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Investigating the Level of Expertise of the Staff Implementing Policy on the Management of Public Early Childhood Development Education Centres in Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya

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is instrumental for quality learning, not only in pre-primary education but also in other levels. The study sought to examine the level of expertise of the staff implementing the policy on the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design and anchored on systems theory. The target population for this study comprised ECDE officials, all the head-teachers and teachers in all the public ECDE's in Elgeyo-Marakwet County. The study used stratified sampling to stratify Elgeyo- Marakwet County into sub-counties that form 155 ECDE schools from Keiyo North, 144 ECDE schools from Keiyo south, 118 ECDE schools from Marakwet East and 156 ECDE schools from Marakwet West. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents for the study from the strata. Thus, 344 ECDE teachers and 172 head teachers participated in the study. The 5 ECDE officials were purposely included in the study sample. Data collection was done using a combination of sets of questionnaire, interview guides and checklists. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square test was used to find the relationship between the variables investigated. Data was presented using tables. The study established that majority of ECDE teachers had attained diploma qualification with a few who had attained master's degree. Majority (67.4%) of the respondents said that there was no implementation policy on level of expertise in the policy. Similarly, the study established that there existed a relationship between the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policies and the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County government ($\chi^2=762.066$, $df=45$ and $sig=0.001$). The study recommends on the need for individual and collective efforts on the part of teachers to keep themselves abreast of any new development regarding pedagogy and any relevant aspects of teaching and learning so as to remain relevant in their career. This can be done by way of professional development through in servicing.

Abstract

In Kenya, the County governments, through the county education boards are tasked with the responsibility of overseeing the operation and management of Pre-primary education programs. Despite the growing importance of Early Childhood Education programme, there is lack of schemes of service for ECDE teachers, low and irregular remuneration of pre-school teachers thus adversely affecting the morale of these teachers. Teacher qualification

Introduction

According to Morrison (2013), Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) is a domain of education theory which relates to the training of young children (formally and informally) up to and until the age of eight. This age bracket presents crucial opportunities for the development of children's

academic, behavioral, psycho-motor and social competencies (Gordon and Browne, 2013). This is the formative age of children. These skills have been shown by researchers to be vital for later academic success of the child and thus ECDE is crucial in stimulating child development and success in later life of schooling and also in the labour market (Wortham

and Hardin, 2015). For the past decade, enhancing the quality of ECDE has been a national and international priority in education expressed through research and policy initiatives, program development and advocacy. Improving early childhood education and care is a major theme today in the world. Participants in the 1990's World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Thailand, pledged to provide quality fundamental education for all children and massively reduce adult illiteracy by the end of the decade (Chabbott, 2013). This was followed up in 2000 with the Dakar frame-work of Action on Education for All (AEA) where the participants undertook to continue expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood education and care, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. They further committed to provide basic education to all children especially to those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory ECDE and Primary education of good quality (Bergen and Hardin, 2013). To achieve this, they resolved to mobilize strong national and international Political commitment for education for all, develop national action plans and to enhance significantly investment in basic education. Despite these efforts, the dream of quality education for all has not yet been met in Kenya (Miller and Elman, 2013).

In Kenya, the County governments, through the county education boards are tasked with the responsibility of overseeing the operation and management of Pre-primary education programs. This responsibility include coordinating and monitoring Pre-primary education and training on behalf of the national government and interpreting national policies on ECDE programs based on county's needs. To achieve this, each county government has developed customized policies derived from the national ECDE policy of 2006 (Wasonga, 2013). Despite the growing importance of Early Childhood Education programme, there is lack of schemes of service for ECDE teachers, low and irregular remuneration of pre-school teachers thus adversely affecting the morale of these teachers. Studies by Makoti (2005), Gumo (2003), Waithaka (2003) and Branyon (2002) show that teachers' motivation is hampered by low pay and benefits as well as lack of professional development avenues. The number of untrained teachers in the public ECDE centers is still high (56%) and so they lack skills to enhance the holistic development and learning of children. Teacher qualification is instrumental for quality learning, not only in pre-primary education but also in other levels. According to Australia's national

qualification framework, one of the determinants of quality ECD education is the qualifications required of staff. Initial qualification of the teacher and the experience earns him/her the expertise required to better execute ECD programs, primarily the curriculum implementation function. Literature makes the distinction between structural quality, which looks at 'quantitative' aspects of early childhood education and care settings such as facilities, staff levels and qualifications; and process quality - what actually happens in an early childhood education and care setting, especially child-adult and child-child interactions and children's education programs.

