

Challenges Facing Early Childhood Development Education Centres in the Implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum in Mwingi West Sub-County, Kitui County.



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Abstract

The purpose of conducting this study was to investigate challenges encountered by early childhood development education centres while implementing competency based curriculum in Mwingi West Sub County. The research targeted ECDE centres, primary head teachers, board of management members, curriculum support officers and sub-county early childhood education officer (SubCECEO). The study had a sample of 50 ECDE centres, 50 primary head teachers, 100 ECDE teachers, 5 curriculum support officers, 6 board of management members and 1 subcounty early childhood education officer. To achieve the sample the researcher used simple random and expert sampling techniques. The tools used to gather information were questionnaires, observation guide and interview guide. Data were collected using questionnaires, interview guides and observation guide. Quantitative were analysed using Ms EXCEL and Statistical Package for Social Science version 21 and were presented using percentages and frequencies. Qualitative data were analysed using the qualitative techniques precisely, content analysis. From the findings, the majority of the ECDE centres are not well prepared to roll the competency-based curriculum. While qualitative data was thematized and presented in form of narratives. The findings highlighted the following challenges; inadequate teaching and learning resources, poor parental involvement, lack of enough support staff members. The researcher recommended that the government should provide teaching and learning materials for the competency based curriculum to be effectively implemented in ECDE centres.

Key terms: implementation, ECDE centres, Competency based curriculum

Introduction

Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) is a curriculum that has been formulated due to exponential growth and thirst to fabricate up a society that is knowledgeable and the need to expand regional and market competition (Ondimu,

2018). Competency based curriculum forms the foundation of a lifelong education and significantly influences the future of one's knowledge and skills. It is the initiation of one's educational endeavours. Competency Based Curriculum focuses on up learners' ability to apply knowledge and navigate through uncertainties. According to Moha (2012), competency based curriculum is one that elicits learning outcomes, the developed skills and knowledge. Thus, competency based curriculum is an involvement of a child's holistic development, which includes cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.

The most important developmental phase in the human lifespan is considered the earliest months and years of life. Therefore, the early years of life are considered as a golden opportunity to build a strong anchorage for a child's life (World Bank, 2010). Learners should thus be provided with the tools (teaching and learning resources) that will enable them to be creative, be accommodative and understandable. These tools are considered part and parcel of nurturing of respect for views and rights of others (American near East Refugee Aid, 2016). Thus, competency based curriculum is an essential cornerstone for entrepreneurs, investors, leaders and educators in the next generation.

According to Frame (2013), understanding the role of competency development and quality human power has led to improving the existing and planned education frameworks guiding the educational programmes and projects. Globally, there is growing demand for quality learning outcomes across all education levels. Due to that demand, countries across the world are improving and effecting implementation of competency based curriculum to enhance social-economic growth and political stability.

Statement of the Problem

The current situation with the implementation of Competency based curriculum in early childhood education centres is that teacher training ,preparation and recruitment is not adequate,(Kenya Union of Teachers (KNUT) ,2019).A study conducted by KNUT(2019) on teachers' preparedness in the implementation of competency based curriculum indicates that, ECDE centres lack relevant infrastructures for competency based curriculum, lack of instructional teaching and learning materials, training of the facilitators and public participation and involvement was below expectation. According to Njoki (2019) teachers are ill-prepared and lack proper skills to facilitate implementation of competency based curriculum in early childhood development education .However, in all these studies and reports, the focus has not been on the challenges facing early childhood development education centres in the implementation of competency based curriculum, which this article investigated. This study, therefore, assessed the challenges facing early childhood development education centres in the implementation of competency based curriculum in Mwingi West sub- County.

Research questions

This study was guided by the following research objectives:

- i. To investigate the perception of teachers on the challenges facing ECDE centres
- i. To investigate the perception of teachers on the challenges facing ECDE

- i. To investigate the perception of board of management members on the challenges facing ECDE

2.1. Literature Review

The literature presented focuses on the factors affecting implementation of competency based curriculum in ECDE centres.

