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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TEACHERS' TRAINING, TERMS OF SERVICE AND HEAD TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF ECDE POLICY
FRAMEWORK IN BUNGOMA SOUTH DISTRICT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a descriptive survey of the relationship between policy framework governing ECDE and actual practices in Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDCs) in Bungoma South District, Kenya. It examines the training that teachers of ECDE underwent, the terms and conditions of their work, and head teachers' level of awareness on ECDE policy. A sample size of 40 ECDCs was used. All the head teachers of the selected ECDCs participated. The teachers were selected through simple random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview and observation schedules. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and presented thematically. It emerged that policy framework governing ECDE programme in Kenya was not being fully practiced in the District. Most teachers had a certificate while a few had a diploma in ECDE. The training content was sufficient to make teachers competent. However, majority had never attended refresher courses since training. Moreover, most teachers did not enjoy harmonized terms and conditions of services, though the conditions of services were emphasized during inspection by QASOs. The study recommended facilitation of ECDE teachers by educational officers, cooperation of parents, administration, community leaders and MOE to improve the working conditions of ECDE teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophical Basis of Early Childhood Education

The present curriculum for ECDE has been influenced greatly by the writings and activities of great philosophers of all times like Plato, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Johann Pestalozzi, John Comenius, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Froebel among others. Plato (427-347 AD) writes that the character of the young and tender being is founded and desired impression readily taken when the child is young or starting his or her life. He sees early years as critical for developing not only the child's body and healthy habits but also for fostering good thoughts, sports, games, plays and songs. This could lay foundation for wisdom, temperance, courage and justice which to him are cardinal virtues of the perfect citizen of the republic. To Plato, curriculum is to be linked to a continued concern for social betterment (Karanja & Githinji, 2009). Comenius (1592-1670) wrote the first illustrated picture book for children and has advanced the concept that early learning determines what a person becomes (Nasibi, 2005). He suggests that in teaching children, the teacher has to follow the order of nature, build on the foundation of spontaneous reaction and teach repeatedly one thing at a time. The teacher has also to teach without coercion and discourage memorization without understanding.

He emphasizes on learning by experience and experimentation and asserts that a child could be taught new knowledge by the teacher associating it with what is already familiar to the child, i.e. from known to unknown (Sifuna, 1986). Rousseau (1712-1778) and Pestalozzi (1746-1829) argue that conception of education includes the development of powers of the individual because the enhancement of a person's power means progress towards an improved society. To maximize the goodness of the person for such a society, the early years need attention. For Pestalozzi, this means loving care from others and the need for teacher guidance. He argues that the child should grow up whole, free, able and being led to solve the problems of living through his or her own experiences (Nasibi, 2005).

Froebel (1782-1852) was influenced by Pestalozzi. He demands for a co-operation rather than a competitive classroom situation and insists that social values would accrue from many of the plays of childhood. To him, play is the basis of early learning; the plays of childhood are the germinal leaves of later life, for the whole man is developed in these, in his tended deposition in his innermost tendencies. He values the child and views him/her as unique, creative and productive (Watson, 1997a). Dewey (1990) has introduced a work play period in which social interaction is free and natural. The child is left to actively choose materials and worked with them guided by his/her own plans and ideas. Group projects and a

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wide variety of activities are seen as a way of providing individual initiatives and cooperative endeavours. Dewey also argues that the primary business of the school is to train children in co-operative and mutually helpful living, to foster in them consciousness in making the adjustment that will carry this spirit into overt deeds. Montessori (1870-1952) is best known for her design materials for sense training. She was committed to the idea that movement, manipulation and the isolated training of the senses develops the capacity or thought. She advocates the fact that children repeat tasks which they enjoy. Repeating makes children achieve highly and concepts should not be taught once. According to Montessori, simple materials should be for easy identification. Children should be allowed to use discovery method of teaching. She also stresses teacher preparation to enhance competence. Unlike Froebel, who advocated for a teller, organizer and group leader, a teacher, for Montessori, is an observer of children. Children manipulate activities on their own (Karanja & Githinji, 2009).