The teacher is the learner's role model and his or her competence will impact on their performance. Competence involves the ability to give instruction to learners. Kafwa, Musamas and Mwaka (2014) define teaching as a process that enhances behavior changes in learners. She asserts that teaching, as an art, calls for inspiration, intuition, skill, imagination and innovativeness/creativity. It's an instrument that needs improvisation, spontaneity, style, pace rhythm and relevancy. It calls for reflective thinking about content, methodology of teaching, research and instructional media. Good teachers of English language and composition writing therefore should be inventive in their teaching and should constantly seek to avoid featureless classroom routine. Silverman (1996) in Nasibi (2003) argues that teaching, as a science involves repertoire of techniques, procedures and skills that can be systematically studied and described and therefore transmitted and improved.

According to Shiundu and Omulando (1992) teachers are an important resource in the teaching and learning process, and their training and utilization require unique consideration. When teachers cannot eradicate learners' mistakes in a second language, they help perpetuate inadequacies, (Barasa, 2005). Many teachers of English do not teach composition writing because they feel quite incompetent in this area. It is this lack of competence that makes most teachers resort to traditional methods of teaching composition. Omwadhho (2001) argues that the way the teacher understands language, language learning and his command of the methods and techniques of teaching are important in his or her professional skills. His understanding of the subject matter and methods of teaching and learning is therefore crucial to his dissemination of the same to his learners (Omwadhho, 2001).

Competence, in most cases is developed through professional development. The development of

teachers beyond their initial training can serve a number of objectives (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1998). These include; updating individuals' knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area, to update individuals' skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research. Development of teachers also enable individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice, enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice. It also enables exchange of information and expertise among teachers and others and to help weaker teachers become more effective.

Continuous Professional development (CPD) for teachers in Kenya is often achieved through courses, workshops and seminars organized locally or at regional level depending on what the control, organization, and management of CPD, often referred to as in-service teacher education, is primarily the responsibility of the Quality assurance, a department of the Ministry of Education headed by the Director Quality Assurance (Ministry of Education, 2005) In-service education in Kenya tends to consist of a specialized tailored course of study or a selected learning agenda to achieve a specific goal. These programs have been criticized for having ill-defined objectives, inappropriate practices, inadequate evaluation and follow-up and lack of support for educators (Wanzare, 2000; Onderi & Croll, 2008). The training activities are said to be far removed from the schools. Also, these programmes do not fully address the needs of the majority of Kenyan teachers who have very little input into the selection and design of the course content (Wanzare, 2000).

There is sound evidence from research that the ratio of staff to children makes a positive difference in early childhood programs. The level of sensitive, responsive care for infants and toddlers decreases when the ratio of staff to children is decreased (NICHD, 2000). The number of staff with the necessary expertise is a plus for ECD centers and as such teacher to pupil optimum interaction is guaranteed. A comprehensive review of the literature on Determinants of quality in child care (Huntsman, 2008) concluded that across age groups and service settings 'the most significant factor affecting quality appears to be caregiver education, qualifications, and training'. As the Strategies for Children Coalition Research report (2000) states, 'better prepared teachers teach better' because they

have deeper knowledge of child development and how children learn, are more responsive to children's interests, strengths and needs and have more advanced skills in guiding children's behaviour and planning for individual differences and learning including using effective early intervention strategies and understand the significance of relationships for learning.

Although county governments have been entrusted with the role of managing ECDE in the counties, education programs and implementation of existing policies are yet to take route given that they have inherited the many challenges that existed in implementing the standard guidelines by national government. This is why the study was necessary in examining the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policy on the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County. There was one null hypothesis that was tested in this study:

H₀₁: there is no significant relationship between the levels of expertise of the staff in implementing policies and the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County government.

Methodology

This study was guided by systems theory as espoused by Bertalanffy (1968). This is a theory that concerns systems, wholes and organizations. According to Herylighten and Juslyn (1992), the world is made of interacting components which have properties and viewed as a whole and do not exist within any of the smaller units. Systems theory reveals a multi-faceted world which comprises sub-systems within systems within environment, all of which are regulated through a set of relationships. The systems theory was relevant to this study as it sought to understand the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policy on the management of public ECDE centers.

In order to meet the aims and objectives of the study, a descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population for this study comprised ECDE officials, all the head-teachers and teachers in all the public ECDE's in Elgeyo-Marakwet County. The county has a target population of 573 ECDE centers, 1146 ECDE teachers, 573 head teachers and seven ECDE officials (Elgeyo-Marakwet DICECE, 2015). The study used stratified sampling to stratify Elgeyo-Marakwet County into sub-counties that form 155 ECDE schools from Keiyo North, 144 ECDE schools from Keiyo south, 118 ECDE schools from Marakwet East and 156 ECDE schools from Marakwet West. Simple random sampling was used to select 47 ECDE schools from Keiyo North, 43 from Keiyo South, 35 from Marakwet East and 47 from Marakwet West sub-

counties. Simple random sampling was used to select 2 ECDE teachers from each of the selected schools. This implied that 344 ECDE teachers and 172 head teachers participated in the study. The 5 ECDE officials were purposely included in the study sample. Data collection was done using a combination of sets of questionnaire, interview guides and checklists. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square test was used to find the relationship between the variables investigated. Data was presented using frequency tables.

