Dynamics Of Effective Curriculum Implementation In Public Early Childhood Development And Education Centres In Muhoroni Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) programme for years has not been part of the mainstream education services, with the programme provision left to various stakeholders in a totally uncoordinated manner. However, in the recent past, the government through the Ministry of Education has introduced an ECDE curriculum and is making an effort to see that it is fully implemented. The objective of the study was to evaluate how the instructional resource materials and learning facilities affect curriculum implementation in public ECDE centres. The study adopted descriptive survey design. Questionnaires and Observation Checklists were used to collect data. The researcher used descriptive methods to analyse data. Sample for the study was 30 ECDE centres which included 30 head teachers of the primary schools in which the ECDE centres were attached and all the ECDE teachers in the sampled centres. Cluster sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. Data analysis was undertaken primarily in terms of percentages and, to a lesser extent, through descriptive analysis. Based on research findings, the study concluded that there were inadequate resources and facilities. Finally, the study recommended that mobilisation be done to acquire more resources and facilities.

I. INTRODUCTION

The demand and increased interest in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) programmes has increased considerably as a result of changing socio-economic conditions and changing family structures all over the world. Njagi (2009) posits that, ECDE is an 'umbrella term' or 'a general classification' that refers to the process by which children, from birth until they turn eight years old, grow and flourish socially, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and morally.

Holistic Early Childhood Development (ECD) is the foundation of a good education, and a healthy social development. A strong ECD program is the cornerstone of communities and education programs. The early years of a child's life are spent in the creation of a child's 'sense of self' or the building of a first identity. This is a crucial part of children's make-up: how they first see themselves, how they think they should function, and how they expect others to function in relation to them. (Global Family Village, 2014).

It continues to acknowledge that a vast body of research has demonstrated that ECD programs if effectively implemented benefit children, families, and communities. The reduced drop-out and repetition rates, improved school achievements, greater adult productivity and higher levels of social and emotional functioning encouraged by ECD programs, make them a highly cost-effective means of strengthening society as a whole by ensuring that its individual members live up to their full potentials.

In curriculum development, the logical process to undertake after the try out is the implementation of the curriculum. At this stage, the new curriculum and curriculum materials, including teaching and learning aids, are made available to all schools and colleges which are within the jurisdiction of the development projects in question. This is a process that the project staff and educational authorities always look forward to with a lot of eagerness (Oluoch, 2011).

Several essential steps should be taken to ensure effective implementation of the developed curriculum. However, implementation of curriculum is complex and does not proceed in a linear fashion, and the people involved can even have conflicting ideas about how to go about it. Because of this, there is need to put these and other issues into consideration. Needless to say, teachers are the implementers of curriculum and this is usually facilitated by Education Officers, Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (Q.A.S.O.s) and the school system steered by the head teachers, deputy head teachers, fellow teachers, Teacher's Advisory Centres (T.A.C.s) among others (Shihundu $ Omulando, 2013).

The history of ECDE shows a movement from private charity to public sponsored programs in the early 19th century through the 20th century. While Great Britain led the way in private nursery school programmes in the 19th century, the first public kindergarten programs were founded in Canada, the United States and Germany. The U.S continued to lead in some aspects of ECDE with such landmark as mandatory state-wide kindergarten in Mississippi in 1982 (Harvey, 2013). He further posits that there has been an increase in attendance of public pre-K programs in the last 25 years. Causes for this increase include societal changes such as dual-income families, single parent families, and an increase in teen parents and a decrease in extended families' availability. Increased public support, increased awareness and evidence of school student success have contributed as well.

The contribution of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Frobel, Dewey and Jean Piaget among others improved the quality of life of the children (Driscoll & Nagel, 2002). Pestalozzi established orphanages to cater for destitute children while Frobel advocated play activities as a source of learning. Maria Montessori emphasized on use of senses for learning and holistic development of a child. She was the first to develop the curriculum of ECD program. Prior to Dewey, black American children were considered part of the workforce. They were rushed to grow in order to provide labour. He fought hard against child labour and discrimination (Driscoll & Nagel, 2002).

