

Assessment of the Early Childhood Development Policy Implementation in Kenya, Case Study of Ruiru District

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Abstract

In 2006, Kenya government introduced the Early Childhood Development (ECD) policy to be implemented by the Ministry of Education. A mixed method approach is applied to study the implementation. Data were collected through interviews, questionnaires and observations at ECD centers. Findings indicate that the ECD policy has achieved gains including teacher employment and enhanced quality education standards. Comparatively, learning outcomes indicate that teacher student ratio impact education outcomes significantly. Results indicate that government should consider prioritization of teacher employment and training them on ECD policy standards. Parents and communities should take part in the improvement of ECD class infrastructure especially in rural areas where ECD is mainly provided in public facilities.

Keyword: Early Childhood Development, Policy development, Program Evaluation, Education Programs and Poverty Reduction

Introduction

In 2006, the Kenya government adopted a policy on Early Childhood Development (ECD). The policy document outlines a comprehensive framework that encompasses policies for early childhood services and programs for children from conception to age eight years. Also, it outlines an ECD policy system and provides a frame of reference in the provision of services for infants and children. Further, it provides a basis to strengthen, develop, and review policies related to health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation, and social services. According to a 2006 policy document, the Republic of Kenya sector policies are central in providing standards and guidelines for ensuring provision of quality services for all children in their earliest years. This evaluative study outlines salient components in education that are engrained in the ECD policy framework. The study investigates the extent to which the policy has been implemented at the national and grassroots levels, challenges, and lessons learnt from the process.

A meaningful evaluation must involve all stakeholders in the assessment processes. In this view, this evaluative study engaged a variety of Ministry of Education (MOE) stakeholders both at national and regional levels. The MOE is structured into distinct functions that are responsible for policy formulation and implementation. At the national level, there are two critical functions directly involved in policy formulation and implementation. These are, the Directorates for Quality Assurance, and Policy and Planning. The directorates have devolved functions at the regional level.

These functions include: County and District Education offices; Quality Assurance Offices, and District Centre that oversees Early Childhood Education (DICECE) offices. The latter are in charge of early childhood education at the regional level. Among the key functions of DICECE are development of localized curriculum and research; and early childhood teacher capacity development. Other partners take holders in early childhood development (ECD) include development partners such as the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, Aga Khan Foundation, USAID, Bernard van Leer Foundation, Care International, Action Aid, and Catholic Relief Services, among others. Other critical stakeholders in early childhood education and development include: ECD centers and schools whose operations are guided by the policy and parents who require their children to access quality services in the schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this evaluative study is to examine the extent to which the government has managed to implement the ECD policy six years after its enactment. The study is informed and necessitated by observation of the challenges experienced in policy development, as well as poor learning conditions and lack of employment for teachers that continues to lock the education sector. This study highlights the barriers to the implementation of the policy and recommends measures to rectify the situation.

Evaluation Questions and Hypotheses

The evaluation study was guided by the following questions: i) To what extent has the ECD policy framework and standard guidelines been implemented? ii) What outcomes and impacts has the ECD policy achieved at the national and grassroots levels? iii) What are the key challenges facing the ECD policy implementation process? In addition to the research questions, the study also sought to test the following three hypotheses (the hypothesis are guided by research question (ii) above): H_{O1} : There is no significant difference in performance among children taught in different class sizes; H_{O2} : Age of ECD teachers and their motivation levels are independent; and H_{O3} : There is no significant relationship between experience of ECD teachers and their motivation levels.

Theoretical Framework

There are two pertinent schools of thought in policy implementation they include: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down advocates see policy designers as the central actors and give attention on factors that can be manipulated at the national level; while bottom-up supporters emphasize target groups and service deliverers. The top-down perspective assumes that policy goals can be specified by policymakers and that implementation can be carried out successfully by setting up certain mechanisms. This perspective is ‘policy-centered’ and represents the view of the policymakers. The top-down perspective exhibits a strong desire for ‘generalizing’ policy advice. This requires finding consistent and recognizable patterns in behavior across different policy areas (Matland, 1995, p. 146). Additionally, the top-town perspective emphasizes formal steering of problems and factors, which are easy to manipulate and lead to centralization and control. Interest will be directed towards concerns that include funding formulas, formal organization structures and authority relationships between administrative units, regulations and administrative controls, such as budget, planning and evaluation requirements (Elmore, 1978).

