

The Role of Community and Parents' Finances on Pre-School Children's Cognitive Achievements in Nakuru North Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract: Education as a right to every person is fundamental to the success of the government overall development strategy. The Kenya Children Act (2001) states that, every child is entitled to basic right which education is key. The Kenya ECE programme encourages partnership at all levels. The government, parents, communities, religious and Non-Governmental Organizations are the main source of ECE finances and support. It is also worth stating that as communities' partner in the development of the centres, taking responsibility for the provision of physical facilities, furniture, payment of salaries to teachers, organizing feeding programmes and provision of learning and play materials. The purpose of this study was to establish the role of community and parents' finances on pre-school children's cognitive achievements in Nakuru North Sub County, Kenya. The results obtained on the influence of community and parent's finances on Pre-school children's cognitive achievements showed that diverse interacted aspects. Community ECDE centres lacked feeding programmes, inadequate instructional materials, furniture, play materials, latrines and playgrounds which affected the cognitive achievements of Pre-school children in the ECDE centres. The study concluded that availability of finances is closely related to cognitive achievements of Pre-school children in ECDE centres in Nakuru North Sub-County. The researcher recommended that in Community sponsored schools, the adequacy of instructional materials, physical facilities teacher's salary, supervision, feeding programme and financial managerial capacity needed to be addressed appropriately.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Cognitive

I. Introduction

Education as a right to every person is fundamental to the success of the government overall development strategy. The Kenya Children Act (2001) states that, every child is entitled to basic right which education is key (Manani, 2007). The Kenya ECE programme encourages partnership at all levels. The government, parents, communities, religious and Non-Governmental Organizations are the main source of ECE finances and support. As evidenced in the literature review the government lays much emphasis on enrolment, gender disparities, access and quality through the introduction of community support grant (Republic of Kenya, 2005) but fails to document and explore on influence of Pre-schools finances on children's cognitive achievements with regards to funding sources, adequacy of finance, availability of finance as well as budgetary allocation in ECE Centres. It is also worth stating that as communities' partner in the development of the centres, taking responsibility for the provision of physical facilities, furniture, payment of salaries to teachers, organizing feeding programmes and provision of learning and play materials. These provisions merited immediate attention as it offers opportunity for improvement of children cognitive achievements. As a result of the fore stated gap, the study investigated the influence of Pre-school finances on children's cognitive achievements in Nakuru North Sub-County.

II. Literature Review

In China the responsibility of children aged 3-6 years is the Ministry of Education while those aged 3 is the Ministry of Health (Wong and Pang, 2002). However, ECCE is administered, organized and funded primarily within local setting. With some Public funding, and state guidelines, private providers in China operate nurseries and Kindergartens. Parents are expected to contribute significantly for ECCE, with tax exemptions where pre-primary provisions are attached to primary school. A massive expansion of early childhood care and education center throughout the country followed Kenya's independence in 1963. The expansion in education was given impetus by President Jomo Kenyatta's call for a national philosophy of 'Harambee' which means 'let's pull together'. Early care and education of children was considered to be a community concern necessitating collaboration. Communities raised money to purchase land and other materials

to build schools (Mbugua-Muriithi, 1996). Many Kenyan women formed groups to champion for and sustain early childhood and care adopting a variety of networking strategies through women's self-help groups (Mbugua-Muriithi, 1997). The groups would identify educated members of the community to be Pre-school teachers. Some of the initial Pre-schools were maintained within primary schools, others were placed in individual homes, makeshift sheds or even outdoors and under trees.

Kenya Early Childhood Education is deeply rooted in the community. Communities have established ECDE centres comprising 70% (Republic of Kenya, 1998) of the total number of ECDE centres Nationwide. Communities are responsible for identifying suitable locations to set up ECDE centres and mobilizing human and materials resources for construction and furnishing as well as development of play and learning materials. In addition, communities are involved in the identification of teachers and payment of their salaries. The communities are also responsible for establishing management teams that oversee the running of centres. Through workshops and seminars organized by the DICECE, parents and community members have been encouraged and empowered to increase their participation beyond provision of physical facilities. The communities provide feeding programme and take part in collecting, telling and demonstrating stories, songs and dances in the mother tongue. The incorporation of tradition and folklore into the curriculum make the community feel proud of their contribution to the cognitive achievements of their children. According to Myers (1992), the lesson from Kenya is that the community is a very important resource for the community of ECD programme and must continue to be tapped and appreciated. The critical role of community involvement in sustainability and relevant cannot be overemphasized. In terms of maintaining quality, however, much still needs to be done to enhance the capacity of the community management teams to effectively carry out their responsibilities.

Objective of the Study

To establish the role of community and parents' finances on Pre-school children's cognitive achievements in Nakuru North Sub County, Kenya

Research Question

What was the influence of community and parent's finances on Pre-school children's cognitive achievements in Nakuru North Sub County, Kenya?

III. Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive survey design. As noted by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a survey, is an attempt to, collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of the population with respect to one or more variables. It is a self-report study which requires the collection of quantifiable information from the sample. The survey design allowed the study to gather on actual state at the time of collection. It was also appropriate since it allowed the researcher to gather information from a large number of cases. The target population was thirty nine (39) head teachers, seventy eight teachers (78), one (1) Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education Programme Officer in Nakuru North Sub-County. Using purposive sampling, the study used a sample size of 8 head teachers, 16 ECD teachers, and 1 Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education Program officer. There was 100% response rate on the distributed questionnaires.

IV. Findings And Discussions

This study sought to find out the influence of the non-government finances on the preschool children's cognitive skills. To answer this question, the researcher viewed the learners' progress records of the selected ECDE centres based on various cognitive competencies in number work which included number ordering, shape recognition, matching, number reading, counting, addition and subtraction. This was done to determine the role of community and parents finances on Pre-school children's cognitive achievements. The scores were analyzed in percentages of good, trial and slow cognitive achievements and the results presented as indicated below in Table 1.

Table 1: Community Sponsored Pre School Children's Cognitive Competencies in Number Work

Name of ECDE centre	Heshima (Roll 32)						Juhudi (Roll 20)					
	Good	%	Trial	%	Slow	%	Good	%	Trial	%	Slow	%
Number ordering	13	41	16	50	3	9	3	15	11	55	6	30
Shape recognition	18	56	9	28	5	16	11	55	8	40	1	5
Matching	17	53	9	28	6	19	6	30	6	30	8	40
Number reading	18	56	14	44	--	--	9	45	10	50	1	5
Counting	10	31	13	41	9	28	5	25	6	30	9	45
Addition	18	56	12	38	2	6	5	25	7	35	8	40
Subtraction	14	44	18	56	--	--	6	30	8	40	6	30

Sources: Learners Progress records.

Table 4.4.3 shows cognitive competencies in number ordering, shape recognition, matching, number reading, counting, addition and subtraction in two community sponsored ECDE centres which were Heshima and Juhudi.

The two ECDE centres had an average of 28% of good scores in number ordering, 55% in shape recognition, 41.5% in matching, 50.5% in number reading, 28% in counting, 40.5% in addition and 37% in subtraction. The average scores for slow cognitive achievements for the two ECDE centres were 19.5% in number ordering, 10.5% in shape recognition, 29.5% in matching, 5% in number reading, 36.5% in counting, 23% in addition and 30% in subtraction. Cognitive achievements in these ECDE centres were relatively low as compared to Faith Based and Public ECDE centres. Teachers in these ECDE centres were highly demotivated due to poor remuneration which with no doubt translated to low cognitive achievements among learners. Community ECDE centres lacked feeding programmes, inadequate instructional materials, furniture, play materials, latrines and playgrounds. While the government allocates less than 1% of the education Ministry's budget to Pre-schools, parents and the communities currently manage 70% of the Pre-schools' budget in the country (Republic of Kenya, 1998).

These ECDE centres rely on the communities to raise money to purchase land and other materials to build schools. The community identifies educated members of the community to be Pre-school teachers, furnishing ECDE centres with play and learning materials, payment of teachers' salaries, and providing feeding programme. According to Mbugua-Muriithi (1996), early care and education of children was and is still considered to be a community concern necessitating collaboration. Communities raise money to purchase land and other materials to build schools. Many Kenyan women formed groups to champion for and sustain early childhood and care adopting a variety of networking strategies through women's self-help groups which is still practiced to date (Mbugua-Muriithi, 1997). However, much still need to be done to enhance the capacity of the community management teams to effectively carry out their responsibilities in order to influence Pre-school children's cognitive achievements. This inadequacy may have greatly contributed to low cognitive competencies achievements due to lack of enough contact hours between the teachers and learners, lack of concentration span by learners, and the reluctant manner in which parents participate towards provision of school support materials.

In terms of maintaining quality the centres are not supervised and community management teams lack financial managerial capacity as indicated by the DICECE Programme Officer. It was noted that finances provided by parents are inadequate to pay and motivate teachers, equip the centres with instructional materials, physical facilities and provide feeding programme; factors which are essential in enhancing the cognitive achievements of Pre-school children. Teachers in these centres were observed to possess inadequate professional qualifications, were less paid, less motivated and therefore not very competent at enhancing the cognitive achievements of Pre-school children. According to Myers (1992), the lesson from Kenya is that the community is a very important resource for the community of ECD programme and must continue to be tapped and appreciated. The critical role of community involvement in sustainability and relevant cannot be overemphasized.

V. Conclusion

In Community Sponsored ECDE centres, it was the role of the community and the parents to raise money to purchase land and other materials to build schools. The community also identified educated members of the community to be Pre-school teachers; furnished ECDE centres with play and learning material and were responsible for payment of teacher's salaries. Despite the provisions above, Community Sponsored ECDE centres lacked feeding programmes in place and this could have negatively influenced learners' cognitive achievements.

VI. Recommendations

In community sponsored schools, the adequacy of instructional materials, physical facilities teacher's salary, supervision, feeding programme and financial managerial capacity need to be addressed appropriately.

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