

# Early Childhood Development Education Implementation Challenges in Teso South, Busia County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Following devolution of ECDE as a result of promulgation of Kenyan constitution 2010, scanty information exists regarding the status of ECDE in various counties in Kenya. This paper therefore examines the ECDE implementation challenges in Teso Sub County. The study used a cross sectional descriptive research design utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The population of this study consisted of all ECDE centers in Teso South Sub County. The Sub County has 77 ECDE centers with two zones. A total of 64 teachers and 12 head teachers were selected to participate in the study. Multi-stage sampling techniques were adopted with stratified, simple random, census and purposive sampling being utilized. A questionnaire and an interview guide were the major tools used in collecting the information from teachers and head teachers respectively. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted utilizing thematic and descriptive analysis techniques respectively. Findings indicate that most ECDE centres have inadequate trained teachers; inadequate teaching and learning materials; inadequate school physical facilities and poor parental support. The study recommends that the county government of Busia to conduct a situational analysis on the status of ECDE centres not only in Teso South but in the entire county.

**Key Terms:** Challenges, Early Childhood Development Education, Implementation

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Convention (1989), every child has a fundamental right to learn and develop to his or her full potential through access to quality education regardless of their age, gender, origin or social background. Kenya being a signatory to the UN convention has passed several laws to ensure that all children are entitled to their constitution rights as contained in the Kenyan 2010 constitution. The Government of Kenya understands and recognizes the significance of Early Childhood Development, as one of the most important pillars for fast-tracking among others the attainment of Education For All (EFA); Vision 2030 as well as Social Development Goals (SDGs) (GoK, 2012).

The purpose of Early Childhood Development Education is to care and nurse all dimension of life of young children to enhance holistic development. It is understood that initial years of zero to six years are important in laying the

foundation for adulthood. Therefore its great important that all the stakeholders concerned should treat this without any hitch. According to Hirst, Jewis, Sojo and Cavagh (2011) early childhood education is crucial and pertinent to all children and should therefore be available and accessible to all. They argue that preschool provides a comprehensive foundation for learning and helps to develop among other aspects; skills, knowledge, sense of social responsibility, confidence and personal competence (Hirst et al., 2011). It is therefore important for all the 47 counties in Kenya to ensure that every child has access to quality preschool education by providing the support and assistance required.

Despite the increasing importance of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE), there are a number of challenges that have continued to pull down its effective implementation as it was the case of Kitui District (Wambua, 2010); Rachuonyo South Sub County (Were, 2014); Nyamira county (Okongo, Ngao , Rop & Nyongesa, 2015) among other counties with little on the status of implementation known in Busia County. This study will therefore delve on the challenges faced during implementation of ECDE in Teso South Sub County.

### A. Statement of the problem

The fourth schedule of the 2010 Kenyan constitution among others states that the county governments in Kenya have the mandate to provide funds required for the development of the necessary infrastructure for institutions of basic education and training (ECDE). On the other hand, the National Government develops and improves services in education system with exemption of ECDE which have been devolved to the county government. At this point, it is worth noting that Early Childhood Development Education is fundamental in the development of children wellbeing and educational aspirations. Successful implementation of ECDE programmes therefore not only rely on teachers and parents but also by the policy guidelines; financial as well as infrastructural support offered by the county government. However, the Council of Governors Report (GOC, 2014) indicated that there is lack of early childhood development and Education programs in the public school systems in the counties in Kenya. This is an indication that ECDE centres might be facing numerous challenges in trying to offer quality

education to the children. Following devolution of ECDE as a result of promulgation of Kenyan constitution 2010, scanty information exists regarding the status of ECDE in various counties in Kenya. This paper therefore examines the ECDE implementation challenges in Teso Sub County.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross sectional descriptive research design in investigating the challenges that faced during the implementation of ECDE. Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, (2012) defines a cross sectional design as that which takes a snapshot of a population at a certain time, allowing conclusions about phenomena across a wide population to be drawn. The study will be carried out in Teso South Sub County. The population of this study consisted of all ECDE centers in Teso South Sub County. The Sub County has 77 ECDE centers with two zones. Chakol zone which has 40 ECDE centers and Amukura zone which has 37 ECDE centers. Teachers and head teachers of these centers were selected to participate in the study. The study used selected 30% of the ECDE centers from each zone in Teso Sub County. Thus, 12 centers with 34 teachers from Chakol zone and 11 centers with 30 teachers from Amukura zone were selected as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
SAMPLED SCHOOLS

Zones	ECDE Centers	30% of Centers	Total Number of Teachers
Chakol	40	(40*30/100) 12	34
Amukura	37	(37*30/100) 11	30
Total	77	23	64

Multi-stage sampling techniques were adopted with stratified, simple random, census and purposive sampling being utilized. ECDE centres were selected in respect to zones where stratified sampling was used. Thereafter, 30% was applied to get the required number of ECDE centres. According to Gay (2002), 30% of the population constitutes an adequate sample size. Simple random sampling was then used in selecting 12 centres from Chakol zone and 11 centres from Amukura zone. All the 64 teachers (34 from Chakol and 30 from Amukura) were included in the sample through census. This is because the number was manageable and further sampling might compromise the reliability and validity of the information collected. Purposive sampling was then used in selecting twelve head teachers (six from each zone) who were interviewed. The study used a sample size of 76 participants (64 teachers and 12 head teachers).