The bottom-up perspective directs attention at the formal and informal relationships constituting the policy subsystems involved in making and implementing policies (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003). This perspective has, as its starting point, a problem in society. The focus is on individuals and their behavior, and in this respect street-level bureaucrats are made central in the political process. The street-level bureaucrats are considered to have a better understanding of what clients need because they have direct contact with the public. Michael Lipsky (1980) proposes a theory of ‘street-level bureaucracy.’ Lipsky’s theory focuses on the discretionary decisions that each field worker or ‘street-level bureaucrat,’ as he prefers to call them, makes in relation to individual citizens when they are delivering policies to them.

For the purposes of this study, the ‘up’ are the policy makers at the top and include the national, provincial, district, or local government leaders whose departments are tasked with direct responsibility for implementing or monitoring the policy. Relating to Kenya’s ECD policy, his will include the MOE, directorate and quality assurance, District Education officers and Quality assurance Officers. The ‘bottom’ includes grassroots policy implementers, i.e. local staff responsible for the provision of services or programs related to the policy. This includes DICECE, local education officers, school head teachers and ECD teachers. In a way, the ECD policy started as a grass root activity since almost all ECD centres/schools in Kenya are community or private owned.

Most of the ECD centres/schools operations are informal and controlled at the “street” level with little involvement of the “up.” Thus convergence of the two perspectives is essential and point to a close relationship between policy implementation and service delivery.

Situating Evaluation needs and Context

Early childhood education is critical ensuring a good foundation for child development. The Government of the Republic of Kenya recognizes Early Childhood Development as an important pillar for accelerating the attainment of Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (Republic of Kenya, 2006). EFA’s first goal stipulates that Governments need to expand and enhance comprehensive Early Childhood Development. According to a 2002 report by The World Fit for Children Conference, it is important for every child to have a good start to life. Essential factors for a good start include quality nurturing, care and safe environment (Githinji & kanga, 2011) The Government of Kenya (GOK) has had tremendous support, and collaborates with partners, to improve the welfare of the Kenyan child, but, these efforts are fragmented and with little impact. GOK’s Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, *A Policy Framework on Education, Training and Research*, recommends the development of comprehensive ECD policy framework and service standard guidelines (Republic of Kenya, 2006).

The ECD Policy Framework came into being in 2006, and provides a coordination mechanism, explicitly defining the role of parents, communities, various Government ministries and departments, development partners and other stakeholders, in the provision of ECD services (Republic of Kenya 2006). A service standard guideline was developed as a separate document aimed at operationalizing the ECD policy framework.

Developers of the ECD policy framework recognized the critical role of investing in young children as a strategy to poverty reduction, universal school enrolment, reduction of child mortality and morbidity, maternal mortality and creation of gender equality. To achieve this, the policy framework emphasizes child survival, growth and development. This is also in line with the African Union (AU) declaration to strengthen and support families in their responsibility as primary caregivers of their children to ensure their survival, growth and development.

The policy implementation outputs included: trained and sensitized education officers; teachers and sensitized parents; teachers in public ECD centers employed by government; ECD reception classes in primary schools; feeding programs; safety and protection programs in ECD centres; appropriate teacher child ratio in ECD classes; water and sanitation provided among other services as described in the service standards guidelines. This evaluation will undertake a detailed study of four ECD centers to establish the extent to which they have aligned with the standard guidelines.

The outcomes would be products of the content and methodologies used to teach children in the ECD centers, with adequate supervision by education officials to ensure quality and the expectation that children will grow physically healthy as a result of the school feeding programs. Teachers were to be employed by the government with improved terms of service to increase motivation to care for, teach and interact with children for better learning outcomes. Emotionally, the children were expected to undergo a smooth transition to primary schools through reception classes in primary school; improved learning environments with class sizes conducive to learning and cognitive development; and overall, physical and psychosocial development as a result of adequate time and facilities for play activities and the right environment. Finally a key outcome was reduced illness due to enhanced hygiene and sanitation issues and linkages with the Ministries of Health. In the medium and long term, therefore, it was expected that children will experience well rounded education resulting in cognitive, psychosocial, emotional, language and psychomotor development.

