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## Indicators of Effective Supervision of Early Childhood Education Curriculum on the Performance of ECD Schools in Nandi Hills Division, Nandi East District, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of this study was to establish indicators of effective supervision of early childhood education curriculum on performance of ECD 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.*

**Keywords:** Indicators, supervision, performance, ECD, Kenya

### **1. Introduction**

The demand for Early Childhood Development (ECD) services has increased considerably in Kenya as in the world over. In Kenya the demand and increased interests in Early Childhood development programmes has been as a result of changing socio-economic conditions of the population (KESSP, 2005). 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 (KIE-ECD guideline 2001:v).

In the same view Hawes (1979) contends that implementation of curriculum change depends on the knowledge, supervision skills and attitudes fostered during initial training. According to the Ministry of Education (2000) report, the number of children enrolled in the ECD centers has risen by 32 per cent in the past eight years. Similarly, the number of ECD centers increased from 16,329 in 1990 to 23,977 in 1998 with a corresponding increase in the teaching force. So, while there were only 6,213 pre-school teachers in 1990, to date the number stands at 37,752, out of whom 16,000 are trained (KESSP, 2007).

The achievements made in the early education sector are largely attributed to the close partnership that exists between the government, parents, donors and communities. 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 (KIE-ECD guideline, 2001).

#### *1.1. Curriculum Supervision*

Teacher's participation in curriculum implementation involves employing their dexterity in assembling and arranging teaching resources. The NACECE curriculum emphasizes the use of locally available materials, which basically depends on the teacher's creativity to source the materials and use them appropriately in teaching ECD activities. The teacher's centrality to

change process necessitates well designed and well implemented teacher training programmes. Verspoorn (1989:92) emphasizes that successful educational change is built on effective training. A well designated and effectively implemented programme is a key element in the successful implementation and institutionalization of change programmes. On the whole teachers' impact on the curriculum depends largely on the teacher education.

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. 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 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 (2005a), 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.

## 2. 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.

## 3. Results/Findings

The study findings showed that supervision was effective in encouraging and improving teacher preparation thereby boosting performance (84.4%), propelled intellectual abilities (81.25%), helped to unearth children potential (65.5%), enhanced job satisfaction (75.0%), led to positive appraisal of pupils (68.8%) and reduced time wastage (68.8%).

## 4. Discussion

The study findings showed that supervision was effective in encouraging and improving teacher preparation thereby boosting performance (84.4%), propelled intellectual abilities (81.25%), helped to unearth children potential (65.5%), enhanced job satisfaction (75.0%), led to positive appraisal of pupils (68.8%) and reduced time wastage (68.8%). Shiundu and Omulando (1992: 224) opined that, most teachers take implementation as their legitimate role in curriculum development. Their reference to the teacher and curriculum is that after a consensus is reached as to what will go into the curriculum of the educational systems; the next important step is to avail this curriculum package to the educational system. This process is known as curriculum implementation and various personnel are involved, but perhaps the one whose role is most important in seeing that programmes are successfully implemented is the teacher. He organizes the learning environment for the benefit of the pupils who must experience curriculum. There are no educational personnel who are more significant in curriculum implementation than teachers. KIE ECD Guideline (2008). Ajahi (2004) argues that supervision of ECDE changes the teacher's beliefs, attitudes and practices in school. He identified the following indicators of effects of effective supervision: shift from a deficit view about children to a more sufficient view that addressed the discrepancies in access to ECDE, increased preparation and use of professional records and shift to an empowering view about of children.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Supervision is effective in encouraging and improving teacher preparation thereby boosting performance, propelled intellectual abilities, helped to unearth children potential, led to positive appraisal of pupils and reduced time wastage. This study recommends that the government ought to develop a valid and relevant policy document on Early Childhood Education with the involvement of all key partners and stakeholders and backed up by legislation. There was need to improve the monitoring and evaluation process through enhanced initiatives to include supports to prepare the Child for school and equally importantly, supports to prepare the school for the child. 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.

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