

Report on Needs Assessment for ECDE School Curriculum Reform in Kenya

Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development

Abstract

This was a Needs Assessment Study for ECDE Curriculum reform. The specific objectives of the study were to: establish the desired general needs for curriculum reform in ECDE, determine the desired competencies for ECDE level of learning, determine the talent identification and nurturing strategies to be adopted at ECDE level of the curriculum, establish desired content/activity areas/pathways for competency based curriculum, identify resources suitable for competency based curriculum, determine desired pedagogical approaches for competency based curriculum and, establish formative and summative assessment modes for competency based curriculum. Relevant literature was reviewed that operationalized the key concepts, grounded the study within the discipline of curriculum studies, reviewed relevant theories and previous researches and provided a rationale for the study. The study adopted the pragmatist research philosophy which draws its tenets from the realist – positivist /positivist paradigm on one hand, and the relativist – interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, on the other hand. This study therefore used a mixed methods design which involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study was conceptualised as a survey therefore both questionnaires, observation schedules, interviews and submitted memoranda were used as data instruments. The study targeted all Early Childhood Development and Educational (ECDE) centres in Kenya, various Education Field officers and other stakeholders. Within the institutions, the study targeted all ECDE teachers in the ECDE centers. The target population size was 37,312 ECDE centres (Ministry of Education, 2011). The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique, which involved random selection of the respondents. The sample size determination formula was applied to compute the sample size at 1081 ECDE centres (Survey System, 2012). This represented the sample size at 5% level of significance, with an error of 2.5%. Sampling for the qualitative phase was done using purposive techniques leading to identification of several participants, institutions and key informants. A total of 1400 participants took part in the study. The participants included ECDE teachers, workers in the informal sector and industry, education field officers and other stakeholders. The study found that Kenyans would prefer societal needs like environmental protection, patriotism and social development to be fully embedded in the curriculum from the foundation level. Holistic development of learners and contemporary issues should also be addressed. Learners in ECDE should acquire the 21st century skills like communication skills, basic literacy, life skills as well as basic health and hygiene practices. Talents should be identified at the formative years of learners in different settings by parents, teachers and other professionals using an assessment tool that needs to be developed. Some of the learning areas preferred by Kenyans to be covered in the ECDE curriculum were language, life skills, creative arts, communication skills, numeracy and literacy skills; environmental awareness; health and nutrition, self-awareness, self-esteem, selfconfidence, personal safety (security), emotional

awareness and physical education. Child centred methods are the most appropriate pedagogical methods for delivery of the competence based curriculum. The resources required to implement ECDE competency based curriculum include print materials, quality teachers, enough classrooms, play materials and play fields. The study found that the most appropriate method for assessment in ECDE competency based learning was observation. Some of the suggested pertinent issues that should be addressed in the envisaged curriculum were drug and substance abuse, HIV and AIDs, religion, use and misuse of ICT, sexuality, environmental conservation, insecurity, gender issues, violence at family, health and nutrition. In addition, respondents proposed a curriculum structure that considers the ages and developmental stages P a g e | 6 of the learners at all levels, that allows transition of all pupils from one level of learning to another. Some of the major recommendations of the study were; education should promote holistic development of the learner physically, socially, psychologically, spiritually, intellectually, morally and in character formation; learners in ECD should acquire competencies like communication, health and good personal hygiene; numeracy and literacy skills; ECDE teachers should be trained on how to identify and nurture learners' talents; the National ECDE curriculum should have learning areas such as languages, mathematics, life skills, creative arts, communication skills, numeracy, literacy, nutrition and health; the ECD teachers should adopt learner centred methods for curriculum delivery and they should be provided with diverse resources; ECDE teachers should use observation method for assessing learners in competence based learning. Finally, the competence based ECDE curriculum should address pertinent issues like drug and substance abuse, HIV and AIDs, use and misuse of ICT, insecurity, violence at family level, health and nutrition.

Key words: Needs Assessment, ECDE School Curriculum, Reform, Kenya

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