

## FACTORS HINDERING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECDE CENTRES

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**Abstract:** *The current policy on management of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres is vested in communities to provide and support development activities with the government providing curriculum and instruction support .This study sought to investigate factors hindering community participation in the development of ECD centres. The study was guided by the following objectives namely: to determine the effect of poverty, literacy levels of parents and teacher community relationship on community participation in the development of the ECD centres. Descriptive survey design was employed in the study. A questionnaire containing both open and closed ended questions was completed by 30 parents and 6 teachers. An in-depth interview was conducted with 6 school committee members. Interpretation and presentation of data was accomplished through descriptive statistics. The study established that high cost of living coupled with high unemployment rate and lack of morale contributed to negligible community participation in the development of ECD centres. It was recommended that teachers, parents and community members need to be sensitized on the importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE).*

### **Concept of community involvement and participation in schools**

Several educationists have tried to explain what is meant by community involvement. Henry (1954) explained that this concept means the sharing of responsibilities between teachers and parents for the promotion and progress of education. He stressed on co-operation meaning working together for a common purpose. Therefore the community cannot participate actively in development of schools if the relationship is not that of mutual respect. According to Alwar (1995), school community relations were seen as inevitable or unavoidable contact and consciously or deliberately planned relations. He added that the relationship was inevitable because the school will always be influenced by the economic standard of the community members, by its budget that come from public tax monies and parents who were involved in their children's learning and the development of the school in one way or another.

Community participation may also refer to the interest parents show in their children schooling by enrolling them in pre-schools, providing school requirements, their basic needs such as open day and prize giving day and talking to the teacher about the progress of the child. According to Olembo et al (1992) community and parents participation includes providing funds for construction and maintenance of physical facilities and supplies through self-help. This is done through a two way

communication whereby the school seeks to provide and obtain information about its programmes and activities.

In a nutshell, community participation entails responsibility by the society and its members to do their best for each other with the full knowledge and understanding that if the society prospers, its members will share that prosperity and the society cannot prosper without full co-operation of its members. Therefore community participation involves two or more people, mutually pursuing the attainment of some defined objectives of development projects.

### **Literature review: Early childhood education from a global perspective and in Kenya**

The early years of a child's life are globally accepted as the most critical years for the lifelong development of a child. Recent research carried out by various neuroscientist particularly on the brain has provided convincing evidence of the critical periods located within these early years for the formation of synaptic connections in the brain and for the full development of the brain potential (Mukanzi, 2005). Globally, many events have contributed to the realization of the significance of the childhood years for the country's economic progress. These changes started with the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child in 1989 whereby a set of international standards and measures to protect and promote the welfare of the children in society were put in place (Alwar, 1995).

In the African context, participation in the ECE is not a new phenomenon. Nyerere (1967) explained that education was the duty of the community and elders. Although there were no schools like today, community members were educated through co-operation of different individuals. Several studies indicate that many African communities still provide manual labour and financial support for their schools. In Kenya, communities share the responsibility of financing schools with the government. In support of this view the Kenya Development Plan (1984-1988) states that participation entails responsibility by the society and its members to do their best for each other with the full knowledge and understanding that if the society prospers, its members will share that prosperity and the society cannot prosper without full-co-operation of its members.

The socio-economic factors that have been stumbling block in the development of early childhood care and education include: poverty, parental level of education, occupation and family size among others. Majority of the people in the community including policy makers, parents and local communities are aware of the importance of providing ECE but the major the determinant of which children should attend ECE programs is the ability of the parents to pay it in addition to meeting costs at other levels (KIE, 2005). According to the policy framework on ECE, poverty has compromised the abilities of parents and local communities to give financial support for the programme. A situational analysis on community participation and proposal for cost effective community mobilization prepared by Alwar (1995) cited poverty as one of the factor hindering community participation in ECE projects. Kituta (2003) in her research carried out in Shimba Hills in Kwale district indicated that the majority of the community members were aware of the

importance of ECE programmes but could not participate in ECD activities because of financial constraints.

According to Chernichovsky (1985) education of the households is the single most important determining factor of educational participation among a large sample of population. This view is supported by Anderson (1967) who argued that parents who have limited education forego many social and economic options thereby restricting a family's opportunity for upward social mobility. Therefore the school cannot be isolated from home and in this context teachers should welcome the community as respected members of the enterprise and involve them meaningfully so that they feel good about their children. Murphy (1991) reports that good parent-teacher relationship can help build up public confidence in the school. He further asserts that support from parents can be through collection of funds, provision of physical facilities, instruction materials and maintenance of discipline in the school.