Methodology

The evaluation study uses a descriptive survey design and a mixed methods qualitative and quantitative approach. Descriptive research designs provided answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how, associated with a particular research problem. This study analyzes the status of implementation of the ECD policy by describing what exists in comparison to the policy guidelines. The target population included staff from the Ministry of Education (MOE), District Center for Early Childhood Education (DICECE), primary school head teachers and ECD teachers.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was applied to select the Ministry of education and DICECE staff since the study needed specific information on policy design and implementation. Stratified and simple random sampling were used to select four ECD centres; two public and two private via the DEOs office in Ruiru, Kenya. The District has 18 public and 33 private ECD centers. Using a computer generated table of random numbers, the researchers, then randomly selected two schools from each category an arbitrary starting point on the table, with the number representing the first school were picked. In each of the schools, the researcher interviewed the head teacher and one ECD teacher. Also the lead researchers visited the ECD college where all 16 trainee ECD trainees were selected. Table 1 below illustrates sample elements and total numbers selected.

Table 1: Sample Size

Sample elements	Number sampled
MOE Official (national level)	1
DICECE Official	1
Headteachers	4
Practicing ECD Teachers	4
ECD teacher trainees	16
Total	26

Measurement Design

Three main types of instruments were used including informant interview, observation schedule and a questionnaire. Interview guides were conducted to MOE officer, DICECE, head teachers and the practicing ECD teachers. The items elicited qualitative data regarding awareness of the ECD policy, status of implementation, outputs and outcomes from implementation, challenges/barriers to implementation and recommendations. The observation checklist for ECD centres endeavored to collect information on the ECD physical infrastructure, including: physical status of classrooms, desk size and availability, play-learning materials, ECD reception classes in primary schools, feeding programs, safety and protection programs, teacher-child ratio, friendly curricula and learning methods, and water and sanitation, among others. Also, related questionnaires for teacher trainees in an ECD college were administered to gather information regarding their awareness of the ECD policy and motivation levels. Before administering the tools, they were discussed in class with fellow graduate students and also given to an ECD expert at Kenyatta University to check for face validity and determine whether they could measure the results required as per the objectives of the study. The feedback given was be used to improve the tools. As a result some items were omitted.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

Interviews were planned and conducted to all the informants including the Ministry of Education and the DICECE officials. Also, head teachers and ECD teachers were interviewed. The researchers created a good rapport with the officials before the interview. All interviewees were assured of confidentiality, and permission to take notes was sought before hand.

The researchers also administered questionnaires to the ECD trainees after obtaining written permission from the college director and individual trainees. Equally, confidentiality was assured and they were not to have their names in the script.

Researchers read the script thoroughly to obtain a feel of the respondents. Using excel spreadsheet, all data was entered and themes were developed by grouping similar information under recurring themes. The themes were then discussed in relation to the study objectives. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS and presented in frequencies and percentages in form of tables and charts.

Findings

Research question one: To what extent has the ECD policy framework and standard guidelines been implemented?

According to key informants interview held with the Ministry of Education ECD official (at the national level), ECD policy enactment was in 2006 but the implementation process was hampered by several factors including lack of concrete plans, negative attitudes towards ECD among senior ministry staff and low financing. Additionally, the official reported that, “the process of developing a detailed implementation plan was started after policy enactment but was abandoned.” This statement suggests that the ministry attempted to implement a policy without a concrete plan, riskinga successful implementation process. Nevertheless, the ministry has implemented some parts of the policy though in small portions. District staff were trained on the policy and salary payment by government was effected for some ECD teachers in the country. As a first step, in what is known as ‘salary top-up,’ the Ministry has been providing some funds to pay about ten teachers in every constituency at a monthly rate of Kshs 12,000.00 for an ECD Diploma holder, and Kshs 10,000 for an ECD certificate holder. Due to the economic hardships in the arid and semi-arid lands, the government has been paying up to 15 teachers per constituency in those areas.

