

Factors influencing provision of early childhood education in Kenya: a case of Madiany Division

Abstract:

Education is a tool for empowerment and so it is important to ensure that every Kenyan acquires relevant and quality education. According to KESSP (2005), early childhood development and education intervention are significant to the social and economic development of a country as they provide children with a fairer and better start in life. There is also a high probability that these children who acquire ECDE will have improved school performance and cognitive abilities than those who do not attend early childhood care and development education. One of the major education challenges in Kenya is the provision of early childhood education. This is so because it has been left in the hands of the community, private providers and parents, resulting in a big variation in type and quality across the country. Moreover, the government fully funds free primary education, subsidized secondary and university education while allocating fairly small amount of money to the ECD sector, yet it is the foundation of learning. The purpose of this study was to establish factors influencing provision of early childhood education in Madiany division. The study was guided by specific research objectives and questions These included: examination of socio-economic challenges facing ECDE provision, establishing characteristics of ECDE centers, and exploring strategies that can be used in strengthening ECDE. This study was anchored on Sigmund Freud's Psycho-Analytic Theory which states that early childhood experiences play a major role in personality development and continue to influence behavior later in life. The emphasis is that early childhood is a critical and sensitive period in an individual's life and any experience one is exposed to has a permanent impact on a person's future life. The study adopted descriptive survey methodology with both qualitative and quantitative approaches to source and analyze data. The study used probability random sampling as well as purposive sampling procedure. Two sets of questionnaires and an interview schedule were administered to ECD teachers, parents and a DICECE officer respectively in order to elicit appropriate responses. The data obtained was analyzed, synthesized and presented using statistical packages for social sciences. This program enables variety of analysis giving rise to frequency distributions and percentages presented in tables. The analysis was done based on demographic attributes of respondents such as age, gender and academic backgrounds followed by thematic analysis. Findings revealed that socio economic factors undermined provision of ECDE services. Moreover, teacher, structural and operational characteristics of ECD centers equally contributed to low standards of ECD Education. The study established that the best strategy of improving ECDE is through collaborative partnerships among stakeholders. The study concluded that the government should support the sector through sound policy framework and budgetary allocations. The study recommended that the government should offer free ECDE services, professionalize the career by establishing training colleges for ECD teachers and collaborate with other stakeholders to provide holistic services to children. The study recommended the need to replicate this study to other parts of the country, focus on other tiers of education and establish factors which influence access and participation in the ECD sector.