Teaching and learning materials

Teaching and learning resources are materials that are crucial in facilitating teaching and learning process through teacher's guidance (Yadar, 2001). They form a major component which schools must prepare for effective implementation of any program. Lambert and Balder (2000), pointed out teaching and learning resources as any material that the facilitator employs to enhance understanding of content during teaching and learning process. The term resources refers not only to teaching methods and materials but also the time available for instruction, the knowledge and skills of teachers acquired through training and experience(Owoko,2010). Learners learn different concepts through interaction with different teaching and learning materials. Therefore, the current study gathered information to see how the ECDE centres are prepared to implement the new competency based curriculum. According to KICD (2018), the current curriculum advocates for use of different teaching and learning materials for example, audio-visual materials, aids like dolls and toys and other teaching aids like charts that can assist the child to learn and acquire new knowledge. A Facilitator is considered a very crucial resource in the implementation of competency based curriculum (Bitok, Chepsiror & Too, 2014). Instructional materials help learners to develop holistically leading to smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school. Young children are attracted to these instructional materials, hold interest and facilitate development of cognitive and non-cognitive competences (Onyango, 2014).

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Teachers' preparedness

Waweru (2018), asserts that teachers were not prepared to implement competency based curriculum due to lack of knowledge on how to implement the curriculum. The findings further showed that teachers had difficulty in planning the lessons since they had no guide books on how to plan for competency based curriculum. The researcher suggested that, the Ministry of education should come up with a framework consisting of the lesson plan for each lesson to ease facilitation of competency based curriculum.

Supervision by quality and standards officers

Awino (2014) conducted a study on impact of supervision on the implementation of early childhood education curriculum. The study was conducted in selected public pre-school in Lang'ata District. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of supervision on the implementation of the ECDE curriculum .Supervisory activities carried out lead to motivation of teachers and thus this leads to effective implementation of competency based curriculum.

Routine supervisions help learners the most as teachers ultimately end up doing the right thing and implementing the curriculum in the right manner as per ECDE guidelines. This study has shed light on the current study by highlighting the importance of supervision and the parties involved in order to effectively implement ECDE curriculum. However, this study focused on the public pre-schools only but the current study focused on both public and private pre-schools. The study looked into the roles played by the sub-county early childhood education officer, curriculum support officer and head teachers and how often they do their supervision to ensure effective implementation of ECDE as per ECDE guidelines. This study also focused on how sub-county early childhood education officer, curriculum support officers and head teachers are prepared to ensure effective implementation of the competency based curriculum.

Policy in ECDE to enhance implementation of CBC

Initially, there were no policies and guidelines underlying the provision of early childhood education in Kenya (Awino, 2014). This led to poor learning outcomes among ECDE teachers due to lack of policy and perceived lack of concern by the government. Today, there is policy document guiding early childhood development education. The policy document highlights a comprehensive framework that encompasses policies for early childhood services and programs for children from conception to age eight years (Kang'ethe, Jane & Karanja, 2015). According to Ayodi, Kirui and Kiriba (2016) both ECD teachers and managers understood and had confident about the existing ECD policy. The existing challenges facing the ECD policy implementation include; lack of clear mechanism to implement policy, lack of effective support in terms of fund and resources and appropriate training for teachers, proper community support to ensure effective implementation, use of a curriculum which is not appropriate and government support to ensure effective implementation of policy on ECD in the country as whole (Kang'ethe, Jane and Karanja, 2015; Ayodi, Kirui and Kiriba, 2016). The policy outlines what's expected of a teacher and the outcome of teaching and learning process.

Research design and Methodology

Research design

This study used convergent parallel mixed method design. This research design is a procedure in which a researcher collects both qualitative and quantitative data, analyzes concurrently and compares the findings to see if they complement or contradict each other. Thus, the study used a cross-sectional survey from a quantitative approach and a phenomenological design from the naturalistic approach to gather quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

Sample and Sample Size

The sample consisted of 50 ECDE centres, 50 primary head teachers, 100 ECDE teachers, 5 curriculum support officers, 6 board of management members and 1 subcounty early childhood education officer. Data collection tools used were questionnaires, interview guide and observation guide.

Data collection

The researcher administered the questionnaires to the participants. Prior to administering them the researcher explained the items in the questionnaire and requested participants not to write their names on them. The questionnaires were administered and collected the same day while interviews were done on a different day.

Discussion of Findings

Based on information gathered from the questionnaires, interview guides and the observation guides the following findings were established on the challenges facing ECDE centres in the implementation of competency based curriculum.

The Perception of Teachers on the Challenges Facing ECDE Centres.

