

An Investigation of Relationship between Parents' Social-Economic Status and Participation in Development of Early Childhood Education and Development Programmes (ECDE) in Githunguri Kiambu, Kenya

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Abstract: The study aimed at the investigation of relationship between parents' social-economic status and participation in development of early childhood education and development programmes in Githunguri Kiambu, Kenya. Literature review outlined poverty situation in Kenya, causes of poverty, improving child quality, provision of quality education and importance of early years of a child in Early Childhood Education and Development Centre. Target population comprised of all the private and public pre-schools in the district. The sample of the study included five pre-school head teachers, twenty five parents and fifty pre-school children. Random and stratified methods were used to arrive at a random and representative sample for the study. Survey research design was used for the investigation. Research instruments used included questionnaires, interview schedules for the head teachers and parents and, Observations and records on ECDE education in the district. Data collection was through face to face interactions with the respondents, through questionnaires given out to the respondents with appropriate instruction on how to complete them and through secondary sources, like ECDE programme records in the District Education Office and the internet. Data was analysed with the aid of computer software (SPSS V17.0) for data processing. Results were displayed through descriptions, explanations and categorizations. The study found out strong relationship between parent social-economic status and their involvement in ECDE Programmes' development. The study recommended sensitization of parents on the importance of involvement in development and management of ECDE Programmes in the district and Kiambu County Government to over the management of ECDE education across the county.

Keywords: Parents' Social-Economic Status, Participation in Development of Early Childhood Education and Development Programmes

I. Introduction

Early childhood is an instrumental stage in the development of an individual because it's in this period that one can lay the foundation for later realization of his/her potentialities. It's a period of fast growth, concept formation and cognitive development of the child. Early Childhood Education and Development Programmes (ECDE) must therefore respond satisfactorily to this challenge. To do this, parents' participation is vital although this is hindered by low parent social-economic status, among other variables. Many parents with children in public ECDE Centres in Githunguri district are poor or have low social-economic status.

Poverty is lack of money or material possessions: that is a person is unable to meet the basic needs necessary for survival. The definition of poverty varies depending on the context and what is held to be an 'acceptable' standard of living. This implies that a poor parent may not be able to feed self and family, may lack of proper housing, may have poor health due to inability to pay medical bills and may not be able to educate his/her children.

The Children Act of 2001 stipulates education as a right for all. According to this Act, both parents and government have a responsibility of providing free and compulsory basic education. Every child therefore is entitled to this education regardless of sex, origin, religion, social-political, race, tribe or disability. A study carried out by United Nations revealed that today nearly half of the world's 9 billion people live on less than \$2 a day. Therefore, poverty is a reality affecting both rich and poor countries. In developed countries, it is estimated that one in ten children live below the poverty line (World Bank 2005). The situation in developing countries is much worse. In the year 2000 alone, 1.7 million children were needlessly lost because countries

around the world failed to reduce poverty levels. This has resulted to increased mortality rate due to malnourishment, inability to receive basic medical treatment and inability to take simple preventive measures against diseases (World Bank 2005).

II. Literature Review

Poverty situation in Kenya

During post independent era average economic growth rate in Kenya declined from 6.6% in 1974 to 4%, in 1950 – 59 and 2.4% in 1990 – 2000. Since 1980, the decline in economic performance has been accompanied by declining investment levels. In addition, the economy has been devastated in recent years due to declining world market prices for the country's goods (GOK-poverty reduction strategy plan, 2001 – 2004)

Poverty in Africa is pre-dominantly rural, like Githunguri district in Kiambu Kenya. More than 70% of the continent's poor people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for food and livelihood and yet governmental developmental assistance to agriculture is decreasing. In Sub-Saharan Africa more than 218 million people live in extreme poverty. Among them are rural people in Eastern and Southern (GOK-poverty reduction strategy plan, 2001 – 2004). The incidence of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa is increasing faster than the population. Overall the pace of poverty reduction in most of African has slowed since the 1970's (Achoka, J.S. 2007).

Role of parents participation in child development

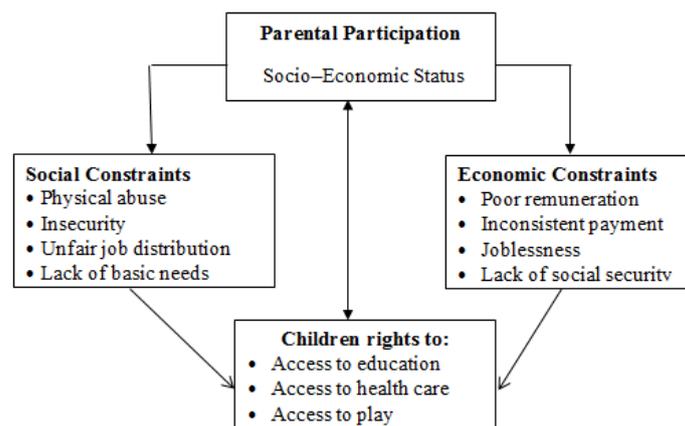
The role of parents in provision of basic needs in the early developmental years cannot be over-emphasized. Poor feeding habits in schools, poor health among children, poor relations between school and parent, create strained relations not only within the community but also brings about poor working relations in schools thereby affecting negatively development and efficient management of ECDE programmes (Achoka, J.S. 2007). Achoka continues and asserts that the major challenge for many Kenyans has been many parents and care-givers inability to augment government financial provision with inputs as stipulated in the policy of cost sharing in Early Childhood Education and Development in Kenya. Regrettably County Governments which has been mandated to run and oversee pre-school education in Kenya have not actualized this important function (GOK, 2010).