The DICECE official also explained the extent of implementation of the policy at the grassroots level. They indicated that they have managed to train School Management Committees (SMCs), while a few teachers (i.e.10 in a constituency) are receiving salary payments from the Ministry. Additionally, the government has provided some funds to the schools where ‘top up’ beneficiary teachers work to purchase play and learning materials for the ECD centres. This is to enhance quality of instruction in the ECD centres. Awareness creation on new policies is a prerequisite to proper implementation and should be one of the first activities. In determining the extent of ECD policy implementation, the study sought to find out whether practicing and trainee teachers were aware of the ECD policy, since they cannot implement what they do not know. Feedback from teachers interviews suggest that the levels of awareness of the ECD policy among teachers vary. To gauge the level of awareness of the ECD policy a sample of 16 teachers undergoing ECD training course were given a questionnaire to respond to questions regarding their awareness of the policy and motivation as ECD teachers. The teachers were all attached to ECD centres as teachers. Table 2 below indicates the age of the ECD teacher trainees who responded to the questionnaire.

Table 2: Teacher Trainee Respondents by Age N=16

Age	Percent
Below 20 yrs	6.3
21-25 yrs	68.8
Above 31 yrs	25.0
Total	100.0

Of the 16 teachers, 11 (68.8%) were aged between 21 and 25 years. Seven were enrolled for the Diploma, while eight were enrolled for the certificate course in ECD. Over half of them (56.3%) had some experience teaching in ECD. When asked whether they had heard about the ECD policy from the Ministry of Education, the majority (68.8%) indicated they were aware of the policy, and 31.2% indicated they were not aware. When those who had heard about the policy were asked form what source they were made aware, most responded they had heard from their fellow teachers, followed by newspapers, as shown in the Table 3.

Table 3: Sources of Policy Information N=16

Source	Percent
Radio	6.3
Newspaper	18.8
DEO circular	6.3
Other teachers	31.3
Others	6.3
Both Newspaper and other teachers	6.3
Total	75.0
Not heard	25.0
Total	100.0

The findings indicate that official communication of policy to stakeholders is poor, as 25% of the teachers were not aware of the policy at all. Without proper communication it is difficult to implement policy. All ECD teachers as stakeholders need to be properly informed of the ECD policy and even involved in discussions during formulation so that their concerns addressed. It seems this never happened, and the plurality of teachers only heard of the policy from other teachers or read in the newspapers. Teachers were asked to discuss the types of issues mentioned in the policy; their responses are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Teachers Policy Knowledge Areas

Issue	Frequency	%
ECD teacher motivation	5	33.3
ECD teacher employment by government	6	40
Children rights protection	1	6.6
Mainstreaming ECD in basic education	1	6.6
Making ECD teaching a profession	1	6.6
ECD curriculum content	1	6.6

The findings presented in Table 4, show that teachers are not-well versed with most issues that feature in the ECD policy, and, particularly, that their knowledge is concentrated on issues concerning their welfare. Few recognized, or demonstrated awareness, of the child-related issues in the policy document (e.g. curriculum and rights).

Research question two: What outcomes and impacts has the ECD policy achieved at the national and grassroots levels?

The researchers also sought to identify the outcomes and short-term impacts of the policy implementation. A similar question was asked to the Ministry official. The official's response indicated that there is "enhanced access to quality ECD services for children in the poorest communities and regions and the availability of salaries as 'top up.'" The latter enables ECD teachers to be retained in the ECD centres. The policy also seems to have given a new lease of life and motivated ECD teachers in college, giving them hope for the future.

Availability of small grants for purchase of materials is also a key outcome because in most poor ECD centers, there are almost no play and learning materials. In the supported ECD centres materials are available, a condition made possible by the small grants. However, the employment of ten teachers per constituency (fifteen in ASALs) is a drop in the ocean given the extent of the problem of teacher salaries and lack of play and learning materials in the entire country.

