

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

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Abstract: *Early Childhood Education subsector in Kenya is expanding at a tremendous rate. Various efforts by the government, communities and other collaborating partners have resulted in intersectional collaboration and a variety of education settings available to young children. Faith Based Organizations, Communities, and Public Preschools in both rural and urban settings in Kenya have increased. In order to improve Pre-school children's cognitive achievements, adequate funding in this subsector need to be addressed. The purpose of this study was to establish the role of government finances on pre-school children's cognitive achievements in Nakuru North Sub County, Kenya. The findings on the influence of government finances on Pre-school children's cognitive achievements showed that Pre-school children in ECDE centres that were assisted with CSG scored more than 50% in all the indicators of cognitive achievements. The low scores in cognitive achievements were associated to inadequate instructional materials which are very critical in enhancing children's cognitive achievements. The researcher recommended that there is need for the government to develop a policy on budgeting allocation towards promotion of ECE Sub-sector.*

Keywords: *Early Childhood Education*

I. Introduction

The United Nations Declaration of human rights (1948), the Jomtein Declaration of Education For All (1990), the Dakar Framework of Actions (2000), Millennium Development Goals and the Kenya Children Act (2001), all advances that every child is entitled to basic rights among which education is the key (Manani, 2007). The constitution of Kenya (2010) and Education Act (2013) also provides for Free and Compulsory Education. The World community renewed its commitment to Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the Dakar Framework of Actions, whose first goal was devoted to Early Childhood Education (ECE). It focused on expansion of access to integrate Early Childhood Development Education services, improving quality and ensuring equity. Investing in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is an established fact, that pays off, educationally, socially and economically (UNESCO, 2003).

In China, the development of Early Childhood Education (ECE) is divided such that kindergartens for children aged 3-6 is the responsibility of Ministry of Education and nurseries for children under age 3 is the responsibility of Ministry of Health (Wong and Pang, 2002). The national Ministry of Education is responsible for the development and implementation of policy and regulations of kindergartens and early education. The overall administration, organization and funding within local setting. Funding of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in South Africa is largely through a private market (Statistics S.A, 2005). This market includes independent reception years, nursery programmes, day care and home-based provision. In the 1970s the Kenya government entered into partnership with communities' parents and Non-Governmental Organization engaged in the provision of Early Childhood Education. Kenya's partnership policy provides the only policy framework that directs the Ministry of Education provision for Early Childhood Education (ECE). The policy was stipulated in the Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1988 and the National Development Plan of 1989/1993. Kenyan government successfully implemented a ten year (1972-1982) Pre-school Education Project (PEP), supported by the Bernard Van leer Foundation (Moncrieff 1993). President Circular Number One in 1980 and reports by Gachathi and Kamunge (Republic of Kenya, 1976, 1988) emphasized the importance of quality services provision.

In 1984, National Centre For Early Childhood Education was established at then KIE. Its core mandate was responsible for training of trainers in curriculum development research and co-ordination (Gakuru, Riak, Ogula, Mugo Njenga, 1987). Decentralization of National Centre For Early Childhood Education services was done through creation of Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education and is accountable to the Sub-County education officers for their day to day operations. In full cognizance of the national and international goals of education, Ministry of Education (MOE) developed a Comprehensive Childhood Development Education Policy, (2005). A sessional paper No. 1 of (2005) entitled 'A Policy Framework for Education Training and Research' was developed with an intention to enhance access, equity and quality of education at all levels by 2010. It is upon this backdrop that in 2005, the Government commitment led to the inclusion of Early Childhood Development Education as one of the 23 investments in the Kenya Education Sector Support

Programme (KESP) (Republic of Kenya, 2005). The Ministry of Education (MOE) use the strategy that target to achieve its target in Early Childhood Development Education through provision of government grants in form of Community Support Grant (CSG). The grant is provided according to the number of children. The main objectives of CSG are equity, increase in access and quality services offered to Pre-school children. The World Bank ECD project (1997-2003) also strengthened the Early Childhood Development Education system through the construction of conference at NACECE, staffing, equipping and capacity building of DICECES expansion of training opportunities for preschool teachers, strengthened community engagement through training management teams, the establishment of ECD Centre in marginalized communities, inclusion of health and nutrition in ECD (World Bank 1997).

