

Effectiveness of Public Participation Structures on Early Childhood Development Education Policy Implementation in Bomet County, Kenya

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Abstract

Public Participation structures play a critical role in Early Childhood Development Education Policy Implementation. Despite the importance of structures as domiciled in the law, public participation structures are yet to be fully actualized in the various levels of the government and specifically in ECD at county level. The purpose of this study sought to examine effectiveness of public participation structures on ECDE policy implementation in Bomet County, Kenya. The study is anchored by principal-agent theory and new public management theory. The study used mixed research design to explain interaction of study variables. The study targeted 1356 ECD teachers, 678 head teachers, 2034 Executive PTA and BOM and 12 County Education Officers who have been participating and managing past participation sessions. A sample size of 364 respondents was used. Data collection instruments included questionnaires and interviews. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which were presented in form of tables, frequencies, pie charts and narrations. Findings of the study indicate that ECDE public participation stakeholders are not fully represented in decision making and not involved in participation functions. Representative including special interest groups do not articulate issues affecting ECDE public policy implementation; representative views are not accepted and are not included in ECDE policy development and implementation. Public participation structures contributions are not reflected in final ECDE policy implementation plans. ECDE policy sessions need to be done in a conducive and secure place; participants of public participation need to be provided with facilitation for ECDE development policy implementation. Representative including special interest groups need to be given opportunity to articulate issues affecting ECDE development policy implementation and their views included in ECDE policy development and implementation. The study findings will be useful to the county government, ministry of education, policy makers and others stakeholders involved in ECD as it helps in getting better information on policy implementation when making decisions.

Index Terms: Public Participation, ECDE Policy; Policy Implementation; Structures; Effectiveness; Representation.

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I. Introduction

The concept of citizen involvement in Botswana can be traced to the pre-independence era where the community was seen as part of the decision making structures where the village leadership sought ideas and advice from locals prior to introducing policies and programs. Botswana has a strong tradition of participation and consultation at all levels of public life from the village to central government, and this, has strong roots from Tswana custom of holding 'town meetings' known as the Kgotla which still exists and is part of the local consultative network. The study by [1] call the attention of all stakeholders to critically address the challenges related to issues of access, equity, quality and relevance of ECDE programs. However, the private sector seems to have monopolized most of the ECDE centers compared to the government. Thus, the public education sector opportunities for ECDE are lacking, yet available data shows that at later formal education primary schools, public education caters for well over 90% of Kenya's school going age. In the devolved system of government, the County Government Act [2], the Public Finance Management Act [3], and the Urban Areas and Cities Act of 2011 [4] have called for public participation in drafting new legislation, determining budget priorities, ensuring that public-sector performance and expenditures are reviewed and submitting grievances. In addition, County governments have been tasked with ensuring that the public receives information for public participation, setting in place structures and mechanisms and guidelines for public participation, and also providing an annual report on citizen participation to the County Assembly. In Kenya, every county government has its own ECDE development policy. The County Government, like other state organs, is required by law to put into place regulatory frameworks, structures and mechanisms and provide for appropriate spaces for all persons to participate i.e. women and men of all ages, those with disability and in difficult to reach in marginalized areas. The researcher carried out observation with categorized note taking on three public forums to observe the proceedings of the public participation forums. Three out of five Sub-counties namely Bomet East, Bomet Central and Sotik will were purposely sampled. The study focused on public participation and policy implementation, and not factoring in factors like public participation structures, access to information and capacity building influence on policy implementation. Despite all the utilization of public participation as stated above in ECDE development policy implementation there are still gaps to be filled hence this study would bridge those gaps.