Critical Issues on ECDE Teacher Training and Policy

The ECDE policy framework is a key milestone in development of ECDE in Kenya. It was not until 2006 that the government through NACECE came up with a policy framework for ECDE. Previously, ECDE was guided by various reports, Sessional papers and goodwill from various authorities. The policy makes it clear that by 2010, the ECDE programme shall be mainstreamed into primary education. The ECDE policy framework done in 2004 to 2005 gave suggestions over the following items: Transition, Enrolment of children in ECDCs, Terms of service for pre-school teachers, Certification and grading of ECD teachers, Examination and assessment of ECDE teachers, and Establishment of ECDCs among others. Since its dissemination in 2006, stakeholders have remained anxious to see it implemented in totality. It is from this outcry that the research was carried out because this missing link in educational development seriously needs to be filled (Karanja & Githinji, 2009). There is adequate and clear evidence that ECDE in Kenya is not being managed properly. Being a practitioner in one of the primary schools in Bungoma South District, the author had observed how ECDE activities were being carried out in ECDCs attached to primary schools within this region. This left a lot of questions on whether or not the policy framework was being put in practice. The discussion in the background of the proposed study likewise demonstrates this weak link, neglect and mismanagement of ECDE. To strengthen the development and management of ECDE, there is need to develop and enforce relevant policy framework which the Ministry of Education has done. However, there is evidence, as earlier stated, that this policy framework is not effectively implemented by ECDCs. As a practitioner, and from the interaction carried out with other practitioners, the author points to clear evidence that there is a problem in the policy implementation. As evidenced in the Kafu Committee (1998) document, the recommendations were not clearly followed and thus, there was a need to carry out the research. Hence this study was designed to find out the level and effectiveness of implementation of this policy framework by ECDCs in Bungoma South District. This study was designed to establish the practices carried out at the ECDCs and their relationship with the ECDE policy framework in Kenya.

Content of the ECDE Policy in Kenya

As defined in Kenya's legal policy document, ECD in Kenya refers to the programme that provides for the holistic development of children from conception to eight years. It involves teaching/learning experience in pre-school and primary schools. It also involves Psychology – special stimulation of children, community and parental education mobilization, transition from education mobilization, transition from pre-school to primary, health and nutrition surveillance (World Bank, 1993). Early Childhood Education policy at this level of education is in line with the needs of the nation, the children and the community.

Transition from ECDE to Primary

The policy requires that the management of ECDE centres and primary schools be harmonized under the leadership of the head teacher. This is for easy transition. The document requires that at least each ECDC be attached to a primary school, and where ECDCs are separate, the head teacher of the nearest primary school should be in charge. The ECDCs that share one compound with a primary school are managed independently and in most cases have their own communities. The current study sought to establish the relationship between practices at ECDCs and ECDE policy in Bungoma South District.

Enrolment of the Children at the ECDE Centres

The Kafu Committee (1998) recommends that all ECDCs established three classes; classes such as junior class 3-4 years, mid-class 4-5 years and senior class 5 years and above. This is not the case in the policy since which is not clear on the age of entry to ECDCs. Most ECDCs, especially those that are privately run, seem not to be doing any of this. Most of them have haphazardly put up rooms where learners of all these ages are heaped together without age considerations. This has led to poor quality production, of learners of as low as five years of age joining class one unlike the proposed 6 years in the policy. The idea of at least a child spending one year in ECDE centre has created a loophole where parents don't take education at this level seriously. Due to levies that are charged, some take their children to school for just that one year without letting the child to go through the three stages gradually (Hunt, 1969). Maturation theorists believe that development is a biological process that occurs automatically in predictable sequential stages over time. This information provides a foundation to the current study which seeks to ascertain whether the policy is clear concerning enrolment of children at ECDCs in Bungoma South District.

Terms of Services for Pre-school Teachers

In Kenya, ECDE is not part of the 8-4-4 Education system. This isolates ECDE Teachers from their Primary counterparts in terms of pay and status, with the former feeling inferior to the latter. In community-owned ECDCs and those attached to public primary schools, the ECDE committee decides monthly how much each parent should pay taking into account parents' income levels. ECD teachers' salaries, which average around Ksh 2000 per month, though with the large variation between rural and urban areas, have not changed much over the last 10

years and whether or not they are paid depends largely on parental contribution. As such, their salaries are not stable and fluctuate each month depending on the level of contribution from parents. In some cases, teachers stay on after working official hours and are paid to look after some children whose parents' need custodial care for them. Other teachers are paid to go to homes of children to provide custodial care. The ECD committee can hire and fire teachers "at will" (MOEST, 2005). According to the National Early Childhood Developing Policy (2006), there is no documentation on terms and conditions of service. Because of this, it is evident in Bungoma South District there are schools that are paid by municipal council and others paid by county council, while others are paid by the employers of ECDCs where they work. The big question here is on whether payment is equal and fair for all of them. There are some ECDCs that offer loans and other services to their teachers and not to others. This has created a very big disparity between teachers in this sector. It is therefore upon the MOEST to provide unified and harmonized terms and conditions of services for all pre-schools teachers in the country.