Findings of the Study and Discussion

Gender of Respondents

Level of expertise of the staff

The third objective of the study sought to find out the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policy on the management of public ECDE centers in the County. The respondents were presented with statements in which they were to state whether they strongly agreed, agreed, undecided, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements. The responses were then coded as 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively. Means were then computed. The means and standard deviation of the 516 respondents are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2: Level of expertise of the staff in implementing policy

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
There are external policies and trends when reviewing correspondence, reports, and policy on ECDE	2.22	0.87
There's Implementation of successful action plan on management of ECDE centers	2.46	1.041
There is quick Adjustments on organizational priorities quickly as situations change in ECDE centers	3.04	0.989
There is regular feedback to streamline processes in order to meet deadlines and service delivery of the ECDE center	3.03	1.083
There is persistence when providing rationale to staff during times of significant ECDE center changes	2.86	1.093
There is Development strategies using existing resources for achieving objectives	2.52	1.162
There is acceptance of negative feedback in a constructive manner and adjusting behavior accordingly	2.75	0.940
There is Anticipation of demographic change in society and formulation and implementation of policies of ECDE	2.46	0.727
Establishing strategic performance measures to allow the ECDE center to continually assess and adjust program direction	2.12	0.704
Development of an approach to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the ECDE center using creative reorganizing concepts	1.77	0.735

Source: Field data

From the Table 2 of descriptive above, we find out that the highest mean of 3.04 was Quick adjustments on organizational priorities quickly as situations change in ECDE centres. This clearly indicates that the ECDE centers management takes so long to adjust to change is programmes or adjustments implemented by the county policies and the government hence the poor learning environment.

The respondents however agreed that there was need for development of an approach to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the ECDE center using creative reorganizing concepts (1.77). The statements with a mean of 2.5 and less means that the respondents agreed

with the statements while a mean of over 3.5 means that they disagreed. Management should be quick to establish the changes made in the ECDE sectors and be ready to make quick approach of adjustments. Essa (2013) indicates that "Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a topic of increased policy interest in Japan, where improving quality in the ECE sector is a subject of growing importance. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has identified five effective policy levels to encourage quality in the sector namely: 1) quality goals and regulations; 2) curriculum and guidelines; 3) workforce; 4) family and community engagement and

5) data, research and monitoring.” Of the five aspects, Japan considers improving quality in the workforce as a priority; it considers well-educated, well-trained professionals the key factor in providing high-quality ECEC (Early Childhood Education Curriculum) with the most favorable cognitive and social out-comes for children.

Implementation policies on level of Expertise

The research sought to find out if there was any policy on level of expertise of the teacher in ECDE center such as promotion or any other motivation due to level of expertise of the teacher. Table 3 shows the findings.

Table 3: Existence of Implementation policies on Level of Expertise

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Don't agree	348	67.4
Agree	168	32.6
Total	516	100.0

Source: field data

In the table 3 above, majority of the respondents 348(67.4%) did not agree that there is effective implementation of policies governing the level of expertise while only 168(32.6%) agreed. This implies that the policies governing implementation of level of expertise need to be reviewed. Formal knowledge provides the basis of the experts’ practical skills. However, one of the major questions is how to translate formal knowledge into informal knowledge and skills .While a routine expert in this case ECDE teachers and head teachers are able to make an efficient and high-quality performance in unchanging situation and in constantly changing situations. The component of the pedagogical expertise is metacognitive knowledge. It involves self-knowledge and self-assessment. It includes knowledge about where and when to use particular strategies; for example, for learning or problem solving. Rather, it is about knowing how to regulate oneself in order to do a task in a particular way than knowing how to do a task.

Expertise on Early Childhood Educators are people who have the ultimate skills and knowledge of their own field and discharge them with diligence. They usually have a long working experience and they are able to use their professional ability in practice. Expertise on ECDE comprises care, education, and instruction. However, the know-how included in these areas can also be examined as the separate fields of competences. ECDE instructional knowledge includes curriculum, content, and pedagogical knowledge. Curriculum knowledge directs an ECDE teacher to utilize appropriate contents and structure of teaching young children. In addition to a subject to be taught, content knowledge contains the competence of knowing how to teach young children.