Marito (2007) says that, Early Childhood, from birth through school entry, was largely invisible worldwide as a policy concern for much of the twentieth century. Children, in the eyes of most countries including those in Africa, were 'appendages' of their parents or simply embedded in the larger family structure. The child did not emerge as a separate entity until school age, which was typically six or seven years. African leaders played key roles in a number of the international events that saw the history and growth of ECDE in Africa.

For a long time in Kenya, ECDE centres have been in the hands of private individuals and all activities going on within the centres; including curriculum dispensation, have been of less concern to the government. However, in 2006, the government drafted a National ECDE Policy Framework and the National ECDE Service Standard. The Policy Framework provides a co-ordination roadmap and defines the roles of various stakeholders in ECDE. Key areas focussed on included; Quality of ECDE services, Access, Equity, Transition, Completion and Quality of ECDE, Mainstreaming

of ECDE services by 2010, ECDE curriculum; a syllabus for ECDE in 2008, and Increased parental role in ECDE (Republic of Kenya, 2006).

To address the above issues, the government decided to implement the following policy: implement free and compulsory ECDE for all 4-5 year olds, implement the ECDE policy, ensure that all public primary schools have an ECDE unit, set quality standards and develop an ECDE performance framework, create funding modalities for ECDE, mobilise resources and engage stakeholders, develop and implement appropriate ECDE programs for all children with special needs, including the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. (Republic of Kenya, April 2012).

From the above key areas that were focussed on, the most important to note is the publication of the ECDE curriculum; a syllabus for ECDE in 2008. This is so because previously ECDE teachers taught without any syllabus and whatever they did in those classrooms were 'right' in their eyes and in the eyes of the parents. It was very difficult to get quality education from the public pre-schools and for this reason, public pre-schools found themselves in stiff competition with their private counterparts. Most of the parents preferred private pre-schools because the owners made sure they had many learners which implied a lot of income for them.

This also implied that parents who could not afford to pay for private pre-schools either took their children to public ECDE centres for the sake of it, or left their children at home until they were old enough to join standard one. This is no longer the case especially since the government put up measures to mainstream ECDE services. It is evident that the far the government has gone is slowly bringing confidence in the parents as to take their children to public pre-schools. This is putting a lot of pressure on teachers who must work hard to offer quality services which entails curriculum implementation.

Even so, the issue of teacher recruitment is still taking a process, but there is hope ahead. However, it is worth appreciating that even though the government is not paying the ECDE teachers' salaries, it has opened ways for training and is providing guidelines to ensure that the teachers get trained and sensitised on ECDE services. In the recent past, the Ministry of Education (M.O.E) has made an effort to supplement teacher's salaries in public ECDE centres through Community Support Grants. However, this only benefitted a few schools in Muhoroni Sub-County and was not motivating enough for these teachers to work harder.

Provision of instructional resource materials and learning facilities for these learners is also very critical since the much that has been done does not march the growing number of learners in public ECDE centres in Muhoroni Sub-County. However, there is element of growth since rarely do we come across learners taking their lessons under a tree with completely no materials as was the case before. However, there is a possibility that ECDE curriculum is not being effectively implemented in public pre-schools in Muhoroni Sub-County as stipulated by Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E) syllabus of 2008.

II. INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE MATERIALS AND LEARNING FACILITIES

The availability and use of teaching and learning materials affect the effectiveness of a teacher's lessons hence contributing to effective program implementation. Instructional materials are an integral component of Early Childhood Education (ECE) program implementation; their adequacy and suitability are important. The quality of education the learners receive bears direct relevance to the availability or lack of instructional materials (Avalos, 2000).

Educational resources can be defined as anything in the school or its environment that may be organized for use in the process of teaching and learning. Resources are vital inputs needed to effectively conduct instructional activities at all levels of implementation of educational programs. Teaching/learning materials form medium through which teaching is carried out. Teaching/learning materials can be divided into two categories; those used by the pupils and those used by the teachers. Materials used by the teachers are important because they help teachers prepare schemes of work and lesson notes which guide them in the course of teaching. They include the syllabi, the teachers' guides, chalkboard, maps, globe, and pictures. The availability of teaching and learning materials is very crucial in the provision of education (Mbamba, 2008).