Regarding data collection instruments, this study used questionnaire to collect information regarding ECDE implementation challenges from 64 teachers and an interview guide which assisted in collecting information from 12 head

teachers in Teso South Sub County. The collected data was then edited and coded. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted utilizing thematic and descriptive analysis techniques respectively. Frequencies and percentages were used to group and organize raw data into a meaningful way for ease interpretation. Quantitative data was presented in form of graphs and frequency tables while qualitative data was presented in form of narratives and direct quotations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Background Information

Regarding gender of ECDE teachers who participated in the study, it was established that majority (91%) were female while few (9%) were male. A possible explanation to this is that most men perceive that managing preschool children is a feminine affair and thus, it is better handled by ladies. This was revealed during an interview with the head teacher from one of the selected schools. *‘The current situation regarding gender disparity among teachers in our ECDE centres has improved. For instance, for the past six years I have served this school, it was only last year that we employed a male teacher. Most men prefer other jobs than teaching children because they are impatient and get pissed off easily’*, he said.

In relation to qualification of teachers, the study found that (24)38% had no training while (40)62%. Furthermore, out of those who had been trained, only (20)49% had been employed by the County while the rest are paid by parents in collaboration with the school management. In addition, it was established that 37% of teachers who participated in the study had taught for seven years and more, 32% stated that they had taught for 4-6 years, 26% had taught for 1-3 years while a few (5%) stated that they had taught for less than a year. This is as shown in Figure 1.

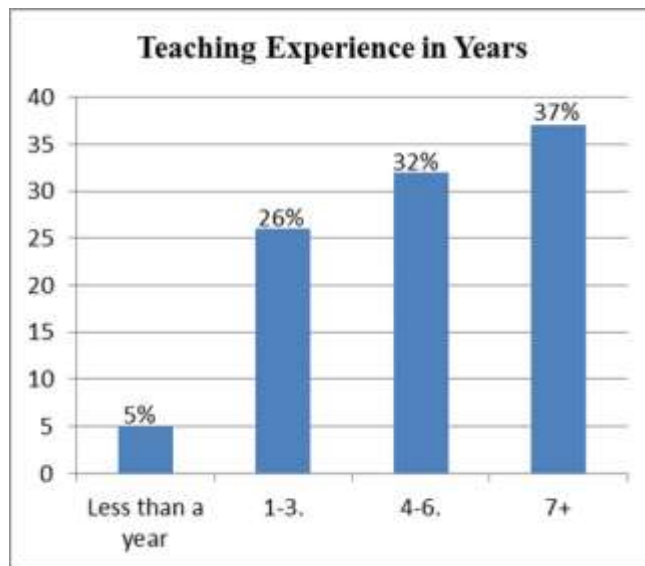


Fig 1 Teaching Experience

### B. Challenges Facing Implementation of ECDE

Early childhood development has been acknowledged to be a vital element to the life of a child as it forms the onset of a person's educational development. This study was conducted in Busia County at a time when ECDE was devolved by the virtue of Kenya's new constitution which was promulgated in the year 2010. From the sampled schools that data were collected, it was established that majority of the centres are still struggling to provide quality learning to the children due to various challenges which have been discussed below.

TABLE 2  
CHALLENGES FACING IMPLEMENTATION ECDE

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Inadequate trained human personnel	57(89%)	4(6%)	3(5%)
Inadequate teaching and learning materials	58(91%)	2(3%)	4(6%)
Inadequate physical facilities	60(94%)	3(5%)	1(1%)
Poor parental support	51(80%)	10(15%)	3(5%)

Findings from Table 2 indicated that majority agreed that there are inadequate trained human personnel (89%); inadequate teaching and learning materials (91%); inadequate physical facilities (94%) as well as poor parental support (80%). Quality education at any stage from pre-primary to institutions of higher learning is paramount. Thus, the issue of employing trained and qualified human personnel to handle children is inevitable if the quality outcome is to be achieved. An overwhelming majority of teachers who participated in the study however agreed that ECDE centres have inadequate trained teachers. This is also attested by the background information which states that out of the 62% of teachers who had been trained, only 49% of them had been employed. Practically, it implies that ECDE centres are run with fewer trained teachers compared to untrained teachers commonly known as UT. During an interview with one head teacher over the issue of trained teachers in ECDE he said that the county government was aware of the shortage and had promised to deploy more trained teachers. He further said that as management they are compelled to supplement with the shortage with untrained teachers (form four leavers) while waiting for the county government to employ more teachers.