Certification and Grading of ECDE Teachers

The policy stresses the need for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) to review the minimum qualification for the regular course; the course should take candidates with D+ and above or KCE division IV and above and grading of certificates should be done according to performance. All these can be achieved when assessment is also properly done. The MoE has not put in place these mechanisms. Practical assessment is not properly done. Teachers on practice are not properly assessed. There are cases where some have been graded without going through proper assessment. The system has been marred with corruption where when being assessed, teacher trainees use 'shortcuts' to get their results. Some are not assessed leading to referral. Exams are also delayed. An independent examination board should handle issues of ECDE teacher examination. There is need therefore to investigate whether the teachers of ECDE in Bungoma South District have undergone training.

Establishment of ECDCs

The policy is particularly about the standards of establishing ECDCs with suitable physical structures and available facilities. The MOEST expanded vision on ECD is articulated in the 1988/1993 Development Plan which mandated the formation of NACECE and ECD sections at the MOEST headquarters and was expected to develop alternative and viable programmes to meet the need of less than three years. The MOE is adopting the policy of partnership to provide ECDE services throughout the country. According to Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1988, to enhance ECDE, there is need for involvement of various partners in ECDE sector, the main partner being government ministries, parents, local community, private organization and individual and NGOs, bilateral and multilateral partners. Ministries involved in ECD programme areas:-

- MoEST: To cater for ECDE programme
- MoH: Provision of preventive and curative services to children and their families. In line

with this, they give de-worming medicines and vitamin A tablets among others.

- Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services: Promotes children's needs and rights as well as positive values and practices in children in line with Children's Act of 2001
- Ministry of Local Government: Provides support to schools in their jurisdiction

These Ministries are supposed to be very important to a child's growth, but in the case of ECDE in Kenya, they seem to be silent. Well, the existing policy falls short in providing clear guidelines on how the work of different partners should be co-ordinated for effective programme provision. Basing on the above, there has been rampant establishment of ECDCs without basing on what has been clearly stated in the policy document. The conditions that ECDCs are being set up in are worrying. ECDCs have become so commercial that they have lost sight of the need for a holistic child development. The present study thus seeks to ascertain whether the policy is clear concerning enrolment of children to ECDCs.

Link between ECDE and Public Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme

ECDE and Free Education For All are part of the country's poverty reduction strategies which ensure improvement of Access to ECD and provision of services. Public Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) emphasizes raising economic base of parents and communities to ensure that they can provide holistic needs of children and families. This encourages parents to provide quality ECD Education. Research has proved that children who are cared for in early years are more socially stable, have better brain development, have higher academic achievements, fewer rates of repetition and dropout and end up getting better paying jobs. Such children become an asset to their families as they contribute more economically to their families and the country. It is therefore necessary to establish the relationship between practices at ECDCs with the ECDE policy in Kenya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The location of the study was Bungoma South District in Bungoma County. Bungoma South is one of the districts that form the Western Province of Kenya. This study employed the descriptive survey research design. This survey dealt with opinions on the ECDE policy framework, attitudes of the ECDE teachers towards the policy and whether the policy was being practiced or not. The study targeted head teachers and teachers in ECDCs in Bungoma South District. Statistics from the DEOs office (Bungoma South District) indicated that the District had 138 registered ECDCs. The DEO's office Bungoma and DICECE offices, in Bungoma South District were included in this study. Either the head teachers of ECDCs or primary schools were used. This study used systematic random sampling to select 46 ECDCs that formed the sample of the survey, The ECD teachers were selected through simple random sampling technique in each school. The instruments of collecting data included the questionnaires, interview schedule and observation schedule. Descriptive statistics were used in analyzing of data in this study. Data was then presented in frequency tables.

RESULTS

Training of Early Childhood Development Education Teachers

Training has been looked at in two broad areas: pre-service and in-service training. Under pre-service, the following areas were examined: nature of training, duration of training, mode of training, and adequacy of content taught during the training programmes.

Training of Early of Childhood Development Education Teachers

When the teachers were asked to say what type of training they had undergone in ECDE teaching, the findings were as follows: 25(65.8%) of the teachers had undergone certificate training, 12(31.6%) had a diploma and 1(2.6%) had a degree in ECDE. From this, it appeared that all teachers in Bungoma South District, Early Child Development Centres were professionally qualified. Majority of the teachers had certificate in ECDE. An equally high proportion, 13(34.2%), had Diploma and above qualification in teaching ECDE. This calibre of teachers of ECDE in Bungoma South District was competent and well qualified in teaching ECDE.