Since 1954, UNICEF has played a critical role in policy development strategy planning, high level advocacy and the capacity strengthening of Early Childhood Education (ECE) at various levels in Kenya. In 1986, the Aga Khan Education services started Madrasa Pre-school programmes for helping parents and communities to provide a positive and early start for their children. A massive expansion of early childhood was given impetus by President Jomo Kenyatta's call for national philosophy of 'Harambee' which means 'lets pull together' upon Kenya's independence in 1963. Early Childhood Education of children was considered to be a community concern nEarly Childhood Education (ECE)ssitating collaboration. Communities raised money to purchase land and other materials to build schools (Mbugua-Muriithi, 1996). Kenya's Early Childhood Education is deeply rooted in the community. Communities have established ECD Centres comprising 70% (Republic of Kenya, 1998) of the total number of Early Childhood Development Education centres nationwide. As part of the endeavor to partner with government, the communities are responsible for identifying suitable locations to set up Early Childhood Development Education centres and mobilizing human and materials resources for construction and furnishing as well as development of play and learning materials, identification of teachers and payments of their salaries. Communities provide the feeding programme and help to incorporate traditions and folklore into curriculum. This makes the community feel proud of their contributions to the learning achievements of the children.

II. Literature Review

Even with the provision of Early Childhood Education (ECE) involving community, parents and Non-Governmental Organization, much could not have been achieved without government involvement. In the 1970's, the Kenya government entered into partnership with communities, parents and Non-Governmental Organization engaged in the provision of Early Childhood Education. The existing situation in Kenya is that the partnership policy provides the only policy framework that directs the MOE provision for the ECD. The policy is the first on ECD and was stipulated in the Session Paper No. 6 (Republic of Kenya, 1988) and The National Development Plan of 1989/1993. Despite community involvement and ownership, the Kenya government successfully implemented a ten year (1972-1982) Pre-school Education Project (PEP), supported by the Bernard Van Lee Foundation (Moncrieff, 1993) Presidential Circular Number one of 1980 and reports by Gachathi and Kamunge (Republic of Kenya, 1976, 1988) emphasized the importance of quality service provision. The national Early Childhood Education (ECE) system was established through creation of National Centre For Early Childhood Education in 1984 and Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education in 1985 (Gakuru, Riak, Ogula, Mugo & Njenga 1987). The establishment of National Centre For Early Childhood Education and Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education was to streamline management, supervision and curriculum development.

Its mandate includes; developing and disseminating curriculum for Early Childhood Development Education programme, identifying, designing, undertaking and co-coordinating Early Childhood Education (ECE) research, facilitating interaction between agencies and sponsors, co-coordinating and liaising with external partners and informing the Public of needs and developments in the Early Childhood Development Education programmes (Republic of Kenya, 2005). The functions of Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education include; training of Pre-school teachers and other personnel's at the Sub-County level. Supervision and quality assurance of Sub-County Pre-school programmes, mobilization of local community to improve care, health, nutrition and education of young children, development of localized Early Childhood Development Education curricula, and evaluation and research related to the Pre-school children. The Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education staff is trained by National Centre for Early Childhood Education and is accountable to the Sub-County education officers for their day-to-day operations. Republic of Kenya, (2007) on Early Childhood Development Education service guidelines only approved Early Childhood Development Education syllabus to be used in Early Childhood Development Education centers. A study done by (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations) UNESCO and (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) OECD in February 2005, in Kenya stated that there were geographical inequalities in Early Childhood Development Education. In Nairobi, more children were likely to be enrolled in Early Childhood Development Education than in other former provinces with similar poverty levels. There are also gender

disparities in Nairobi; girls are likely to enroll where as in former North Eastern Province the reverse is observed (UNESCO, 2005).

In full cognizance of the national and international goals of education, Ministry of Education (MOE) developed a comprehensive early childhood development education policy (2005). The policy was to address special attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged children. A Sessional Paper No. 1 (Republic of Kenya, 2005) entitled "A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research" was developed. The government intended to enhance access, equity and quality of education at all levels by 2010. It is upon this backdrop that in 2005, the government commitment led to the inclusion of Early Childhood Development Education as one of 23 investments in the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) (Republic of Kenya 2005). The strategy the Ministry of Education applies to achieve its target in Early Childhood Development Education is the provision of Government grants in form of community support grant (CSG). Each beneficiary of the fund rEarly Childhood Education (ECE)ives a total of Kshs.300, 000 (around 4,500 US Dollar). Community Support Grants is provided according to the number of children. It is more focused on the disadvantaged communities especially ASALS and urban slums. The main objectives of CSG are equity, increase access and quality of service offered to preschool children. Funding of ECCE in South Africa is largely through a private market (statistics S.A, 2005). This market include independent reception years, nursery programmes day care, and home-based provision. There are considerable differences across ethnic groups in enrolment rates. In china, ECE is divided such that Kindergartens for children aged 3-6 is the responsibility of Ministry of Education and nurseries for children under age 3 is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health (Wong and Pang, 2002).