Teacher to Pupil Ratio and Performance

Teacher to pupil ratio as a standard of quality is key in the ECD policy. The study sought to investigate the effect of Teacher to pupil ratio on performance. Practicing teachers in both the public and private schools assessed had diploma and certificates in ECD certification. They were aged between 21 and 30 years. They had worked in their schools for two years and above. They all had heard about the ECD policy from the Ministry of Education, through the radio and from fellow teachers. They agreed that implementation of the ECD policy had started being implemented in their schools. In two ECD centres, the teachers used to undertake assessments of their pupils and give scores. However in the other two, they used other assessment methods awarding grades A to D, and never awarded scores. For purposes of the study, the researcher concentrated on the two scores where pupils were awarded scores, referred to as A and B. Information presented in Table 5 shows the number of children in the ECD classes in the two schools by age.

Table 5: Number of sampled ECD children by age

Age (yrs)	School A	# of teachers	School B	# of teachers	Total
Age 2 and below	0		0		0
3 – 4	15		20		35
5 – 6	25		34		59
6 Plus	15		10		25
Total	55	3	64	2	5

A key aspect of the implementation of the policy is the teacher-pupil ratio. School A had a Teacher-child ratio of 1:18 and school B 1:32. To assess the impact of the policy, the performance of ECD children in the two schools with different teacher pupil ratios were compared. To analyse the impact of teacher-child ratio on performance, the raw scores of the last end of term examinations were used to calculate the z scores for all the students in the two schools in order to allow comparability. The means of the z scores of the two sets of schools were then compared among the different teacher child ratios. The information is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Comparison of Pupil Performance (Z Score Means) by Teacher: Child Ratio

School	Teacher child ratio	Mean
School A	1:18	0.729147
School B	1:32	-0.62661

It is clear that the school with a lower teacher-child ratio had higher scores compared to the school with higher teacher-child ratios. The researchers applied independent samples t-test to determine if the difference between the two means was significant. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Independent Samples t-test: Teacher Child Ratio vs Achievement

School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A	55	.7291	.56683	.07643
B	64	-.6266	.85709	.10714

Table 8: Independent Samples T-Test

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	9.999	117	0
Equal variances not assumed	10.3	110.16	0

Results presented in Table 8 show that there is a significant difference between the two means ($t=10.302$, $p<0.01$). This indicates that smaller teacher pupil-ratio is likely to produce significantly better performance among the pupils compared to a higher teacher-pupil ratio. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The findings indicates a key impact in the school where the policy on low teacher-pupil ratio has been implemented. This is correlated to the class size as a determinant of quality of ECD as discussed by World Bank (2012).

Effect of Policy on Teacher Motivation

Previous research has indicated poor work motivation and consequent poor learning outcomes among ECD teachers due to lack of policy and perceived lack of concern by government (Murundu et al undated). As previously indicated, a majority of ECD teachers are now aware about the ECD policy. To gauge how the knowledge that an ECD policy now exists to regulate the sector has impacted on ECD teachers, a sample of 16 teachers undergoing ECD training course were given a questionnaire to respond to questions regarding their motivation as ECD teachers. The teachers were asked to respond to a series of questions to gauge their motivation for training as ECD teachers. When asked whether they always wanted to be ECD teachers, the responses were as given in Table 9 below.

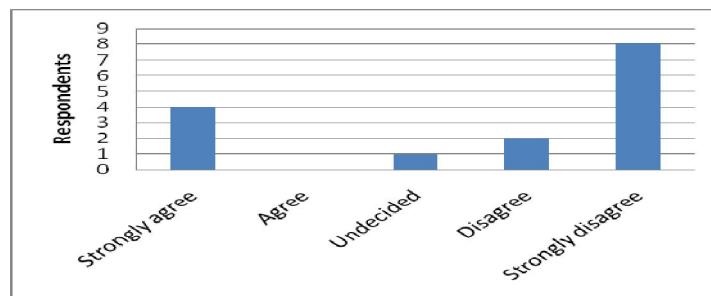
Table 9: Always wanted to be trained as ECD Teacher. N=16