II. Materials and methods

The area of study was Bomet County. The county is in South Rift valley and borders Narok, Kisii and Kericho counties. Bomet has a population of 875,689 persons with a population density of 346 persons per square km as per the 2019 census report, out of this 434,287 are females, 441,379 males and 23 intersex persons and it is 1,630 km² in size. The study used mixed method research design. This design is most apt because it provides a complete and true picture of the population and phenomenon of the study. The study by [5] observed that descriptive research design offers a clarification as to how and why there is a relationship between various aspects of a phenomenon or a situation. Descriptive are most apt for the study since it's the best in information collection, response to questions, and can investigate and explain the underlying issues on various variables that lead to phenomenal behavior in question as well as describe and explain relationship between variables.

The people of Bomet County, entails Sotik, Konoin, Bomet Central, Bomet East and Chepalungu, sub counties. The study targeted 1356 ECD teachers, 678 head teachers, 2034 Executive PTA and BOM and 12 County Education Officers who have been participating and managing past participation sessions. The sample was drawn from ECDE teachers, ECDE head teachers, Executive BOM and PTA, County Education Officers from Bomet County who include County Assembly Education Committee as well as County Education Board members. The formula by [6] was used to calculate the sample sizes of this study were randomly selected.

Table 1.1: Sample Size

Respondents	Sample size	Percentage (%)
ECDE Teachers	118	33.2
ECDE Head teachers	58	16.6
Executive BOM and PTA	176	49.3
County Education Officers	12	0.9
Total	364	100

Source: Research Data (2023)

The questionnaire posed closed and open-ended questions with some sections having structured questions that are framed to address each thematic area and a table of questions aligned to each objective [7]. The questionnaire was filled by 118 ECDE Teachers, 58 ECDE Head Teachers, 176 Executive BOM and PTA members.

The use of a semi-structured interview guide was recommended for the study because it allows the interviewer to ask questions that directly relate to that specific context of the study, along with additional inquiries that explore research aims [8]. The interview guide was used for 12 County Education Officers who were key informal in the involvement of public participation on Early Childhood Development policy implementation. Use of at least two methods in data collection helps in complementarity thus bringing together the used methods. The interviews were used on County Education Officers from Bomet County. Data was analyzed descriptively and presented in form of tables and frequencies.

III. Findings and discussions

To examine the effectiveness of public participation structures on ECDE development policy implementation in Bomet County. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statements on public participation and the responses were rated on a 5 point likert scale ranging from; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The responses are presented in Table 4.6. The descriptive findings of the study on access to information on ECDE policy development and implementation were sought where the scores of strongly disagree and disagree represented a mean score of 0 to 2.5; the score of agree and strongly agree represented a mean score of 2.6 to 5.0.

Table 1.2: Public participation Structures on ECDE development policy implementation

Statement of Access to Information	1	2	3	4	5	Me an	Std. Dev
There is need for all to be involved in developing the agenda for discussion during ECDE policy session	57 (16.4 %)	57 (16.4 %)	3 (0.9 %)	113 (32.4 %)	118 (33.9 %)	3.47 99	1.49 818
Conducive environment facilitate effective participation on ECDE implementation policy	68 (19.5 %)	77 (22.2 %)	8 (2.3 %)	99 (28.4 %)	96 (27.6 %)	2.76 06	1.41 368
Lack of security affects public participation in our area	83 (23.8 %)	86 (24.7 %)	4 (1.1 %)	97 (27.9 %)	78 (22.5 %)	2.81 90	1.42 193
Participation on ECDE policy in Bomet County is usually done in a conducive and secure place	109 (31.3 %)	97 (27.9 %)	8 (2.3 %)	96 (27.6 %)	38 (10.9 %)	2.17 64	1.28 804
We are usually provided with facilitation in the implementation of ECDE Policy	97 (27.8 %)	98 (28.1 %)	7 (2.3 %)	88 (25.2 %)	58 (16.6 %)	2.16 34	1.42 161
Not involving all stakeholder is the biggest threat to ECDE policy implementation in Bomet County	97 (27.8 %)	90 (25.8 %)	7 (2.3 %)	116 (33.3 %)	38 (10.8 %)	3.49 14	1.33 989
ECDE Public participation structures are represented in decision making	136 (39.1 %)	117 (33.6 %)	9 (2.7 %)	29 (8.3 %)	57 (16.3 %)	2.26 44	1.44 014
ECDE Public participation structures are involved in participation functions	77 (22.1 %)	117 (33.6 %)	8 (2.3 %)	72 (20.6 %)	74 (21.4 %)	2.26 04	1.29 205
Representative articulate issues affecting ECDE public participation structures including special interest groups	108 (31.1 %)	97 (27.9 %)	9 (2.5 %)	77 (22.1 %)	57 (16.4 %)	2.28 18	1.42 331
Representative views are accepted and included in ECDE policy development and implementation	97 (27.9 %)	77 (22.1 %)	8 (2.3 %)	84 (24.1 %)	82 (23.6 %)	2.45 01	1.43 807
Public participation structures contributions are reflected in final ECDE policy implementation plans	90 (25.8 %)	136 (39.1 %)	8 (2.3 %)	57 (16.4 %)	57 (16.4 %)	2.53 74	1.45 886
Average						2.60 770 9	1.40 325 1

