those of Ezeasor (2012) who revealed that most science teachers did not improvise science materials nor use improvised materials in teaching sciences in schools. This was attributed to poor funding, lack of time on the part of the teacher, lack of creativity and poor improvisation skills.

In addition, 157(34.6%) teachers agreed with the statement that Parents have provided feeding programme for ECDE learners to enhance pre-school learner achievement, 144(31.7%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement, 89(19.6%) teachers disagreed with the statement and 33(7.3%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 31(6.8%) teachers were neutral on the statement. It seems therefore that majority (66.3%) of the pre-school teachers in the study area reported that parents provided feeding programme for ECDE learners to enhance pre-school learner

achievement. It has been noted that a well implemented school feeding increases enrolment and attendance rates of pre-school learners (Akanbi, 2013). Moreover, Alabi, (2003) pointed out that undernutrition in children stunts their growth and mental development, hence, leading to a negative relationship between nutrition and academic performance. This points out that parental involvement in the provision of feeding programmes had enabled learners to be retained in school thus improving on their performance.

Additionally, 153(33.7%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement that play materials were usually provided by the parents, 114(25.1%) teachers were in agreement with the statement, 76(16.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement and 70(15.4%) teachers were strongly in disagreement with the statement while 41(9.0%) teachers were neutral on the statement. The responses pointed out that majority (58.8%) of the pre-school teachers acknowledged that play materials in ECDE centres were provided by parents. This implies that it is through the parents that pre-schools are able to utilize various play materials. Moreover, 232(51.1%) teachers disagreed with the statement that pre-school teachers had undergone in-service training courtesy of the parents, 92(20.3%) teachers were strongly in disagreement with the statement, 57(12.6%) teachers agreed with the statement and 48(10.6%) teachers agreed with the statement while 25(5.5%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement. As shown by the responses, it emerged that majority (71.4%) of the teachers reported that pre-school teachers had not undergone training through parental financial support. This implies that most teachers sponsor themselves for the in-service training courses. This training attendance depends largely on one's capacity to sponsor himself/herself.

Notwithstanding, 132(29.1%) pre-school teachers disagreed with the statement that at the end of every term, parents provide teachers with incentives for performance, 127(28.0%) teachers were strongly in disagreement with the statement, 72(15.9%) teachers were neutral on the statement and 70(15.4%) agreed while 53(11.7%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement. From the responses, it emerged that majority (57.1%) of the pre-school teachers in Nandi County reported that they were not rewarded by parents for their performance. This therefore points that pre-school teachers are not motivated well despite their outstanding performance in laying the educational foundation of the learners. Mustapha and Ghee (2013) pointed out in their studies that motivation plays an important role in the organization because it increases the productivity and goals can be achieved in an efficient way and also it takes part in the vital role for teachers since it helps to achieve target goals in efficiency way. In addition,

teacher motivation is very important since it improves the skills and knowledge of teachers seeing as it directly influences the learners' achievement.

Furthermore, 198(43.6%) teachers were strongly in agreement with the statement that Pre-school parents fund extra-curricular activities in their schools, 126(27.8%) teachers disagreed with the statement, 76(16.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement and 39(8.6%) teachers were neutral on the statement. It seems therefore that majority (71.4%) of the teachers acknowledged that parents participated in funding of extra-curricular activities in pre-schools in the study area. Interviews conducted found out that teachers expected good employment thus better remuneration on permanent and pensionable terms. This has never been the case since those who are employment are still on contract basis. Their expectation also was on promotion, since most of them are well trained and qualified to move to the next level. Teacher expected to have their own union to advocate for their issues in terms of employment are still on contract basis their expectation also was on promotion since most of them are well trained and qualified to move to the next level. Teachers expected to have their own union to advocate for their issues in terms of employment and curriculum delivery. For instance, medical scheme, commuter allowance and Job group, House allowance, leave allowance amongst others.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study it can be concluded that most pre-schools in the region lacked adequate and relevant teaching and learning materials. The study recommended that there was need for county governments to provide instructional materials to pre-schools so as to motivate teachers and improve service delivery, There is also need for the county government to provide teachers with medical allowances so as to motivate them and enhance improved service delivery. This is attributed to the fact that the pre-school teachers both employed by the government and those employed by the parents lack medical schemes thus are forced to pay out of their pockets whenever they or their family members fall sick. There is also need for the county government to employ more ECDE teachers in Nandi County. This is attributed to the fact that there were inadequate teachers employed by the county government to gather for the needs of pre-school learners yet early childhood education is a devolved function.

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