The National Ministry of Education is responsible for the development and implementation of policy and regulations of Kindergarten and early education. However, ECE is administered, organized, and funded primarily within local settings. Private funding from international aid agencies has been targeted at disadvantaged, rural areas, as well as areas with minority populations; ECE within these settings is less formal. Given the reliance of aid from agencies, the availability and quality of ECE varies across regions in China. The (2010) Constitution of Kenya has provided for children's right to free and compulsory basic (Early Childhood Education (ECE)) education including quality services and to access educational institutions and facilities for all persons including those with disabilities. The Fourth Schedule, on the distribution of functions in the constitution of Kenya (2010) allocates the responsibility of planning and development of Early Childhood Development Education Centers and child care facilities to County Governments. The National Government retains responsibilities for policy standards and curriculum development, even where implementation is undertaken by County Governments. The new Basic Education Act (2013) and a Policy Paper on Framework for Education (2012) provides Early Childhood Development Education for 4-5 years old to be free and compulsory in Kenya. Consequently, responsibility for financing this sub-sector has not been adequately addressed as it has been rested to both County and National Government.

Objective of the Study

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

Research Question

What was the influence of Government 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 government finances on the preschool children's cognitive skills. In order to answer this question, the researcher analyzed the learners' progress records of the selected Early Childhood Development Education centers based on various cognitive competencies in number work which included number ordering, shape recognition, matching, number reading, counting, addition and

subtraction. The scores were analyzed in percentages of good, trial and slow cognitive achievements and the results presented in Table 1.

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

Name of ECDE centres	ECDE Centres assisted with CSG						ECDE Centres without CSG					
	Nakuru workers (Roll 45)			Baraka (Roll 30)			Nakuru teachers (Roll 24)			St. John (Roll 30)		
Indicators	Good %	Trial %	Slow %	Good %	Trial %	Slow %	Good %	Trial %	Slow %	Good %	Trial %	Slow %
Number ordering	26 57.8	13 28.9	6 13.3	16 53.3	10 33.3	4 13.3	10 41.7	12 50	2 8.3	1 33.3	19 63.3	10 33.3
Shape recognition	26 57.8	13 28.9	6 13.3	19 63.3	9 30	2 6.7	9 37.5	12 50	3 12.5	11 36.7	14 46.7	5 16.7
Matching	45 100	-- --	-- --	16 53.3	10 33.3	4 13.3	10 41.7	12 50	2 8.3	18 60	12 40	-- --
Number reading	35 77.8	3 6.7	7 15.6	16 53.3	11 36.7	3 10	11 45.8	9 37.5	5 16.7	8 26.7	8 26.7	14 46.7
Counting	45 100	-- --	-- --	17 56.7	8 26.7	5 16.7	8 33.3	7 29.2	9 37.5	11 36.7	13 43.3	6 20
Addition	35 77.8	3 6.7	7 15.6	17 56.7	9 30	4 13.3	11 45.8	12 50	1 4.2	7 23.3	15 50	8 26.7
Subtraction	27 60	13 28.9	5 11.1	15 50	12 40	3 10	10 41.7	10 41.7	4 16.7	10 33.3	14 46.7	6 20