Duration of Training in Years

Apart from level of training, the research was also interested in establishing durations of training. Majority, 35(92.1%), of the teacher respondents had trained for 1-2 years. This duration is not enough to adequately prepare a teacher to handle ECDE children. According to the reviewed literature, in Ghana, the basic level teacher training course lasts three years after which a certificate is awarded.

Mode of Training

The main interest was to determine whether the training was full time or part time. It was found out that 27(71.1%) teachers had gone for part time training while 11(28.9%) had opted for full time training. It is obvious that part time is not as efficient as full time training. This was in collaboration with the information that majority of the teachers, 35(92%), had undergone their training for 1-2 years. Given the poverty index in Bungoma County, it appeared that many teachers might not have been able to afford full time training, which is fairly expensive.

Adequacy of Content Taught during Training Programme

An item seeking the opinion of the teacher respondents on the adequacy of the content they were taught during training was analyzed as follows: Those who felt it was sufficient were 35(92.2%) while those who felt it was not sufficient were 3(7.9%). The feeling of the majority was that the content was sufficient. It was therefore clearly indicated that content was suitable for their teaching at ECDE. The finding corroborates with what Gross *et al.* (1971) have advanced, that for any implementation to take place, the implementers need to have knowledge about an innovation.

Terms and Conditions for ECDE Teachers in Kenya

This theme sought information on the scheme of service of Early Childhood Development teachers in Kenya. To obtain

the relevant information on terms and conditions, the study sought to find out the respondents' feelings on the terms and conditions of their services, role played by QASOs in relation to the terms and conditions, and action taken when there was a breach of terms and conditions for ECDE teachers.

Perception of ECDE Teachers about Terms and Conditions of Service

It was very vital for this study to establish whether or not teachers of ECDE enjoyed the terms and conditions of their service. The responses were as follows: 17(44.8%) of the teachers of ECDE enjoyed the present terms and conditions of service, 16 (21.1%) of them did not enjoy and 5(13.2%) did not know anything about terms and conditions of service. The teacher respondents were split halfway. It emerged that some teachers are not familiar with their terms of service. This was so because not all of them are employed by the Ministry of Education. They are not under one employer. Most of them are employed by individuals and organizations hence are subjected to terms of conditions of the private institutions and are paid in accordance with the agreement they make with their employers. In Bungoma South District, this could be affecting ECDE policy implementation. There is need for one employer to bring harmony and quality education.

Emphasis and Terms and Conditions by QASO's Visits to ECDCs

This item sought to find out the emphasis placed on conditions and terms of service when QASOs visited schools. Analysis showed that 28(73.7%) of the teachers reported that the officers placed a lot of emphasis on terms and conditions of services, 2(5.3%) of the teachers reported that no emphasis was put on their terms and conditions and 8(21.1%) of the teacher seemed not to know. It appeared that the QASOs seemed to sensitize the Early Childhood Development teachers on their terms and conditions. This is an indication that the QASOs were concerned with terms and conditions of teachers of ECDC. From the analysis, 8 teachers did not seem to understand what their terms and condition were. The fact that teachers of ECDE were not aware of their terms and conditions means they were most unlikely to enjoy their services. A good scheme is a source of motivation to teachers and hence people seem to work better when they are motivated.

Action Taken when Terms and Conditions are breached

In this item, the study sought to find out whether or not any action was taken when there was a breach of terms and conditions for ECDE teachers. The analysis showed that 25(65.8%) of the teachers stated that there was action taken. This implies that schools and the MOE were concerned about the conditions of service. It is therefore believed that teachers of Bungoma South District have the support of management and the MOE.

Head Teachers' Familiarity with the Content in the ECDE Policy Framework

The study also found it important to establish whether or not head teachers were familiar with the content of the ECDE policy framework. The analysis revealed that 16(44.4%) of the head teachers who responded mentioned that it talked about

training and compulsory employment of ECDE teachers, 4(11.1%) said it talked about good learning environment and 16(44.4%) of the respondents said they were not aware of what the policy document contained. Despite the fact that 22(55.6%) of the head teachers mentioned one of the contents they knew, the truth is the general response is worrying. The policy document has quite a lot of content which should be at their fingertips. It shows that even through the policy framework has been there, it has not been studied and understood. This is clear evidence that the policy framework is not being practised in most ECDCs in Bungoma South District.

Discrepancy between Policy Framework and Actual Practices

There was need to find out whether or not there were discrepancies between policy framework and practices. When analysis was done, 12(33.3%) of the head teachers who responded said there was discrepancy, 14(43.9%) of the respondents said there was no discrepancy and 12(33%) said they did not know whether there was discrepancy or not. There was evidence enough to show that a large proportion of head teachers of ECDE were not familiar with the policy framework. If the head teachers are not familiar and are not able to understand ECDE policy framework, the teachers of ECDC will most likely not implement the policy competently. Head teachers were not competent to monitor and enforce the policy. That is why it was not one of the refresher courses. Theoretically, it indicates that there should be clarity followed by implementation.