Response	Percent
Strongly agree	62.5
Agree	25.0
Undecided	6.3
Strongly disagree	6.3
Total	100.0

From the Table above, 87.5% of the teacher trainees strongly agree or agree that they always wanted to be ECD teachers. This means they have passion for the job and an intrinsic motivation to teach small children, with 62.5% strongly agreeing and 37.2% agreeing that they enjoy working with small children. In relation to this finding, 15 who responded to a question as to whether the training was related to their career plan affirmed that indeed it is. In addition, 93.8% of the teachers said they find ECD work interesting and that they felt excited to have been admitted to the ECD college, with only 1 (6.2%) disagreeing.

However, responses as to whether ECD career is rewarding to the teacher shows wide variations as shown in the chart below. Only 25% strongly agreed the career is not rewarding, with 50% strongly disagreeing. This indicates that many ECD teachers are intrinsically motivated to do the job.

Figure 1: ECD Career is not rewarding to the Teacher



To test hypothesis two, the researchers adopted Pearson's Chi square test. The results show that teacher's age and desire to have an alternative job in future are independent ($\chi^2 = 4.793, p > 0.05$). The results are summarized in Table 11.

Table 10: Chi Square Tests for age vs Alternative Job

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.218 ^a	6	0.399
Likelihood Ratio	7.738	6	0.258
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.793	1	0.029

The researchers adopted Pearson's correlation coefficient to test hypothesis three (*There is no significant relationship between experience of ECD teachers and their motivation levels*). The results are summarized in Pearson's correlation summary Table 13.

Table 11: Pearson Correlation for Age vs Experience and Motivation

		teaching experience	Motivation
Years of experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.398
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.126
	N	16	16
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.398	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	
	N	16	16

The results in Table 12 indicate that there is a weak and positive correlation between teaching experience and motivation ($r = 0.398, p > 0.05$). The relationship is not significant, meaning the more years one teaches does not necessarily lead to greater motivation.

Play/Learning Materials in the ECD Centers

To establish the extent to which the policy standards on play/learning materials have been implemented, the researcher undertook observation in the ECD centres. Of the private centers, one center was registered while the other was not. They both had child-sized furniture and teacher's furniture. However, both lacked ramps, rails, lower door handles or any environmental adaptation for special needs children. Both had separate latrines for boys, girls and teachers. They both had enough curriculum materials including children books, teachers books, and writing materials for children.

Regarding play/learning materials, indoor materials included alphabet cards, number cards, bean bags, wall charts and toys. However, the centers lacked puzzles, regalia and wooden blocks. Outdoor materials observed in the private centers included swings, climbing frame (in one center), merry go round (in one center), kites, tyres, balls, ropes; neither had sand pit.

Asked whether they use thematic teaching approach, both teachers in the private schools concurred that they use the method with one saying "it is a method that allows children to learn in a way that is most natural for them." However, neither described the approach itself or in technical terms.

Both teachers also indicated that they grouped the children with one teacher, stating “to know each other, and share things, and for the teacher to have a chance to know all of them.” Another teacher said, “we group the children according to their performance because there are slow learners and we cannot group them with quick learners.” In addition, the teachers reported that they do not follow a time table.

The private schools have developmentally appropriate learning materials, adequate play materials, safe materials, a fenced area, lockable gates, a well-maintained and clear compounds, and a feeding program, in which some children bring food from home and some take food prepared at the school. They also have water, first Aid kits and a list of parent’s emergency kits.

However, the situation was different in the public ECD centres. The children in the two public ECD centres used desks designed for bigger children. They lacked ramps for children with disabilities, as well as rails, lower door handles, or any environmental adaptation for special needs children. Both had separate latrines for boys, girls and teachers. They both had some curriculum materials including: some but few, children’s books and writing materials for children. There were teachers books available, but these were very few, and belonged to the teacher. The public ECD centred did not have outdoor fixed-equipment; to this point, the teacher argued, “the older primary children would destroy them.” The centres did not have adequate play materials for indoor play. Both schools were fenced, but only one had a lockable gate. The compounds were observably dusty. Some ECD children in both schools brought snack foods from home and no food was prepared at the school. They had no source of water, first aid kits, or lists of parent’s emergency kits. The public schools were, therefore, worse off in implementing the policy compared to the private schools.