The first research objective was to investigate the perception of teachers on the challenges facing ECDE centres. Data collected and analyzed is presented in Table 1` below

Table 1.
ECDE teachers' response on challenges facing ECDE centres

No.	Statement	SA	A	NS	D	SD
	ECDE teachers are adequate	9(9.7)	11(11.8)	0(0)	61 (65.6)	12(12.9)
	School facilities are adequate	15(16.2)	17 (18.2)	22 (23.7)	12(12.9)	27 (29)
	Board members are not trained to take up their roles well	50(53.8)	19 20.4	0(0)	20(21.5)	4 (4.3)
	ECDE support staffs are adequate	0(0)	14(15)	0 (0)	70(75.3)	9 (9.7)
	ECDE policies are well implemented	12(12.8)	10(10.8)	2(2.2)	59(63.4)	10(10.8)
	ECDE teaching and learning materials are adequate	8(8.6)	40(43.0)	6(6.5)	12(12.9)	27(29.0)
	Lack of support by parents	0(0)	52(55.9)	5 (5.4)	16(17.2)	20(21.5)
	In-service training has been conducted to implement CBC effectively	6 (6.5)	14(15.1)	5(5.3)	55(59.1)	13(14.0)

From the Table 1 of the study, 9(9.7%) strongly agree that ECDE teachers are adequate to implement the competency-based curriculum, 11(11.8%) agree that schools have enough ECDE teachers, 61(65.6 %) disagree that schools have enough teachers, and 12 (12.9%) strongly disagree that there are adequate teachers in schools. The analyzed findings indicate that 15(16.2) strongly agree that school facilities are adequate, 17(18.2%) agree that facilities are enough, 22(23.7%) are not sure whether the facilities are adequate, 12(12.9%) disagree school facilities are adequate and 27(29%) strongly disagree that school facilities are adequate for the implementation of CBC. The findings also indicate that 50(53.8%) of the participants strongly agree that board members are not trained to take up their roles, 19(20.4%) agree that board members are not trained, 20(21.5%) disagree and 4(4.3%) strongly disagree that board members are trained to take up their roles.

The findings show that 14(15%) agree that the support staff are adequate, 70(75.3%) disagree and 9(9.7%) strong disagree that support staff are adequate to facilitate the implementation of the competency-based curriculum.

The findings also indicate that, 12(12.8%) strongly agree that ECDE policies are well implemented, 10(10.8%) agree, 2 (2.2 %) are not sure that policies are well implemented, 59 (63.4 %) disagree the ECDE policies are being implemented well, 10(10.8%) strongly disagree that the ECDE policies are well implemented. This is an indicator that the policies for implementing the competency based curriculum in ECDE are not well implemented. The policies are a vision of the entire program if poorly implemented vision 2030 will not be a raw deal. On the other hand, Naudeau, Kataoka, Valerio, Neuman and Elder, (2011), these researchers assert that a national ECD policy represents a country's vision for young children. The framework articulates the visible goals, objectives and strategies needed to make this vision a reality.

As shown in Table 1, majority of the participants 40(43 %) agree that schools have teaching and learning resources, 27(29%) strongly disagree that schools have teaching and learning materials, 12(12.9%) disagree that teaching and learning materials are adequate, 8(8.6%) strongly agree that there are teaching and learning materials while 6(6.5%) are not sure whether the available materials can be used to roll the competency-based curriculum. This concurs with a report from KNUT (2019), which postulates that the current situation in most developing countries with the implementation of the competency-based curriculum is inadequate instructional materials and lack of infrastructure specifically for the implementation of the competency-based curriculum.

Table 1 shows that, 52(55.9%) of the participants agree that there is no support from parents, 5(5.4%) of the participants are not sure whether the parents support implementation of the competency-based curriculum in ECDE, 16(17.2%) disagree that there is no support from parents while 20(21.5%) strongly disagree that there is no support from parents. The findings also indicate that, 55(59.1%) disagree that in-service program was conducted, 14(15.1%) agree, 13(14%) strongly disagree that in-service was conducted, 6(6.5%) of the participants strongly agree that in-service was conducted and 5(5.3%) of participants are not sure whether it was conducted or not. These findings concur with Ondimu (2018) who stated that despite the schools having enough resources some of the teachers were not trained on how to implement Competency-Based Curriculum. In addition, they lacked skills on how to use technology to implement competency based curriculum. These findings are also cemented by sentiments from one of the curriculum support officer,

The workshops conducted so far are not adequate to implement the curriculum bearing in mind that the curriculum is more complex than 8-4-4 curriculum. Currently, parents cannot help learners with calculations like during 8-4-4 curriculum.

The Perception of Head Teachers on the Challenges Facing ECDE Centres.