Mbamba continues to argue that, instructional resource materials, which include textbooks, teaching aids and stationery, must be provided in adequate quantities and on time. Because of the centralised nature of their education systems, many African countries have established national schools' equipment schemes. Such schemes should collect and procure quality educational resource materials for distribution to the educational institutions.

For effective learning to take place, Mbamba says that, an environment that is conducive must be created in the form of basic facilities. Some of these are classrooms, laboratories, workshops, libraries and playing fields. There has been a mistaken view that only the provision of physical structures for an educational institution is required to meet the needs for effective implementation of a curriculum. Contrary to this notion, effective curriculum implementation requires a combination of physical structures, recreational facilities and such software as library resources. The provision of facilities that match the requirements of the curriculum implementation process cannot be possible in Africa without the cooperation and joint action between the beneficiaries (local communities) and their governments. Such cost-sharing efforts have brought about significant achievements in curriculum implementation within the African countries which have adopted them

Storage space is also important in curriculum implementation. Good teaching depends on having the equipment the teacher needs ready when they need them. Stocks of equipment are built up over the years; some bought, some made, some acquired. New syllabuses usually contain recommendations of items to acquire and things to make. All these need to be stored. There is need for adequate blackboard and display space in the classrooms. This is because most teaching and learning activities require enough space for demonstration by both the teachers and pupils as well as plenty of room to display children's work (Avalos 2000).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification. This design presents oriented methodology used to investigate population by selecting samples to analyse and discover occurrences. This design also provides numeric description of the population and describes and explains events as they occur. This design was deemed fit for this study because it considered issues such as economy of the design, rapid data collection and ability to understand a population from a part of it and therefore enabled the researcher to gather information on the dynamics of effective curriculum implementation in public ECDE centres in Muhoroni Sub-County.

The study was carried out in Muhoroni Sub-County, Kisumu County. Muhoroni Sub-County covers part of the vast Kano plains and part of the Nandi escarpment. It is bordering Nandi Sub-County to the North, Kericho Sub-County to the East, Nyando Sub-County to the South and Kisumu East Sub-County to the West. Muhoroni Sub-County was chosen because of its diversity in culture as well as economic activities. It also covers different geographical areas and was presumed to give a clear picture of different backgrounds under one umbrella.

This study targeted all ECDE teachers in 100 public ECDE centres in Muhoroni Sub-County and 100 primary school head teachers to which the public ECDE centres are attached.

In this study, cluster sampling technique was adopted to ensure that areas within the Sub-County were adequately represented as the target population was consisting of different educational zones. The Sub-County was clustered into five educational zones which had some schools along the road and some in the interior. From each zone, 6 pre-schools were sampled using simple random sampling technique; this made a sample size of 30 pre-schools representing 30% of the total population. The sampling unit was the public primary school to which the pre-school was attached. Pre-school teachers and head teachers were selected from the sampled pre-schools. This sampling technique was preferred because it used the whole sample and every subject in the study stood a chance to be involved.

The researcher used a questionnaire for head teachers in this study. A questionnaire is a research instrument that gathers data over a large sample (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). It is a written list of questions that is to be filled in by a number of people with an aim of collecting information. The advantages of using questionnaires were: the person administering the instrument had an opportunity to establish rapport, explain the purpose of the study and explain the meaning of items that might not have been clear.

An observation checklist was also used to collect data. Observation involved the use of all senses to perceive and

understand the experiences of interest of the researcher. It allowed the researcher to see for herself what the teachers actually did rather than what they said they did and also see the real state of the pre-schools in terms of infrastructure. The researcher chose this instrument as well to enable her record information as it occurred, explore topics that may be uncomfortable to the informants, and to be on the ground by herself to notice unusual aspects that may have been going on regarding the implementation of ECDE curriculum. The instruments were adapted from guidelines for Quality Assurance and Standards Assessments of schools in Kenya and modified to fit the pre-school setting.

Validity attests to whether an instrument measures what it is supposed to and is justified by the evidence (Uma, 2003). Essentially, it entails the extent to which an instrument actually measures the aspects that it is intended to measure. In this study, the researcher piloted the instruments in two ECDE centres which were not be included in the study in order to ensure that data collected using such instruments adequately represented the domains of the variables that it was expected to measure. The pilot helped to improve face validity and content validity of the instruments. As such, the researcher sought assistance and scrutiny of the instruments from colleagues, the supervisor and experts which helped to improve content validity of the instruments.

