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Influence of Teachers' Instructional Skills on Academic Performance of Refugees Children in Public Primary Schools in Ruiru Sub County

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Abstract

The purpose for this study was to determine the influence of teachers' instructional skills on academic performance of refugees' children in public primary schools in Ruiru Sub County. The study used exploratory research design. There are thirty (30) public primary schools with refugee children in Ruiru Sub County. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 28 public primary schools. The target population for this study was 536 teachers and 30 head teachers. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 221 teachers while purpose sampling was used to select 28 head teachers. Result findings showed that teachers' instructional skills influence the academic performance of refugee children. Based on research finding it can be concluded that that teachers' instructional skills influences academic performance of refugees' children in public primary schools in Ruiru Sub County. It is further recommended that training through seminars and workshop be introduced for both teachers and head teachers. These training should include skills on how to manage, handle and care for refugee children.

Key words: *Teachers' instructional skills, academic performance, refugees' children, public primary schools, Ruiru Sub County*

1.0 Introduction

Education for refugee children is a basic right, one that is vital in restoring hope and dignity to people driven from their countries or homelands because of civil wars, epidemics and natural disasters. It helps them to get back on their feet and build back a better future when they are repatriated (Kabui, 2016). The future security of individuals and societies is connected to the transferable skills, knowledge and capacities that are developed through education (UNHCR, 2012).

Inadequate humanitarian assistance and educational opportunities in refugee camps results to increased numbers of refugees leaving the camps and settling in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city. By moving to the city, these refugees hope to improve their livelihoods and find alternative educational settings where their children can have more access and improved quality education. Indeed, the refugees view education as a source of integration an avenue to rebuilding their dignity (Dryden-Peterson, 2004).

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have (UNESCO, 2001). Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, socio-behavioural support resource use and partnerships with their communities (Salamanca Framework for Action, 1994).

Instructional practices have been proposed based on successful research projects and from observations of successful teachers to influence academic performance (Lemov, 2010). Educators struggle with the problem of overcoming the inertia of instructional practices in the traditional classroom (Trimble, 2003). Pupils are typically not provided with whole, dynamic learning experiences, but rather with limited, arbitrary activities. Schools frequently teach information from the various disciplines without providing adequate contextual support with opportunities for students to apply what they are taught to the current status of their lives. The development of teachers' instructional skills enables teachers to protect refugee children in the school system by sensitizing them regarding the needs of the refugee children (Dryden-Peterson, 2011).

Tutors instructed to teach refugee children are expected to have acquired instructional skills to aid in guiding and counselling of children with diverse needs; promoting personality development, social, mental and physiological characteristics to primary school pupils; assessing children's progress in terms of behaviour and academic performance (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2015). For instance, The Sudanese refugee children in Nairobi, Kenya, face xenophobia, discriminative practices and policies, which limit their chances of admission into public elementary schools in the city (Karanja, 2010). These negative experiences, harassment, bullying and name calling act as salient stressors for refugee children to perform in schools because of psychological instability by affecting children's self-perception, motivation, and academic performance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ruiru Sub County is an area that has continuously been a home for refugees especially from Sudan. The challenge of acquiring quality basic education for the refugee children is problematic due to lack of inclusive educational opportunities for these children (Thuo, 2014). These children are also vulnerable to marginalization and discrimination.

Because of this, refugee children face varied learning difficulties that results to educational underperformance. In order to address these problems, governments and other international organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF emphasizes on the right to and the benefits of education for refugee children through inclusion criteria (UNESCO, 2001).

In the process of providing these educational needs to refugee children, educational performance is undermined by insufficient instructional skills from tutors to mentor and counsel refugee children. The schools are also characterized by bullying; racial, ethnic, marginalization and tribal prejudice (Karanja, 2010). Because of these problems, pupils within these schools feel excluded and separated a situation that undermines their full concentration in class. The outcome is poor academic performance among these pupils.

1.3 Research Objectives

To determine the influence of teachers' instructional skills on academic performance of refugees children in public primary schools in Ruiru Sub County

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Teachers' Instructional Skills and Academic Performance

Mendenhal *et al.* (2015) observes that teachers are a central dimension of the policies and practices aimed at providing quality education for refugees. The focus on teachers is not unique to refugee contexts, but it does reflect broad trends in educational development. Within the policy realm, conceptualizations of the teachers of refugees have shifted dramatically over the past several years. The current UNHCR Education Strategy, in effect from 2012 to 2016, takes a different view of teachers, one that focuses on their instructional role and the kind of training they need in order to be effective in student learning processes (UNHCR 2012).

