

Abstract

The kind of early care received from parents, pre-school teachers, and caregivers, determines how well a child learns and performs throughout his/her entire life. Despite its importance, Kenya does not have a national framework of providing Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) services in the country. The provision of ECDE is regulated by scattered legislations without a clear policy. The recent policy direction by the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) that the Ministry of Education (MoE) integrates the four to five year-old children into primary education leaves a gap as there are no specified mechanisms for coordinating ECDE programmes for children under three years of age whose care is entrusted to several government ministries and departments among other stakeholders. Using a United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) framework of analyzing policy issues in ECDE, this study uses secondary data to analyze policy gaps in ECDE services in Kenya. It also highlights challenges facing the education sub-sector and makes recommendations based on relevant international experiences. The study found out that despite the existing government efforts, ECDE has not been given enough attention at the policy level to enable it provide all children with the necessary readiness for formal education. In addition to creating a networking mechanism, the study recommends that policy implementation should be research based so as to address access, quality, and equity issues. Awareness should be intensified on the importance of early intervention and allocate adequate resources to support public as well as private initiatives.