What are the key challenges facing the policy implementation process?

The study also sought to investigate the key challenges that had hindered the policy implementation process. During the interview with the ministry of education official, he decried the lack of prioritization of ECD matters in the ministry and treasury, especially among the ministry’s finance personnel. The attitude towards ECD has contributed to poor implementation of the ECD policy, especially relating to the limited provision of funds to enable permanent employment of all ECD teachers. Plans to have ECD teachers on the permanent payroll have been shelved for several years despite being in the ministry’s plans due to other pressing priorities.

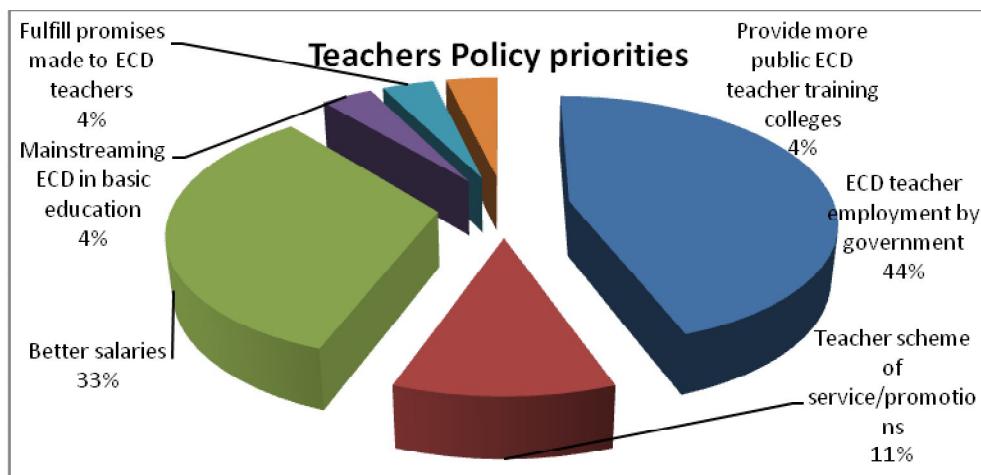
Another key challenge is the attitude of the politicians who do not appreciate the importance of ECD. The official said for instance, that that ECD matters have been pushed to the counties in the new constitutional dispensation. Related ministry headquarters will therefore have no control of how the county deals with ECD matters. The government is quiet as to whether any funds will be allocated to fund ECD in the counties, but according to the official, there will most likely be no funds allocated to the counties for ECD. Counties will be expected to raise funds through taxes or other means to finance ECD services, including payment of teachers.

The DICECE official cited key challenges she faced including lack of cooperation from the head teachers as she tried to ensure the implementation of the policy, and lack of adequate information by the ECD teachers, especially on their roles in the implementation of the policy.

Key informant interviews with head teachers brought forth the challenge of poor remuneration for the majority of ECD teachers, since the government pays only a few; lack of physical facilities i.e. classes, desks and chairs; and high poverty levels in the community, resulting in parents not paying fees for their children. Inadequate availability of land to start or expand ECD centers was also cited as a big problem, especially in the urban areas. The teachers themselves said the key challenge was the delay in implementation of policy recommendations, frequently citing the recommendation that provided for formal government employment of at least two teachers in every public primary school by 2010. If that happened, it would have gone a long way in solving the ECD teacher employment problem.

Policy Priorities According to the ECD Teachers

ECD Teachers were requested to state the key priority areas they would want to be addressed when implementing the policy document. A summary of the findings is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2: Key Policy Priorities for ECD Teachers

Findings presented in figure 3 show that the key priority for ECD teachers is formal employment by government as recorded by 44% of the teachers. Being on the government payroll is closely related to better salaries and a scheme of service. It is instructive to note that the teachers have not mentioned issues to do with teaching and learning materials or other aspects of quality standards in the ECD centers which are a focus in the policy document. Perhaps these findings underpin the frustrations ECD teachers have faced as they pursue their welfare issues for so long without meaningful success.