The likelihood that a child will remain in school and the parent's participation in ECDE centres can be influenced by cultural attitudes within the family. A study conducted in Kenya by Mulatya (2003) revealed that wealthy and educated parent's utilized private pre-schools and that they deployed resources in a manner creating pre-school conditions which are conducive to a school performance. This provided initial advantages which are difficult to match among the poor, uneducated and rural Kenyans. This means that children from educated and high socio-economic status are more adequately prepared for school than those of low socio-economic status.

On the other hand there is need for more interaction between home and school. This means welcoming of parents to the school setting for more than a few planned meetings. Teachers should welcome the community as respected members of the enterprise and involve them meaningfully so that they feel good about their children. Nduku (2003) supported these views arguing that the relationship enabled the school and the community to share responsibilities of developing and running schools. According to her, a school trying to function without involving the community was like an engine destined to start without petrol. In this context an alert teacher recognizes gifted parents and gives them an opportunity to enrich school curriculum. This is likely to promote community-teacher relationship and enhance community participation in pre-schools activities.

### **Statement of the problem**

Communities play a vital role in managing of ECD centres than the central government. The current policy on management of ECD centres is vested in communities to provide and support development activities with the government providing curriculum and instruction support. The running of the schools programme has been challenging as many parents do not attend school meetings or contribute towards building of the school. Such inefficiencies contribute significantly to withdrawal of communities from assuming their roles in running ECD centres and this has adverse consequences on child especially cognitive development exhibited through poor academic performance.

## Objectives of the study

The study intended to achieve the following objectives:

- To determine the effects of poverty on community participation in the development of ECD centres;
- To assess the effects of literacy level of parents on their participation in the development of ECD centres
- To establish the role of ECD teachers In the development of ECD centres/

## Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design was preferred because this research paradigm sought to collect information of varied magnitude such as people's attitude, literacy level of the community and opinions from a large population within a short while. Stratified and systematic sampling methods were used to identify respondents. The sample was stratified into three groups namely preschool teachers, parents/caregivers and school committee members.

## Research instruments

A variety of instruments were used to obtain data from the population and to answer research questions earlier stated in the study.

**Questionnaires:** These were used to obtain important information about the study population. Closed ended questions were used to collect data from teachers and school committees. One advantage of using a questionnaire is that the questions for each respondent are framed in the same way allowing uniformity for the respondents. Questionnaire has many advantages including saving time and guaranteeing interviewees confidentiality (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

**Interview schedule:** Interviews were conducted with the parents of the various ECD centres. These were used to allow individuals interviewees to express their views on important issues in the study posed by the researcher. This made it possible for the researcher to interact with the respondents, to talk to them, and gain access to their accounts and articulations. Data collected from the interviews were manually and tape recorded for further content analysis.

## Discussions of findings

The study established that majority of parents and school committee members earn monthly income of below Kenya shillings 10,000 while majority of teachers earned a monthly income of between Kenya shillings 10,000 and 20,000. The findings imply that majority of parents and committee members were poor and lacked motivation to engage actively in development of ECDE centres. Their low income were attributed to unemployment and casual labour and therefore most of them

adopted a culture of ‘‘hand to mouth’’. The high expenditures were attributed to more dependants and high cost of living.

It was also established that majority of ECD teachers did not have human resource management skills although some were trained in resource management, human development, Psychology, public relation skills and pedagogical skills. This means that participation of parents and committee members representing community is a challenge when teachers lack basic skills in human resource management.

Further, literacy level of respondents for school committee members was secondary school education. This implies that most committee members lacked management skills and therefore could not make sound decisions towards development activities in ECD centres.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The study has shown that extreme poor conditions and low education level among parents and school committee members make ECD teachers to find it difficult in working with them to achieve school objectives. There is need for head teachers of these centres to interact more with parents, committee members and other community members to ensure participation of neighboring communities in development of ECD centers. The ultimate value of community relationship is critical in determining the ideas, aspirations about education and active participation of the community members in the development of schools. The critical challenge of the ECD centres is attracting and more importantly retaining high caliber employees highly committed to the future of ECD centers development.

In view of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- There is need by the government of Kenya to sensitize parents and community on the importance of ECE.
- The government should extend the policy of free education to cater for Pre-school children.
- Budget allocation to ECE should be increased so as to relieve the parents/community the burden of financing ECD centres.

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