

An Assessment of Factors Influencing the Implementation of Early Childhood Development and Education Policy in Bungoma County, Kenya.

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Abstract

The early years of a child are extremely important because it is the fastest and most critical period of child growth. From birth to six years, the child's brain should have fully developed. Hence, the central value of quality and well implemented Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) policy. The purpose of the study was to assess the factors influencing the implementation of ECDE policy in Bungoma County, Kenya. Study objectives were; assess the human resource capacity in the implementation of ECDE policy in Kenya, determine the nature of resources available in the implementation of the ECDE policy in Kenya, establish the nature of monitoring and evaluation in the implementation of the policy of ECDE in Kenya and the challenges influencing the implementation of the ECDE policy in Kenya. The study was based on the Contextual Implementation Theory (CIT) whose proponent is Toole. The study used a mixed research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches, grounded within the pragmatism philosophical paradigm. The study population comprised, Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QUASOs), the Head teachers, ECDE teachers and the non-teaching staff in respective Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDCs). The sample size of the study comprised 9 QUASOs, 27 head teachers, 81 teachers of ECDE and 27 non-teaching staff from selected public primary schools. The study utilised simple random sampling, stratified sampling and purposive sampling in choosing its study sample. The tools for data collection comprised the questionnaire for head teachers, nonteaching staff and QUASOs, focussed group interview schedule for the ECDE teachers, and the observation and document analysis schedules. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics: means, frequencies and percentages obtained through Statistical Package of Social Sciences and presented in tables and graphs. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis procedures and then presented thematically according to the research objectives. The study established that ECDCs in Bungoma County had sufficient, qualified and trained ECDE teachers and head teachers had good leadership skills although ECDCs did not have enough non-teaching staff. Regarding the nature of resource materials used, the study established that they were not sufficient and the families were major sources of funding to ECDCs making it very difficult to run the programme effectively. Further, head teachers monitored the activities at the ECDCs closely leading to improved teaching and enrolment. QUASOs had increased their visits at the centres although they did not cover all the required areas of supervision. The study also identified a number of challenges that hindered policy implementation that included inadequacy of teaching/learning resources, socio-economic factors such as ill health of children financial constraints and lack of government good will. Based on the above findings, the study concluded that there are a number of factors affecting the implementation of the ECDE policy in Bungoma County. The study therefore recommends the following: County and the Central governments should fund ECDE to improve transition from ECDCs to class one, hire ECDE teachers on permanent and pensionable terms.

Further, they should facilitate QUASOs to cover vast areas with ease and increase the number of visits to the ECDCs. They should also revise the Education act to cater for trained ECDE teachers with regard to their level of training. Lastly, the government should train non-teaching staff on safety operations and above all hire a qualified nurse for every ECDE centre.

Key words: Factors Influencing, Implementation of Early Childhood Development and Education Policy, Bungoma County, Kenya.

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