

Kenya: Policy shot in the arm for early childhood education [KE]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

With the launch of the much awaited Early Childhood Development Education policy by Vice-President Moody Awori, there is now a ray of hope in this part of the education sector, which has been neglected for too long.

The policy framework has explicitly defined the role of parents, communities, various government ministries and departments and development partners in provision of ECD services.

It also sets the required standards on establishment, registration, management and supervision. According to the policy document, ECD covers the period from conception to eight years.

The document states that children between three and five years will be admitted to ECD Centres. Those aged six, seven and eight years will be enrolled in Standard one, two and three. They will form the lower primary section.

All ECD centres, day-care centres, children's home and private ECD colleges must be registered.

There will be no registration of boarding ECD centres for children for children eight years and below, except children's homes and special needs schools.

Existing primary schools wishing to incorporate ECD education in their institutions will be re-registered.

The document states that minimum acreage for ECD centres shall be 0.125 of an acre and 0.25-acre for urban areas and rural areas with high density, respectively. For rural areas with low density the recommended minimum acreage shall be 0.5 acre.

In urban slums, the acreage could be less than 0.125 provided basic conditions of sanitation and health are met. All ECD centres shall be required to provide standard sizes classrooms measuring 8 x 6 metres and accommodating a maximum of 25 children. Toilets shall be at a ratio of 1:25. All ECD centres shall be required to provide safe drinking water as well as play and learning equipment.

ECD centres are required to provide children with a snack during break time and a balanced diet lunch. All cooks and food handlers must have valid medical certificates and shall be required to cover their hair and put on uniforms.

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All ECD teachers who must be above 18 years and possessing at least a certificate in ECD should be registered by the Teachers Service Commission.

The teachers are required to be persons of sound mind and must have valid medical records renewable annually. They are also required to possess certificate of good conduct and should not have criminal record.

Untrained ECD teachers, who should have undergone five - weeks ECD short - course, should only act as teacher assistants. The Government shall undertake to remunerate two teachers in every public ECD centre.

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Learning in ECD centres should be activity based and should be through play. No subjects should be taught. The language of the catchment area (mother tongue) shall be used in all centres for communication and instruction. Children will gradually be introduced to English and Kiswahili.

A National Council for Children's Service will be put in place. It will appoint a National Committee to co-ordinate all ECD activities.

- reprinted from AllAfrica.com

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