Head Teachers' Role of in the ECDE Policy Framework Implementation

On the role of head teachers in the implementation of the ECDE policy, the analysis identified 24(66.7%) of them supervised the teaching and learning of pupils, 8(22.2%) facilitated suitable environment for learning and 4(11.1%) facilitated co-ordination between teachers and parents. From this analysis, majority of the teachers thought they should concentrate on supervising teaching and learning of pupils as opposed to co-ordination. It is unfortunate that many teachers and parents don't regard co-ordination between the teachers and parents of ECDE. From the results, parents are the major source of funding in Early Childhood Development Centres. Poor relationship between teachers and parents may lead to poor response from parents towards levies and fees for their children. Funding is one of the key requirements of any implementation. It is therefore good for head teachers to facilitate good co-ordination since it also creates a favourable environment for learning. From this observation, it could be true to say that teachers of ECDE Bungoma South District found ECDE policy framework difficult to follow since the head teachers had forgotten their role of co-ordination.

DISCUSSION

The study established that majority of the teachers had a certificate in ECDE while others had a diploma in ECDE. Furthermore, majority of the teachers had trained for 2 years. Concerning the mode of study for the courses they undertook, most of the teachers went in for part-time courses with the majority stating that the content taught during the training was sufficient to make them competent ECDE teachers. However,

it can be concluded that majority had never attended some refresher courses since their initial training. Those who had attended refresher courses had learnt about guidance and counselling, ECDE management and scouts and Girl Guide courses during the in-service training. Lack of time, finance and change in curriculum made most teachers not to attend refresher courses. It was revealed that refresher courses attended enhanced teachers' knowledge of teaching skills in ECDE very much. Teachers of ECDE in Bungoma South District are well educated, professionally qualified and experienced enough to teach in Early Childhood Development Centres. In addition, the study found out that many of the teachers were not familiar with their terms of service. Most of them were employed by individuals and organizations; hence, were subjected to terms and conditions of the private institutions. They were paid in accordance with the agreement they make with their employers. The fact that a large proportion seemed not to enjoy or did not know the conditions and terms of their service they were entitled to could impact negatively on their attitude towards the ECDE. The emphasis placed on conditions and terms of service when Quality Assurance and standards officers visit schools shows that the QASOs seem to sensitize the ECDE teachers on their terms and conditions. This is an indication that the QASOs are concerned with the terms and conditions of teachers of ECDE. In line with the theoretical framework, it is good for the management to support the implementers. Gross *et al.* (1971) state that one of the five important conditions in implementation of any new development is support by the management. It is therefore believed that teachers of Bungoma South District have the support of management and the MOE. The study also found out that majority of the head teachers was aware of the policy framework that guided running of the ECDE centres. However, concerning the mode of enrolment of children in the ECDCs, majority of the respondents stated that they had oral tests and also considered the age of the learners. They stated that it was important to consider the age of the learners since a child should acquire at least 3 and above years to be able to attend the ECDE. On the recruitment, the study revealed that majority of the head teachers applied the policy required on certificate and grading of teachers. In conclusion, the study found that there were discrepancies between policy framework and what was actually taking place in Early Childhood Development Centres.

CONCLUSION

From the findings and discussion above, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Teachers of ECDE in Bungoma South District are well educated, professionally qualified and experienced enough to teach in ECDCs.
- Large proportions of teachers have undergone in-service training and very little pre-service training.
- Most of the Head teachers are aware of the policy framework and its contents.
- The head teachers play an important role in the implementation of the content of the policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are given:

- ECDE teachers should be facilitated and supported by educational officers, head teachers and parents to undergo training and also attend refresher courses in order to be conversant with emerging issues in the ECDE curriculum.
- Parents, schools' administration and community leaders should work together in order to improve the terms and conditions of ECDE teachers. The parents should pay levies and fees in time to enable the programme to run. The school administration should practice proper management of funds they receive and the community should create conducive learning environment.
- There should be sensitization of the ECDE policy framework to all stakeholders by the Ministry of Education, through induction or refresher courses for clarity and smooth implementation.
- The Education Act should be revised to cater for trained ECDE teachers' recruitment and payment by one employer, either TSC or Local Authority. This in itself will bring harmony and quality to education. It will lead to motivation and, as such, these teachers, like any other employees, will be motivated to will work harder.

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