Source: Learners Progress Record

Table 1 shows cognitive achievements in number ordering, shape recognition, matching, number reading, counting, addition and subtraction in the four selected Public Early Childhood Development Education centers: Nakuru workers, Baraka, Nakuru Teachers and St. John. These results show that Pre-school children in Early Childhood Development Education centers that were assisted with CSG scored more than 50% in all the indicators of cognitive achievements. Pre-school children in Nakuru workers and Baraka who were beneficiaries of CSG had an average of 55.5% of cognitive achievements in number ordering, 60.55% in shape recognition, 76.5% in matching, 65.55% in number reading, 78.35% in counting, 67.25% in addition and 55% in subtraction. On the other hand, low cognitive achievements were registered by Pre-school children in Early Childhood Development Education centres without CSG which included Nakuru teachers and St. John Early Childhood Development Education centres. The two centres had an average of 37.5% of cognitive achievements in number ordering, 37.1% in shape recognition, 50.8% in matching, 35.25% in number reading, 35% in counting, 34.55% in addition and 37.5% in subtraction. The Early Childhood Development Education centres scored below average achievements in all the cognitive competencies in number work except in matching which had 50.8%. The low scores in cognitive achievements were associated to inadequate instructional materials which are very critical in enhancing children's cognitive achievements. The information got from the head teachers and teachers showed a total breakdown of the infrastructures. They had inadequate classrooms, latrines, furniture, instructional materials, play materials and lacked playgrounds and feeding Programme. Generally Early Childhood Development Education centres without C.S.G posted low scores as compared to those that benefitted from C.S.G. The rationale for this was mainly because most children were not able to pay Pre-school's fees and this was associated with high absenteeism, low/delayed enrolment and consequently low cognitive achievements. This is firmly supported by the inclusion of Early Childhood Development Education as one of 23 investments in the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) which was to address special attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged children (Republic of Kenya 2005). By this initiative, the government also intended to enhance access, equity and quality of Early Childhood Education by 2010.

It can be conclusively presumed that inadequate finance greatly affects children's cognitive achievements. Government's role in financing Pre-school education is aimed at improving children's enrolment, teachers' motivation, curriculum supervision, provision of physical facilities, play materials and instructional materials factors which promote the teaching and learning process and enhance children's cognitive achievements. In this regard, the Republic of Kenya, (2007) on Early Childhood Development Education service guidelines only approved Early Childhood Development Education syllabus to be used in Early Childhood Development Education centres. When Early Childhood Development Education centres are well equipped with learning facilities and teachers are well remunerated, trained and highly motivated, Pre-school children are able to learn in the best way under the guidance of their teachers. In support of these findings, the National Early Childhood Education (ECE) system was established through creation of National Centre For Early Childhood Education in 1984 and Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education in 1985 and was aimed at streamlining management, supervision and curriculum development (Gakuru, et al, 1987).

Teachers in Early Childhood Development Education centres with CSG had high levels of professional training and understood that Pre-school children learn best when they manipulate real and concrete objects.

They guided the learners to explore and experiment to be able to form correct concepts of the world around them. However some Pre-school children in Early Childhood Development Education centres which were assisted with CSG still registered slow cognitive achievements in the cognitive competencies in number work. For instance, the two Early Childhood Development Education centres that were assisted with CSG had an average of 13.3% in number ordering, 10% in shape recognition, 13.3% in matching, 12.8% in number reading, 16.7% in counting, 14.45% in addition and 10.55% in subtraction. This was attributed to the fact that only one school out of the Public pre-schools assisted with CSG had a feeding Programme in place. This could have contributed to low cognitive achievements as learning depends on good nutrition because physiological needs come first before there exists motivation to do anything else. It was also reported by Sub-County Centre for Early Childhood Education Programme Officer that inadequate finances led to inadequate curriculum supervision which was evidenced in this category of Pre-schools. It could be true to say that curriculum supervision would go a long way in improving Pre-school children cognitive achievements. Majority views of the head teachers in the Early Childhood Development Education centres that had received CSG is that, to a large extent the materials used for teaching had been bought using the grants and this could have contributed to the improved cognitive achievements of learners in Early Childhood Development Education centres that were assisted with CSG as compared to those that do not receive CSG. This could have led to learners attending Pre-school regularly as well as high enrolment rates. Conclusively, it was noted that adequate finances are necessary for the holistic development of Pre-school children and therefore has an influence in their cognitive achievements.

V. Conclusion

The study sought to establish the role of government finances on Pre-school children's cognitive achievements in Nakuru North Sub-County. From the results obtained, it was evident that more children had been enrolled in the Early Childhood Development Education centres that had benefited from CSG and their cognitive achievements were higher than Public Early Childhood Development Education Centres that had not benefited from CSG.

VI. Recommendations

The government should continue to issue and support the early childhood education through the issuance of the community support grant with a view of improving the cognitive skills of the children.

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