Source: Field Data (2023)

According to the findings in Table 1.2 majority of the respondents who were 118 representing 33.9% strongly agreed as well as 113 respondents representing 32.4% who agreed that there is need for all to be involved in developing the agenda for discussion during ECDE policy session. Respondents who were 57 representing 16.4% strongly disagreed as well as the same number of respondents disagreed that there is need for all to be involved in developing the agenda for discussion during ECDE policy session. The respondents who were 3 representing 0.9% were undecided.

Respondents who were 99 representing 28.4% agreed as well as 96 respondents representing 27.6% strongly agreed that Conducive environment facilitate effective participation on ECDE policy implementation. The respondents who were 77 representing 22.2% disagreed as well as 68 respondents representing 19.5% who strongly disagreed that Conducive environment facilitate effective participation on ECDE policy implementation. Respondents who were 8 representing 2.3% were undecided.

Lack of security affects public participation, this true according to 97 respondents representing 27.9% who agreed as well as 78 respondents representing 22.5% who strongly agreed. The respondents who were 86 representing 24.7% who disagreed as well as 83 respondents representing 23.8% who strongly disagreed that lack of security affects public participation in their area. The respondents who were 4 representing 1.1% were undecided.

Majority of the respondents who were 109 representing 31.3% strongly disagreed as well as 97 respondents representing 27.9% who disagreed that participation on ECDE policy in Bomet County was usually done in a conducive and secure place. The respondents who were 96 representing 27.6% agreed so do 38 respondents representing 10.9% who strongly agreed that participation on ECDE policy in Bomet County was usually done in a conducive and secure place. Respondents who were 8 representing 2.3% were undecided.

Respondents who were 98 representing 28.1% disagreed as well as 97 respondents representing 27.8% who strongly disagreed that they were usually provided with facilitation in the implementation of ECDE Policy. Respondents who were 88 representing 25.2% agreed as well as 58 respondents representing 16.6% who strongly agreed that they were usually provided with facilitation in the implementation of ECDE Policy while 7 respondents who represented 2.3% were undecided.

Majority of the respondents who were 116 representing 33.35 agreed as well as 38 respondents representing 10.8% who strongly agreed that not involving all stakeholders is the biggest threat to ECDE policy implementation in Bomet County. Respondents who were 97 representing 27.8% strongly disagreed as well as 90 respondents representing 25.8% who disagreed that not involving all stakeholders is the biggest threat to ECDE policy implementation in Bomet County. Respondents who were 7 representing 2.3% were undecided.

ECDE Public participation structures are represented in decision making; this is not true since majority of the respondents who were 136 representing 39.1% strongly disagreed as well as 117 respondents representing 33.6% who disagreed. The respondents who were 57 representing 16.3% strongly agreed as well as 29 respondents representing 8.3% who agree that ECDE Public participation structures are represented in decision making. Respondents who were 9 representing 2.7% were undecided.