Having adequate trained teachers in ECDE centres alone is not enough. Teaching and learning materials are equally important too. When asked whether teaching and

learning materials were enough, most teachers (see Table 2) agreed that T&L materials were inadequate. In addition, during observation by the researcher, it was found that more than 78% of the ECDE centres that were selected for the study did not have adequate materials such as text books, crayons, pencils, erasers, papers rulers and felt pens. In most schools, ECDE children were being taught as primary children using blackboards and chalks.

The quality of educational outcomes in ECDE centres will be achieved under three aspects: i) availability and accessibility; ii) adequacy & relevance and iii) effective utilization. Teaching and learning materials should be made available and teachers as well as children should be able to access them with ease. Secondly, T&L materials should be adequate depending on the number of children to avoid sharing a piece of material among many children. Furthermore, the materials should be relevant to the subject or topic under discussion. Finally, if the first two conditions have been made (i.e., availability/accessibility and adequacy/relevancy) then effective utilization of the materials may be achieved. These findings also coincide with those of Okongo, Ngao, Rop and Nyongesa (2015) who found that a majority (over 85%) of the ECDE centres in Nyamira county, Kenya did not have adequate teaching and learning resources.

Similarly, findings in Table 1 indicate that majority of teachers agreed that their schools have challenges with physical facilities. According to them, the physical facilities such as classrooms, desks, playing ground, and playing equipment (like toys) were inadequate. Furthermore, a researcher's observation also revealed that in some centres, children sat on the floor as there were no seats/chairs/desks. Worse enough was that most floors that children occupied were not cemented; it was dusty which to a great extent affects the quality of learning. It was also established in some centres that children did not have classrooms as learning were taking place either under trees or churches nearby the main primary school sections. In most centres, there were no playing grounds as children from ECDE shared a common playing field with those in primary. This cannot provide a conducive environment for the children to explore their abilities as they are harassed by older children from primary school section. Additionally, playing field meant for primary school children does not have special facilities essential for ECDE children. Inadequate physical facilities are therefore an impediment to the achievement of quality educational outcomes.

During an interview with the key informant regarding the issue of adequacy or inadequacy of school physical facilities under the ECDE section said; *'among the challenges that we are facing in this school is lack of adequate facilities for our children in preprimary section. I understand that they are learning under dilapidated conditions with poor infrastructures. This is as a result of financial constraints which we are experiencing as a school. We do not have funds to upgrade and provide quality physical*

*facilities for our kids. It is so unfortunate that the county government has overlooked the numerous challenges that this school is undergoing.'*

Finally, poor parental support was also found to be a major challenge as was indicated by teachers who participated in the study (see Table 2). According to the teachers and head teachers who were interviewed said that most parents have misconstrued the concept of free education where they expect the government to provide everything for their children including school uniforms and food. This misconception has negatively influenced the quality of education that children in ECDE centres receive. *'we need parents to contribute some little money for us to be able to pay board teachers and provide food for these children but some parents will just brush us off by saying that we just want to embezzle funds from them yet the government is taking care of everything'* said Mr. Shikuku, a head teacher.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Early childhood education is without doubt paramount for setting a solid found for the children's future educational development and achievement. However, challenges such as inadequate trained teachers, inadequate school physical facilities, inadequate teaching and learning resources as well as lack of parental support are there to derail the ECDE achievement objectives and goals. There is an urgent need for the county government of Busia to address the said challenges in order to create an enabling learning environment for children. In addition, unless there is collaboration among the relevant stakeholders such as parents, teachers, school management, neighbouring community as well as the county government; implementation of quality education in ECDE centres that enable children to achieve quality educational outcomes will be a mirage.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Owing to the earlier findings, this paper makes the following recommendations:

There is need for the county government of Busia to conduct a situational analysis on the status of ECDE centres not only in Teso South but in the entire county. This will bring to limelight the plight of most ECDE centres and may elicit response from the county.

Apart from ensuring that ECDE centers have adequate teaching and learning materials and adequate school physical facilities, there is need to employ more trained and qualified teachers to enable ECDE achieve its objectives.

There is need for the county government through the ministry of education to educate ECDE parents to participate and contribute to educational welfare of their children.

Teachers need to be encouraged to use locally available teaching and learning materials such as tins, old tires, and cartons among others in order to supplement the inadequate materials at their disposal. This will not only make learning very interesting but will improve the quality as well.

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