Title: Enrollment and retention of children aged 3-5 years in public pre-schools in Eldama Ravine Division, Koibatek District, Baringo County

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Abstract

The overall goal of the Ministry of Education is to provide equal access to education for all the children irrespective of their socio economic status. This is in accordance with the government’s commitment to achieving Education for All by 2015. Despite the introduction of Community Support Grants, poor access and low retention rates are observed in preschool education in Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) regions, many rural areas, urban informal settlements and other low potential areas. Although various studies have been carried out on preschool education, it is still not clearly understood why some children drop out of school or are not enrolled at all even after the initiation of the Community Support Grants in Eldama-Ravine Division Koibatek District. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence enrolment and retention of children aged 3-5 years in public preschools in Eldama Ravine Division, Koibatek District, Baringo County. The objectives of this study were to explore the public preschools enrolment and retention trends and to establish the factors that influence enrolment and retention of children in public preschools. A descriptive survey design was used in the study. The target population was the teachers and parents of 40 public preschools. Out of the 40 preschools, 12 of them were studied. A total of 54 respondents including 36 teachers and 18 parents were sampled for the study. The data was collected using questionnaires for the teachers and Focus Group Discussion for the parents. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. The collected data was analyzed by use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results were presented using frequency tables and percentages. The study found that enrolment and retention rates in public preschools in Eldama Ravine Division Koibatek District declined and that the dropout rate increased. The problem of low enrolment and retention affects girls more than boys. The most predominant causes of
declining rates of enrolment and retention of children in public preschools in the division are socio-economic, socio-cultural, school-based and environmental factors that can cause a threat to achievement of Education For All which calls for attention from all stakeholders. It was recommended that there is need for the government to initiate School Feeding Programmes in public preschools in order to enhance enrolment and retention and introduce Free Preschool Education so that dropout rates can reduce.