Majority of the respondents who were 117 representing 33.6% disagreed as well as 77 respondents who represented 22.1% strongly disagreed that ECDE Public participation structures are involved in participation functions. Respondents who were 74 representing 21.4% strongly agreed as well as 72 respondents representing 20.6% agreed that ECDE Public participation structures are involved in participation functions. Respondents who were 8 representing 2.3% were undecided. Majority of the respondents who were 108 representing 31.1%

strongly disagreed as well as 97 respondents representing 27.9% who disagreed that representative articulate issue affecting ECDE public participation structures including special interest groups. Respondents who were 77 representing 22.1% agreed as well as 57 respondents representing 16.4% who strongly agreed that representative articulate issues affecting ECDE public participation structures including special interest groups. Respondents who were 9 representing 2.5% were undecided.

Representative views are accepted and included in ECDE policy development and implementation. This is not true since majority of the respondents who were 97 representing 27.9% strongly disagreed as well as 77 respondents representing 22.1% who disagreed. Respondents who were 84 representing 24.1% agreed as well as 82 respondents representing 23.6% who strongly agreed that representative views are accepted and included in ECDE policy development and implementation. Respondents who were 8 representing 2.3% were undecided.

Majority of the respondents who were 136 representing 39.1% disagreed as well as 90 respondents representing 25.8% who strongly disagreed that public participation structures contributions are reflected in final ECDE policy implementation plans. The respondents who were 57 representing 16.4% agreed and the same number of respondents strongly agreed that public participation structures contributions are reflected in final ECDE policy implementation plans. Respondents who were 8 representing 2.3% were undecided.

The findings according to Table 1.2 imply that there is need for all to be involved in developing the agenda for discussion during ECDE policy session since it had a mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 1.499. Conducive environment facilitate effective participation on ECDE policy implementation for it had a mean of 2.76 and a standard deviation of 1.413. Lack of security affects public participation since it had a mean of 2.82 and a standard 1.422. Participation on ECDE policy in Bomet County was not done in a conducive and secure place as depicted by a mean of 2.18 and a standard deviation of 1.288. Participants of public participation are not provided with facilitation in the implementation of ECDE Policy as shown by a mean of 2.16 and a standard deviation of 1.421. All stakeholder needs to be involved during ECDE policy implementation in Bomet County as reflected by a mean of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 1.34. ECDE Public participation structures are not represented in decision making since it had a mean of 2.26 and a standard deviation of 1.440. ECDE Public participation structures are not involved in participation functions for it had a mean of 2.26 and a standard deviation of 1.292. Representative including special interest groups do not articulate issues affecting ECDE public participation structures since it had a mean of 2.28 and a standard deviation of 1.423. Representative views are not accepted and are not included in ECDE policy development and implementation for it had a mean of 2.45 and a standard deviation of 1.438. Public participation structures contributions are not reflected in final ECDE policy implementation plans since it had a mean of 2.54 and a standard deviation of 1.45. The overall mean for the objective was 2.608 and a standard deviation of 1.403 which imply that public participation structures affect ECDE development policy implementation in Bomet County.

In response to the question about early childhood development policy implementation structured in their sub-county, County Education Officer of Sub County - SC4 stated the following:

“As an educationist all stakeholders including parents representative, board of management and other county

official are usually involved in the policy implementation. The leadership structure for ECDE policy implementation in my sub-county is well established in that I chair all the sessions and the school head-teacher is the Secretary. All the parents who have their children in the ECDE centre attend all the meetings and their suggestions used in the reviewing the policy.”