Pedagogical knowledge contains the choices made in the teaching situation as well as practical action. A pedagogically skillful teacher has exquisite interaction skills. She understands what makes learning easy or difficult and can choose developmentally appropriate practices flexibly during a teaching situation. In order to improve as an ECDE teacher, the critical reflection skills are needed as well. Contextual knowledge contains the understanding about culture and society. ECDE teachers and head teachers have to be aware of children’s and families’ living environment and take this into account in their educational work. Interaction and cooperation skills are needed in cooperation with children, families, and partners. In order also to be able to improve children’s well-being and development, ECDE teachers and head teachers should be aware of the values and goals of education as well as the concept of learning. This will create relevance in relaying information to the children. The teacher should be an excellent communicator by being clear and unambiguous (Woodfolk and Hoy, 1990). An important set of factors in the L2 writing classroom relates to teacher attitudes and expectations (Dornyei, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Williams, 2003). Williams (2003) cites research indicating that sound teaching methods could fail to produce significant improvement in performance if the teachers do not believe that they can make a difference in the classroom and/or view students as having little or no competence.

Pearson Chi-Square was computed to test the significant relationship between the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policies and the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County government.

HO1: *there is no significant relationship between the levels of expertise of the staff in implementing policies*

and the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County government.

Table 4 presents the findings on Pearson Chi-Square computation of the significant relationship between

Table 4: Chi – Square test

Test	Value	Degree of Freedom	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	762.066 ^a	45	.001

Table 4 indicates that the calculated Chi-square was 762.066 at 45 degrees of freedom with a significance value $p=0.001 < 0.05$ while the likelihood Ratio value was 575.176. The calculated p value was less than the critical value 0.05. This shows that there was significant relationship between the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policies and the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County government. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected based on this finding. We get a clear picture that from the descriptive table that the most affecting factor is development strategies in using existing resources for achieving objectives. This arise due to majority of staff being in that department have insufficient skills to implement programs that can assist in coming up with good strategies that can make a successful ECDE center. Notably also, many rural ECDE centers, teachers are very de-motivated because of low and irregular payment, in some cases teachers go for three to four months without pay because parents have not paid the ECDE fees. This is a great way lowers the rate of expertise of the staff and service delivery.

Factually, Establishing strategic performance measures to allow the ECDE centre to continuously assess and adjust program direction. Teacher qualification is instrumental for quality learning, not only in pre-primary education but also in other levels. According to Australia’s national qualification framework, one of the determinants of quality ECD education is the qualifications required of staff. Initial qualification of the teacher and the experience earns him/her the expertise required to better execute ECD programs, primarily the curriculum implementation function. Literature makes the distinction between structural quality, which looks at ‘quantitative’ aspects of early childhood education and care settings such as facilities, staff levels and qualifications; and process quality what actually happens in an early childhood education and care setting, especially child–adult and child–child interactions and children’s education programs.

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Competence, in most cases is developed through professional development. The development of teachers beyond their initial training can serve a number of objectives (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1998). These include; updating individuals’ knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area, to update individuals’ skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research. Development of teachers also enable individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice, enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice. It also enables exchange of information and expertise among teachers and others and to help weaker teachers become more effective.

Conclusion

The study established that majority of ECDE teachers had attained diploma qualification with a few who had attained master's degree. Majority of respondents said that there was no implementation policy on level of expertise in the policy (67.4%). This shows that there is need to develop a clear policy on level of expertise of teachers in order to motivate the teachers with greater level of expertise. This may involve the development of an agreed assessment rubric which is well understood by all on implementation of policies on level of expertise. Similarly also the study established that there existed relationship between the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policies and the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County government. The null hypothesis (HO₃: there is no significant relationship between the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policies and the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County government) was tested and $\chi^2=762.066$, $df=45$ and $sig=0.001$ at significance level of 0.05 was found. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected which implied that there was significant relationship between the level of expertise of the staff in implementing policies and the management of public ECDE centers in Elgeyo-Marakwet County government.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- i. There is need for individual and collective efforts on the part of teachers to keep themselves abreast of any new development regarding pedagogy and any relevant aspects of teaching and learning so as to remain relevant in their career. This can be done by way of professional development through in servicing.
- ii. It is recommended that Quality Assurance Officers should constantly assess the quality of ECDE in order to ensure that the licensed pre-primary schools meet the required minimum quality standards. In addition, these Quality Assurance Officers can develop an inventory to capture views and opinions of various stakeholders like parents, teachers and researchers on the quality of pre-primary education provided to children. This will help the Quality Assurance Officers to provide comprehensive advice to the schools and the county as well as the government on the areas that need to be improved.
- iii. There was need to encourage further development of ECDE centres so as to increase transition rates to class one. Thus if all the children entering class one had the opportunity to participate in an ECDE programme, they would be much more prepared to cope up with standard one work. County and ministry of education are encouraged to choose people with experience to be involved in the ECDE programme.

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