The second research objective was to investigate the perception of head teachers on the challenges facing ECDE centres. Data collected and analyzed is presented in Table 2` below

Table 2
Head teachers' response on challenges facing ECDE centres



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Statement	SA	A	NS	DA	SD
ECDE teachers are adequate	4(8)	12(24)	0(0)	24(48)	10(20)
School facilities are adequate	12(24)	11(22)	0(0)	17(34)	10(20)
Board members are not properly trained to take up their duties	5 (10)	28(46)	0(0)	10 (20)	7 (14)
ECDE support staffs are adequate	5(10)	8(16)	4 (8)	24(48)	10 (20)
ECDE policies are well implemented	4 (8)	14(28)	1 (2)	19 (38)	12(24)
ECDE teaching and learning materials are adequate	6(12)	11(22)	4 (8)	27(54)	2(4)
Lack of support by parents	23(46)	20(40)	0(0)	5(10)	2(4)
In service training has been conducted to implement CBC effectively	2 (4)	7(14)	6(12)	19(38)	16 (32)

Table 2 shows that 4(8%) of head teachers strongly agree that ECDE teachers are adequate, 12(24%) of the head teachers agree that there are adequate teachers, 24(48%) disagree and 10(20%) strongly disagree that teachers are not adequate to implement the competency-based curriculum. The findings also indicate that 12(24%) of the head teacher strongly agree that school facilities are adequate, 11(22%) agree, 17(34%) disagree that the schools facilities are adequate and 10(20%) strongly disagree that school facilities are adequate to facilitate implementation of the competency-based curriculum. According to KENPRO (2014), many early childhood development centres lack adequate teaching and learning resources and facilities suitable for the proper functioning of early childhood development education centres.

Board members are properly trained to take up the task, 5(10%) of head teachers strongly agree, 28(46%) of the head teachers agree, 10(20%) of head teachers disagree and 7(14%) of head teachers strongly disagree with the statement. The findings further indicate that 5(10%) of the participants strongly agree that support staffs are adequate, 8(16%) of the participants agree, 4(8%) of the participants are not sure that the support staffs available are adequate, 24(48%) disagree and 10(20%) of the head teachers strongly disagree that ECDE support staffs are adequate.

The findings further demonstrated that 12(24%) strongly disagree that ECDE policies were well implemented, 19 (38%) disagree that the policies are well implemented, 1(2%) of the participants was not sure, 4(8%) agree that the policies are well implemented and 14(28%) of the head teachers strongly agree that the ECDE policies are well implemented. From table 4.5, majority of the head teachers 27(54%) disagree that schools have adequate teaching and learning resources, 11(22%) of the participants agree, 6(12%) of the participants strongly disagree, 4(8%) of the head teachers are not sure and 2(4%) strongly disagree that teaching and learning materials are adequate.

Parents are also key stakeholders in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum, the findings show that 23(46%) of the head teachers strongly agree that parents do not support CBC, 20(40%) of the head teachers agree that there is lack of support by parents, 5(10%) disagree that parents support CBC and 2(4%) strongly agree that parents support CBC. In-service training is needed to

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enhance skills during implementation of CBC, 2(4%) of the head teachers strongly agree that in-service training was conducted before implementation of CBC, 7(14%) of the head teachers agree in-service was conducted, 6(12%) are not sure that there was any in-service training conducted, 19(38%) of the head teachers disagree that in-service was conducted, and 16(32%) of the head teachers strongly disagree that in-service training was done to facilitate implementation of competency-based curriculum.

The Perception of Board of Management Members on the Challenges Facing ECDE Centres.

The third research objective was to investigate the perception of head teachers on the challenges facing ECDE centres. Data collected and analyzed is presented in Table 3` below

Table 3
BOM members' response on challenges facing ECDE centres

No. Statement	SA	A	NS	D	D
ECDE teachers are inadequate	116.7	4 (66.6)	0(0)	1(16.7)	0(0)
School facilities are adequate	0(0)	1(16.7)	0(0)	3(50)	S2(33.3)
Board members are not properly trained to do work well	2(33.3)	4 (66.7)	0(0)	- -	0(0)
ECDE support staffs are adequate	0(0)	1(16.7)	1(16.7)	1(16.7)	2 (50)
ECDE policies are well implemented	1(16.7)	1(16.7)	0(0)	2 (33.3)	1 (33.3)
ECDE teaching and learning materials are adequate	0(0)	2(33.3)	0(0)	3 (50)	1(16.7)
Lack of support by parents	3 (50)	3 (50)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Workshops/seminars have been organized to help implement CBC	0(0)	1(16.7)	0(0)	3(50)	2(33.3)

