

Exploring Devolution A Study of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) Service Delivery in Kilifi County

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Abstract

Since independence, Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) in Kenya has changed as the country aimed to provide quality basic education for children. But it is only with the advent of devolution that the ECDE sector has recorded significant gains. Pre-devolution, the ECDE enrolment rate was very low as compared to the recent statistics that indicate a 47% increase in the number of children who, since 2013, have access to ECDE facilities, according to a study commissioned by the Council of Governors. The above-mentioned gains can be attributed to the sharp scrutiny that the devolution process has been subjected to in the past four years. It is against this backdrop that CISP commissioned a research study specific to Kilifi County in an effort to measure gains and challenges thus far with the devolution of the ECDE function. This is part of a larger project entitled TAKE PART, co-funded by the European Commission and implemented by CISP in partnership with Tangaza University College and Pamoja Trust in Kilifi, Mombasa, Taita Taveta and Kajiado counties. The specific objectives for the study were: To compare the difference in quality of service between centralized government and devolved/county government structures; to determine, if any, specific gains made (success stories) on service delivery in Kilifi county; to establish best practices for future planning and service improvement; and to analyze and determine an evidence-based standpoint on the status of the devolution of ECDE in Kilifi county. The study relied on the data and information gathered from the field within Kilifi County. This included both primary and supplementary information obtained through interviews with county education officers, political leaders, teachers, parents and civil society representatives. Information on the general context or situation of the ECDE was sought through desk review. The findings indicate that Kilifi County has recorded great achievements in the ECDE sector. In particular, devolution has resulted in: increased enrollment of pupils in the ECDE centres, increased number of qualified ECDE teachers and caregivers recruited and employed, and increased number of constructed and equipped ECDE centres among others. Kilifi County has also gone a step farther in having a training centre for the ECDE teachers, fundamental in ensuring the trainers are well equipped to train the pupils. A school feeding program that ensures provision of milk to the pupils twice a week is also in place in a few cases and this has acted as an incentive to retain the learners in school. There is need for the county leadership in collaboration with the stakeholders within the early childhood education sector to consolidate the gains made so far as they strive to fully implement the ECDE programmes across the county. Based on the research, the following are the policy recommendations as a way of addressing the challenges unearthed by the study: a) Sensitization of the local administration together with parents to adhere to the ECDE entry age policy. To this end, the County's Department of Education, Youth Affairs & Sports through its

ECDE inspectors and supervisors must reinforce the national governments policy on ECDE entry age. b) Harmonization of the ECDE curriculum not only within the county, but also to be in line with the national ECDE Service Standard Guidelines relating to the ECDE programmes administered in the ECDE centres. c) Fast tracking the operationalization of the school-feeding programme since its full implementation will contribute not only to enhancing learning outcomes but also in the realization of absolute enrolment and retention of pupils in pre-primary schools. d) Increasing recruitment of ECDE teachers to address the existing shortage. e) Incorporating special needs education as a component of the teacher training in order to equip teachers with skills for early identification and referrals of pupils with special needs. f) Enactment of the ECDE Bill 2016. This will help with harmonization of the terms of service for ECDE teachers across all counties and most importantly standardize teacher's salary rates across counties. It is evident that the devolution of ECDE has led to far-reaching gains that will be fundamental in the development of the ECDE sector in country. One thing that is evident is that the ECDE sector in Kenya had not been given much attention in the past but with devolution, the county governments are making efforts to ensure that the sector takes shape and that the important foundational years of the child are well grounded. Both the National and the County governments need to make deliberate decisions to develop policy that will be geared towards the development of the ECDE sector in Kenya.

Key words: Exploring Devolution, Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE), Service Delivery, Kilifi County

Full text:

http://developmentofpeoples.org/uploads/analysis/analysisECDE_analysis_Kilifi_county.pdf