Uma (2003) posits that reliability refers to whether an instrument is consistent, stable and free from error, despite fluctuations in test taker, administrator or conditions under which the test is administered. To ensure that the instruments were reliable, they were piloted in two pre-schools which were not included in the study to determine item efficiency and revise any items that might have been ambiguous. The aim of pre-testing was to gauge the clarity and relevance of the instrument items so that those items found to be inadequate for measuring variables were either discarded or modified to improve the quality of the research instruments. This ensured that the instrument captured all the required data.

The procedure for extracting an estimate of reliability was obtained from the administration of Test-Retest reliability method which involved administering the same instrument twice to the same group of subject with a time lapse between the first and second test. A Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient formula was used. The researcher obtained a coefficient of 0.78 for the questionnaire and 0.90 for the observation checklist. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) a coefficient of 0.80 or more simply shows that there is high reliability of data.

The researcher first obtained a letter of introduction from the School of Post Graduate Studies. This enabled the researcher to obtain a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, thereafter from the County Commissioner, Kisumu and the County Director of Education, Kisumu to enable her carry out an assessment in the public ECDE centres in Muhoroni Sub-County, Kisumu County. The data was collected within a period of one and a half months. It was collected using questionnaires and observation checklists. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents, who were given some time to fill in and return. The observation checklists were filled by the researcher on the ground.

After doing the assessment, editing was done. This entailed reading through the reports and gathering information from instruments. The information was coded and categorized through a categorization process (MacLeod & Rutherford, 2004). Quantitative data was subjected to the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21). This processed the frequencies and percentages which were used to discuss the findings. Frequency distribution tables, pie charts and bar graphs were used to present the data while descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequencies were used to answer research questions. Qualitative data was also analyzed thematically. Finally, data interpretation was done. This essentially involved locating the meaning of an experience or event in the context of larger sets of meanings (Martin, Sugarman & Thompson, 2003). All interpretation was 'aspectual'; meaning that it was taken from a first person point of view.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

EFFECT OF INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE MATERIALS AND LEARNING FACILITIES ON ECDE CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

The study intended to determine the extent in which instructional resource materials and learning facilities suit the implementation of ECDE curriculum in public pre-schools in Muhoroni Sub-County. Head teachers were asked to indicate the availability of the same in their ECDE units. The researcher also used an observation checklist to assess the adequacy of instructional resource materials and learning facilities. Table 1 presents the results.

Requirements	Availability (f)	Percentage (%)
Teaching/learning aids	28	93%
Text books	28	93%
Classroom displays and hangings	28	93%
Playing ground	28	93%
Playing equipment	26	87%
Chairs/Desks	25	83%
Water	27	90%
Classrooms for all levels	1	3%
Library	0	0%
Special rooms	0	0%
Toilets/Latrines	12	40%

Table 1: Instructional Resource Materials and Learning Facilities

Table 1 indicates that 93% of schools had teaching/learning aids, text books, classroom displays and hangings, and playing ground. 87% had playing equipment, 83% seats and 90% water. However, only 40% had latrines and 3% classrooms for all levels. Sad to note though was the fact that 0% had neither libraries nor special rooms.

Additional Data collected indicated that the sources of IRMs were; 60% through purchasing and improvisation, 20% through purchasing only and 20% through improvisation. Source of funding was 47% by parents, 27% by government,

13% by government and parents, and 13% by government and teachers. 100% of the head teachers said the IRMs were inadequate and 97% of them said that they were being used on a daily basis. 97% of the schools had classrooms which were inadequate apart from the fact that some were lacking classrooms for each ECDE level.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there were inadequate instructional resource materials and learning facilities, for example, only 3% of the sampled preschools had classroom for each level with the rest being forced to share classrooms. The study recommended that Head teachers, ECDE teachers and other local stakeholders should make sure there are adequate instructional resource materials and learning facilities in the ECDE centres if effective teaching and learning have to be realised.

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