

Challenges Facing the Ministry of Education Officials in Carrying Out Supervision of Early Childhood Curriculum in Schools in Nandi Division, Nandi East District, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Quality assurance and relevance of ECD Programmes in many countries obligates the revision of the syllabuses, the establishment of an ongoing in-service programme for teachers, the construction and equipment of resource centers in ECD, provision of free textbooks and the establishment of benchmarks for the improvement of pupils' mastery levels at the basic cycle. The purpose of this study was to identify Challenges Facing the Ministry of Education Officials In Carrying Out Supervision Of Early Childhood Curriculum In Schools. The study was guided by Allan Glathorm's (1997) differential supervision model. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain public ECD centers and private ECDE centers, while simple random sampling was used to get 32 public ECD centers and 15 private ECD centers, from 155 centers in the District. All head teachers from selected ECD centers were involved in the study and one ECD teacher from each selected centre. Five field officers were selected for the study using purposive sampling. Data collection instruments involved the use of the following: questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis. Descriptive statistics (percentages and bar graphs) and inferential statistics (regression analysis) were used to analyze data. The findings of the study noted that supervision of the ECDE curriculum is affected by lack of funding, poor infrastructure, lack of support from the management, dispersion of the ECD centers, interference from local leaders and sponsors. Supervision propelled the teachers' intellectual abilities, helped them to unearth the children's potential, and led to positive appraisal of pupils. The study recommended the harmonization of ECDE curriculum, employment of ECDE teachers by the government and quality remuneration of those ECDE teachers.

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1.1 Introduction

The issue of quality and relevance of the curriculum supervision has been a concern for teachers and parents alike. There have been complaints that performance of ECD centers has been poor. According to UNESCO report (2007), there are complaints in ECD centers on continued neglect as far as ECD teaching is concerned and that there seems to be little or no supervision at all. Although a policy is in place, there is poor implementation due to lack of uniform curriculum and standardization. This makes academic standards for the children to drop and reveal glaring lack of benchmarks to clearly define learning outcomes at ECD centers and lack of quality assessment. The fact that there are no known published researches on the effects of inadequate supervision of ECD centers, creates a gap that this study endeavored to examine. The Kenya Education Sector Strategic Plan (KESSP, 2005), shows that there is inadequate management and supervision mechanism in implementation of ECD curriculum. In addition, the supervision factor is a major determinant in ECD performance. The study therefore sought to investigate the factors affecting supervision of early childhood education curriculum in Nandi East district. Children at the pre-school stage almost entirely depend on

their teachers to guide them in their learning activities. Apart from the difference in their control structures in determining which activities are undertaken, teachers are left to interpret and to implement the curriculum. ECD in Kenya seeks to develop the child holistically. The growth and development processes include all aspects of growth, that is, physical, mental, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic dimensions, hence it demands that teachers should have sound knowledge of how children grow, develop and learn (Ministry of Education Science & Technology guideline, 2000). The government provides a co-ordination role, while the parents provide funds and logistical support. The communities claim ownership over the ECD centers', thus they are ready to take responsibility and manage the institutions themselves. They are willing to send their children to the centers, provide some money when required and even provide their labour during the construction of classes (Ministry of Education Science & Technology, 2000). Currently, the efficiency and effective supervision of ECDE in Kenya is hindered by several factors. Some of these include: gender disparity, high pupil teacher ratio, untrained teachers, lack of adequate knowledge and skills for providing rich and stimulating learning experiences to the children, and

lack of an organized curriculum and other support materials for use. In addition to these, classrooms have insufficient learning and play materials; as a result, rote learning and talk-and-chalk teaching methods are greatly utilized (MoE, 2009). This indicates that supervision of early childhood education has not been investigated adequately. From this prevailing backdrop, therefore, it is important to establish factors affecting supervision of early childhood education curriculum programmes in Nandi East District so as to strengthen the provision and supervision of early childhood education curriculum programmes in Nandi East District.

2.1 Challenges of Curriculum Supervision

Implementation involves putting into practice an espoused idea or concept. Otunga (1993:118) posits that, once a programme has been implemented, it is important that it is supervised. In Kenya the work of curriculum supervision is the duty of Quality Assurance Officers, previously referred to as Inspectors of Schools, and DICECE officers at the local level and head teachers at the school level. In order to close the gap between the written and taught curriculum, the expectation is that teachers assume a role in the development of the curriculum (Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon, 2007). Wiggins and McTighe (2007) state that a teacher must specifically assume the role of a: curriculum designer, critical friend reviewer, field tester, and troubleshooter. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2007) list the following moral principles that make a good school: consistent efforts on behalf of compassion, wholeness, connectedness, inclusion, justice, peace, and freedom. These can lead to trusting relationships among members of the school community. Leadership and learning is conducted through the use of these moral principles in a way that supervisors and teachers experience the benefits as opposed to only being handed down as a directive. Therefore, the ongoing process of pursuing goals and objectives within a learning community succeed when a democracy exists that embraces diversity such that all actors have a voice, can work through conflict, and have the wherewithal to reach a

consensus for the betterment of the school and all its members (Lakoff, 2007).

3.0 Methodology

The study was conducted in Nandi Hills Division of Nandi East District, Rift Valley Province Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The target population of this study comprised of 155 ECD centers in Nandi East District (105 Public ECD centers and 50 private ECD centers). This study used stratified sampling for 155 schools, which comprised of 105 public centers and 50 private centers. The 32 teachers and 32 head teachers and 20 field officers totaling 84 respondents formed the study sample size and answered the questionnaire. As such, the teachers' questionnaire and an interview schedule formed the main instruments for data collection in this study. Thus, the study used the triangulation method of data collection, which usually involves the use of two or more research instruments to collect the necessary data. Data capturing was done using Excel software. The data from the completed questionnaires was cleaned, re-coded and entered into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 to derive both the descriptive and inferential statistics relevant for this study.