The results from Table 3 revealed that 1(16.7%) of participants strongly agree that ECDE teachers are inadequate, 4(66.6%) of participants agree that teachers are not enough to implement CBC and 1(16.7%) disagree that teachers are inadequate. As far as school facilities were concerned, 1(16.7%) agree that school facilities are adequate, 3(50 %) disagree that school facilities are adequate and 2(33.3%) strongly disagree that school facilities are adequate to implement the competency-based curriculum. The competency-based curriculum was introduced to embrace the development of competences through the self-exploratory approach. Adequate teaching and learning resources enable learners to acquire more knowledge and applicable skills. As pupils interact with teaching and learning resources, they learn classification skills which help them later in counting, matching, model the numbers and trace numbers. Waithaka (2005) observed that in Kenya, the pre-school curriculum developed by KICD has provision for learners to have adequate instructional resources to interact with. However, the findings of the study prove that instructional materials and facilities in ECDE centres are not adequate.

Parents' involvement in the implementation of the curriculum needs some training to inform of sensitization. Parents are the first teacher of a child. Parental involvement is mandatory in implementing the curriculum. Most of the participants 4(66.7 %) agree that the board of management members were not trained and

2(33.3%) strongly agree that board members were not trained. The findings revealed 1(16.7%) agree there is support from the support staff, 1(16.7%) of participants are not sure whether there is enough support staff, 1(16.7%) disagree that support staff members are adequate and 3(50%) strongly disagree that the support staff members available are adequate. The findings intermarry with observation made by Sang (2013). The researcher observed that; parents did not participate in the provision of education in pre-primary schools. Due to high poverty levels in the region parents are reluctant to take their children to schools. Basically, the parents never provided even for the school feeding program to retain learners in schools.

Every curriculum is governed by policies for it to be well implemented. The results from Table 3, shows that 1(16.7%) strongly agree that policies are well implemented, 1(16.7%) agree that policies are well implemented, 2(33.3%) disagree that the policies are well implemented and 2(33.3%) strongly disagree. The existing ECDE policy is facing a number of challenges ; lack of clear framework to implement policy, lack of effective support in terms of fund and resources and appropriate training for teachers, lack of community awareness on the implementation and negative attitude towards the policies governing the ECDE curriculum (Kang'ethe, Jane and Karanja, 2015; Ayodi, Kirui and Kiriba, 2016).

Further findings revealed that 2(33.3%) of participants teaching and learning resources are inadequate, 3(50%) disagree and 1(16.7%) strongly disagree that teaching and learning materials are adequate. The results show that (3(50%) and 3(50%) strongly agree and disagree respectively that there is lack of support from parents in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum. The finding in this study concurs with the findings of head teachers and ECDE teachers.

The finding indicates that 1(16.7%) agree that there are workshops that have been conducted, 3(50%) disagrees that seminars and workshops were conducted and lastly 2(33.3%) strongly disagrees that workshops have been conducted to enlighten parents on implementation of the competency based curriculum. On interviewing the sub-county early childhood education officer (SubCECEO) about the workshops and seminars conducted to create awareness, the response was,

The workshops were conducted but with bias. Teachers from private ECDE centres were not included in the workshop. The workshop was not conducted as agreed, trainers were supposed to train and invigilate ECDE teachers every day but instead, it was one day per week, which is a raw deal for the ECDE teachers.

On the challenges the following were major challenges, Lack of support from the parents, poor implementation of curriculum, teachers having not been in-serviced in order to cope with new curriculum, lack of funds, poor parental involvement, parents' negative attitude towards the program, unskilled personnel and lack of teaching and learning resources, poor management and low economy. Both teachers and head teachers had positive attitude towards ECDE implementation and were happy to be part of ECDE program, even though sometimes parents who do not cooperate and show support to the implementation of curriculum in ECDE program discourage them. There is also low feeling of the curriculum due to age factor. Teachers' outcry to The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to provide enough teaching and learning materials is fugitive. The government has not provided enough instructional materials and more so the textbooks. The available resources for competency based curriculum in book store are very expensive; due to

the poor state of most parents the schools still have inadequate resources.



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Conclusion and recommendations

The findings revealed that ECDE centres lack teaching and learning resources, teachers need to be exposed to more workshops and seminars on competency based curriculum.

The study recommended that the government and other stakeholders to provide ECDE centres with instructional teaching and learning materials.

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