Research question three: What are the key challenges facing the policy implementation process?

The Policy implementation process is facing challenges from the top to the bottom levels of the process. Negative attitudes towards ECD by some senior ministry officials leads to little or no prioritization of finance and budgeting plans. As a result, payment of ECD teachers, initially planned to start in 2010, has been postponed for three straight years. Such implementation challenges are common in Africa. For example, in Ghana, the ECD policy was developed in 1994, only to get government approval in 2004 (Pence 2004).

Due to inadequate funding for ECD at the Ministry level, parents have largely taken this responsibility. Parents largely view education of children as a responsibility of the government (especially after the implementation of free primary education policy), and few will take the initiative to pay the agreed amount of fees, and on time, to pay the teacher. This has resulted in irregular and poorly remuneration for ECD teachers. At the regional level, district education staff asserted that they had difficulties with head teachers who are not fully cooperating or complying with the policy requirements. The head teachers on the other hand reported that implementation of the policy is expensive and will require a longer time to accomplish. It is true that the policy will require ample resources in terms of land, equipment, materials, teacher wages before it comes to fruition. Thus in absence of adequate funding head teachers would find it difficult to implement the policy.

Another challenge lies on the fact that ECD teachers, the primary implementers, have not been given serious sensitization on the ECD policy. This suggests an inadequate implementation strategy that has led to under involvement of teachers by the ministry in the implementation process. Inadequate involvement of teachers was also noted in Ghana (Pence, 2004). Pence (2004) stated that, “there is absence of a comprehensive operational plan and a systematic training program for ECD coordinators, head teachers and teachers of pre-schools” (pg 14). Amponsah noted that the ECD program had been marginalized, lacking visibility, priority and coordination from more senior levels. Similarly Chalamada (ECD case study in Malawi focusing on National Action Plans to facilitate the newly adopted ECD policy implementation), identified inadequate resources, insufficient knowledge in public domain about the importance of ECD and marginalized importance of ECD within government as the key challenges facing ECD policy implementation(Pence, 2004).

Conclusion

Based on the findings the following conclusions have been made:

1. The implementation plan for the policy was not completed. Indeed some start up activities towards policy implementation is underway. They include staff training at district level and payment of ECD teachers.

2. Sensitisation of school management committees has led to trickling down of the policy to the grassroots-level. However as a result of delayed training of teachers, there is insufficient knowledge about child-focused ECD standards more so in public ECD Centers.
3. Impact assessment comparing pupil performance shows that there is a significant difference ($t=10.302$, $p<0.01$) in performance when in favor of smaller class sizes . This indicates that smaller teacher pupil-ratio is likely to produce significantly better performance among the pupils compared to a higher teacher-pupil ratio..schools had ensured availability of play and learning materials, both indoor and outdoor, and these are necessary for the physical, cognitive, language and socio-emotional development of children.
4. Perhaps one key outcome of the policy is the fact that ECD teachers have become more hopeful and see a future in the profession. Their motivation levels are high as they await the promises of employment from the government, better salaries and more recognition. It is hoped that more motivated teachers will produce better outcomes in children they interact with.

Recommendations to Improve Policy Implementation

The following recommendation is made to the Ministry of Education:

1. Based on the findings of this study, there is need for stronger leadership of ECD at the Ministry of education for better advocacy and visibility. To achieve this, ECD should be made a Division, just like primary or secondary divisions and headed by a Director.
2. There is need to create awareness on the policy among ECD teachers and headteachers. Once awareness is created, some of the policy requirements such as curriculum, play and nutrition activities can be implemented without the need for a lot of resources.
3. Since class size is a key aspect of quality in ECD, it is important that ECD classes are decongested to ensure the teacher pupil ratio recommended in the policy is adhered to.
4. There is need to complete the operational plan to implement the ECD policy with clear timelines, targets, outputs and budget. Key priorities should include putting ECD teachers on the government payroll before engaging with the other planned activities.

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