4.0 Results/Findings

4.1 Challenges facing the government officers in carrying out supervision of ECDE Curriculum

To establish the challenges faced by the government officers in their supervisory roles. The following interview responses in figure 1 were captured.

The responses indicated that poor infrastructure (25.0%) was a major challenge in carrying out supervision of ECDE; this was closely followed by ignorance of parents (21.88%), unclear education policy (20.31%) and lack of registered ECDE centers (17.19%) which thereby inhibited effective supervision. It was also noted that some managements were unwilling to cooperate with government officers (15.62%).

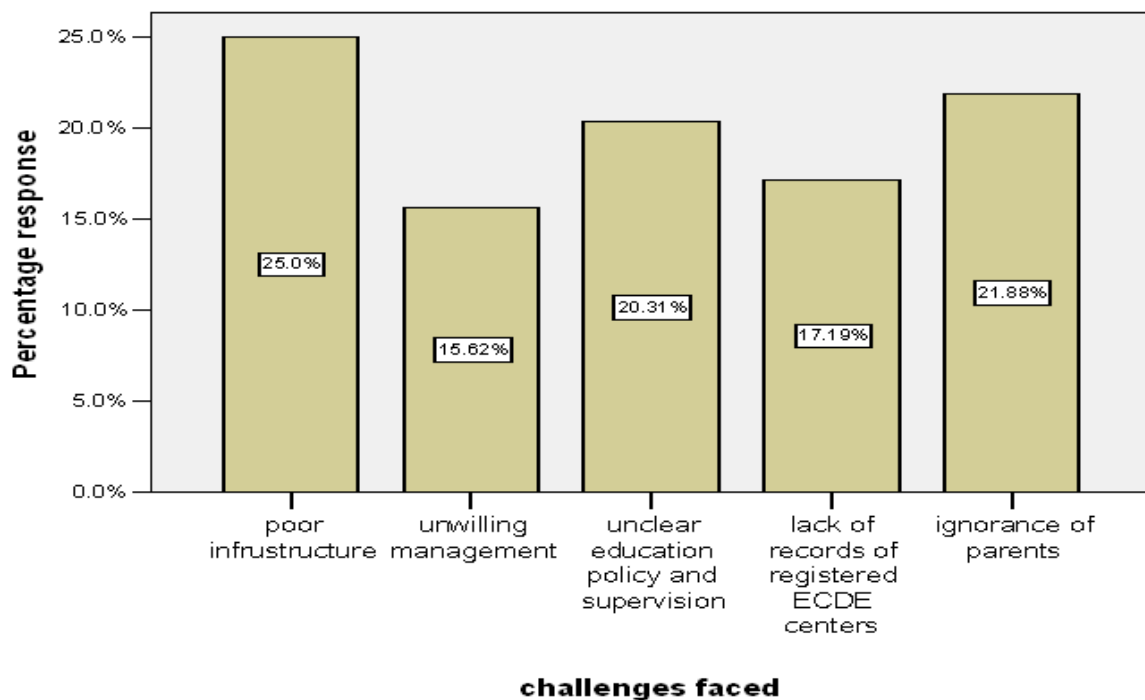


Figure 1. Challenges facing the government officers in carrying out supervision of ECDE.

4.2 Discussion

The study discovered that most government officers in the district did not have pedagogical content knowledge on ECDE curriculum, this hampered their supervisory role. Other salient challenges pointed out by a majority of the respondents included: poor infrastructure (25.0%) ignorance of parents (21.88%), unclear education policy (20.31%), lack of proper records on registered ECDE centers (17.19%) and management unwillingness to cooperate with government officers (17.19%). The government officers' respondents reiterated that not unless the identified problems were properly addressed, then not much should be expected from government officers in carrying out effective supervision of early childhood curriculum in schools.

This is similar to findings in a Nyeri study which established that policy guidelines, funding, facilities and the school management hindered effective supervision of early childhood education (Hannah O. Ajayi, 2008). In a study by M. G. Shaji and F. C. Indoshi, (2008), it was discovered that most educational supervisors at ECDE, just like their teachers, had limited knowledge and understanding about ECDE literacy and the role that the teacher can play in extending children's experiences and thinking. Training therefore plays an integral part in the improvement of the teaching – learning process. Training leads to a shift in the view about the curriculum process, as Sergiovanni, T. (2005).), posits: 'Teachers progress from a deficit view about children to a more sufficient view.' This view addresses the discrepancies in access to ECDE, increased preparation and use of preparation records as well as the adoption of an empowering view of children.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

That despite the many advantages supervision may have, challenges abound in carrying out the supervisory duties.

Such challenges include: poor infrastructure; parental ignorance; unclear education policy; lack of proper ECDE teacher registration records and lack of support from management. A solid policy framework based on prioritization and phasing strategies is urgently needed. To develop a policy framework, some conceptual and terminological clarifications are needed. Most important, a

clearer and rational provision structure needs to be put in place for the training of teachers, caregivers and parents as well as for inspection and monitoring before any efforts are launched to develop training, inspection, monitoring and evaluation systems. Providing ECD teachers with minimum government support would be essential to mobilize supplementary resources from parents and prevent the collapse of ECD

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