Importance of parents' participation in child development

Early childhood development programs are a necessary foundation for other programmes such as primary schooling or health care to be effective. They should be seen neither as a trade-off against, nor a mere complement to other development programmes. Early childhood services can serve as vehicles for extending primary health care, food security, and other development programmes (Chavez and Martinez, 1981). A key challenge, though, is to find effective ways to organize and finance ECDE programmes. The information about the cost per child of services is still lacking for developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, while there are various ways of financing early child development services, there is a lack of a systematic review on this topic. Given the limited existing resources in Sub-Saharan Africa, this means financing ECDE programmes have to be done either through efficient use of existing health infrastructure, nutrition, and basic education programmes and by mobilizing additional community resources (UNESCO, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

Figure There below explains how dependent variable (child right to education) is influenced by the independent variable (parent's participation). Social and economic constraints emanating from parental participation also impact on children's rights to education.



Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was;

To investigate relationship between parents' social-economic status and participation in development of Early Childhood Education and Development Programmes in Githunguri Kiambu, Kenya

Research Question

The research question of the study was;

What is the relationship between parent's socio-economic status and participation in development of Early Childhood Education and Development Programmes in Githunguri Kiambu, Kenya?

III. Methodology

The study employed qualitative methodology, where descriptive and explanative data was collected to give the respondents opinions on their perceived importance of parents' participation in the development of ECDE programmes in Githunguri district Kenya. Qualitative research is important in collating people's opinions, perceptions, attitudes or in cases where numerical data is not applicable (Creswell, J.2009). Survey research design was adopted for exploring parents with children at ECDE centers together with pre-school teachers felt about the state of parental participation in the development of ECDE programmes in Githunguri district Kiambu County Kenya.

Survey research design is recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003), as a suitable procedure for collecting data from members of a population to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. The researcher visited pre-schools and collected information from the teachers. She also visited parents in their homes or workplaces and got their information on ECDE programs. The study population comprised 1000 pre-school children aged 4-8 years, in 200 early childhood centers. The sample was made up 10 Pre-school teachers randomly sampled from 9 ECDE centres, to make 90 respondents, in addition to 10 parents randomly sampled for the study.

IV. Ethical Considerations

Due to the sensitivity of the study, the researcher obtained participant consent to participate the study through signing a consent contracts. Participants collaborated in the study voluntarily without influence or inducement. They were assured of confidentiality during the study process and that any benefits accruing would be used for the improvement and developments of ECDE programmes in Githunguri Kiambu Kenya. She also observed sensitivity of questioning techniques in order to avoid psychological injury to the respondents' ego by issues that touched on private lives.

V. Data Analysis

Data was described Data was analysed with the aid of computer software (SPSS V17.0) for data processing. Results were displayed through descriptions, explanations and categorizations.

Findings and Discussion

The study sought to investigate relationship between parents' social-economic status and participation in development of early childhood education and development programmes in Githunguri Kiambu, Kenya. When parental income was surveyed across the study location, it was found out that source of income for most parents was not adequate to support ECDE programmes in the district. Table 1 below shows parents source of income across the study location.

Table 1: Parents source of income across the study location

Type of employment	frequency	Percentage (%)
Employment	4	15
Peasant farming	7	30
Small scale business	3	12
Casual labour	11	43
TOTAL	25	100

Source: Field survey, (2013)

This shows that majority of parents of ECDE children in Githunguri comprised of people who depended on casual labour for their income. Therefore these parents' found it hard to support ECDE's programmes, because they used most of their working time looking for food, and other basic needs. Parents who had regular income like the employed group at 15% were a minority and may also not find time out of their workplace, to attend to ECDE activities.

VI. Conclusion

The study concluded that majority of parents from Githunguri district Kiambu Kenya do not take an active part in the development of ECDE programmes chiefly because they have little financial resources themselves, are unemployed and do not have any sustainable source of income, and for this reason most ECDE centres are not only underfunded but also lack important resources necessary for children learning activities in pre-schools.

Recommendations

The study recommended that; the county government of Kiambu urgently take over management and revamping of ECDE programmes in line with constitutional provisions (GOK, 2010). Parents also should be sensitized to play active role in ECDE programmes and activities so that they may not only be appraised on them, but also take significant part in decision making pertaining to education of their children and development of physical infrastructure in the schools.

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