County Education Officer of Sub County – SC9 stated that “*County Education Board (CEB) regulates the activities undertaken in the ECD centres. And that most of the centres do not have their own management structures in place; hence they rely on primary schools management committees for their day-to-day activity support.*”

The findings indicated that there was need for all to be involved in developing the agenda for discussion during ECDE policy session. This findings concurs with [9] who noted that schools and communities should be involved in public participation the process which should be done in a conducive environments and allow access for all. The study found out that conducive environment affects the way participation and ECDE policy implementation. The study also found out that lack of Security affects public participation and that participation on ECDE policy in Bomet County was not done in a conducive and secure place. This study finding concurs with [10] who established that the learning environment should create an environment that does not pose challenges which must include security interventions. Thus alludes to the findings of the study that conducive and secure environment need to be provided for smooth implementation of ECDE policy implementation and development

The study established that participants of public participation are not provided with facilitation in the implementation of ECDE Policy that and all stakeholder needs to be involved during ECDE policy implementation in Bomet County. The study findings concur with [11] who noted that ECDE policy formulation faces challenges related to the funding, policy formulation, low participation rates of target age groups in that lack of funding and implementation initiatives complicates the implementation of ECDE policy.

The study found out that ECDE public participation structures are not represented in decision making and that ECDE Public participation structures were not involved in participation functions. This is contrary to the findings by [1] who noted that all stakeholders to critically address the challenges related to issues of access, equity, quality and relevance of ECDE programs, hence the need for all to be involved including special interest groups who are required to articulate issues affecting ECDE public participation structures and their views included in ECDE policy development and implementation.

The study found that public participation structures contributions are not reflected in final ECDE policy implementation plans. This shows that public participation structures affect ECDE development policy implementation in Bomet County. The findings concurs with [12] in his study done in Emuhaya District, Kenya on factors influencing implementation of ECDE who noted that ECDE facilities and learning resources play a key role in the preparation of learning environment and play materials in ECDE centres to ensure all stakeholders relationship is achieved. The findings also concurs with [13] findings of a study done in Thogoto and Karai Zone in Kikuyu Division, Kikuyu County, Kenya, who established that pre-school education physical

facilities, teaching learning resources as the major factors influencing implementation of pre-school education.

The study concurs with [14], in his article “Early Childhood for all; the Economic Impacts of Child Care and Early Education”, says that in the time of scarce resources, the care and education of young children will continue to fall to the bottom of the priority list until there is a shift in the public about the economics of raising the next generation. He asserts that quality of education for early childhood is too vital to be brushed aside as a social service, too expensive to consider in tight budgetary times. Investments in quality childcare and early childhood education do more than pay significant returns to our future citizens and they benefit taxpayer and enhance economic vitality. The study findings agrees with [15] , there is a threshold level of funding below which implementing institutions (for example, governmental agencies) will not be able to achieve the implementation goals they were allocated.

The findings concurs with [16] delays in disbursing funds to support ECD schools” education have frustrated many teachers; put pressure on parents financial burdens. Many heads of both primary and secondary schools have complained that there are delays in disbursing the funds that each public school should receive. Suppliers are not being paid for their services. Some primary and secondary schools had to be closed indefinitely since they cannot sustain themselves. The study agrees with [17] who argues that the value for money in construction and maintenance of initiated ECD programmes allows a greater emphasis to be put on how infrastructure supports other educational inputs, how buildings are used and maintained, where resources are targeted and what added value can be incorporated into the construction process.

The study therefore concludes that the question: “How does the public participation structures towards ECDE policy implementation in Bomet County?” showed that there exists a significant positive relationship between public participation structure and ECDE development policy implementation $\beta = 0.563$ and that results were statistically significant since p was 0.000 which was less than 0.05. Hence public participation structures affects ECDE policy implementation.

IV. Conclusion

The study concludes that all stakeholders need to be involved in developing the agenda for discussion during ECDE policy session; environment affects the way participation and ECDE policy implementation relates to each other; insecurity affects public participation; participation on ECDE policy was not done in a conducive and secure place; participants of public participation are not provided with facilitation in the implementation of ECDE Policy. ECDE public participation structures are not represented in decision making and not involved in participation functions. Representative including special interest groups do not articulate issues affecting ECDE public participation structures; representative views are not accepted and are not included in ECDE policy development and implementation. Public participation structures contributions are not reflected in final ECDE policy implementation plans.

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