As noted in this UN strategy, teachers matter more than any other single factor to learning and to the on-going, formative assessment that is critical to improving learners' achievement. The Minimum Standards for Education, first developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE 2010) in 2004, provide a robust technical framework for the field of education in conflict and the subfield of refugee education. The INEE states that teachers will be competent and well trained and knowledgeable in the subject matter and pedagogy (UNESCO, 2014).

Njeri (2015) conducted a study to investigate the instructional factors influencing inclusive education for Refugees pupils in Public Primary Schools within Dagoretti Sub County Nairobi. The researcher used survey design. The findings indicated all teachers needed to develop instructional skills to effectively teach and handle refugee pupils.

Eze (2011) conducted a study to examine the relationship between instructional skills on student performance: student achievement in mathematics and student behaviour. Data was collected from ten schools and a total sample of 51 teachers participated in the survey. Findings showed that administrators' post observation conferences with teachers about the use of instruction strategy designed to include differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, and teaching for higher order thinking skills had the most significant relationship with student achievement.

Mumo and Kiboss (2015) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between instructional supervisory skills used by Head teachers and students’ academic performance in KCSE in Machakos County. The research adopted a correlation study research design of the ex-post facto Findings on the relationship between supervisory skills and students’ academic performance revealed that there was a significant relationship between supervisory skills used by Head teachers and students’ academic performance.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the social model of inclusive education. In this model, the problem that hinders inclusive education is located within the education system. Among the principles of social model are; collaboration between all stakeholders to develop strategy from birth throughout life, collaboration between all forms of education i.e. formal, non-formal and alternative, listen to and involve all learners and marginalized in planning and implementing, make environment accessible, safe and welcoming, develop and implement policy to respond to diversity and combat discrimination. Therefore, the society needs to change in order to adjust to the diverse needs of learners. The education requires reform and restructuring of the school as a whole with the aim of ensuring that all pupils can have access to the whole range of educational and social opportunities offered by the school. It therefore calls for the removal of obstacles to the participation of learners and in changing institutions, regulations and attitudes that create and maintain exclusion (Campbell & Oliver, 1996).

The education system in Ruiru Sub County needs to be reviewed in order to incorporate all refugees’ learners inclusively. This model encourages teachers to use ‘curriculum differentiation’ to modify content, activities and assessments in order to respond more flexibly to the diverse needs of all learners. This theory is therefore relevant to this study since it outlines the practices in the attainment of inclusive education in a society where some groups of persons are marginalized.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

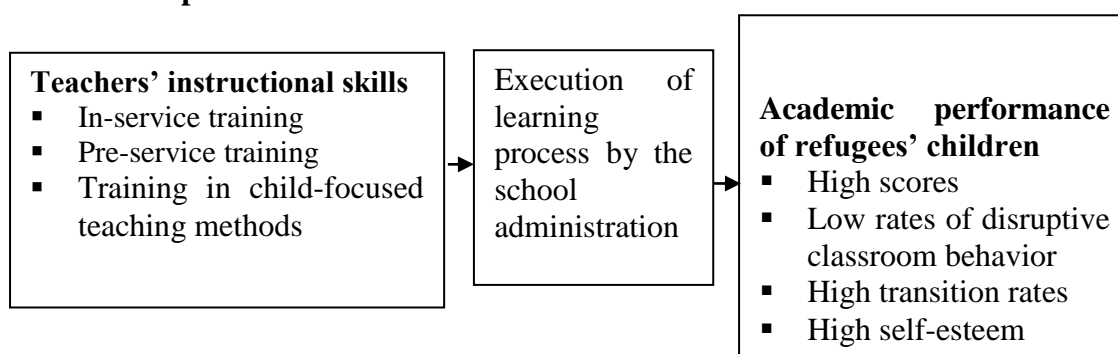


Figure 1: Relationship between Teachers’ Instructional Skills and Academic Performance

3.0 Research Methodology

The study used exploratory research design. The target population for this study was 536 teachers and 30 head teachers (Ruiru sub Sub County Education Office, 2016). To select teachers’ sample size simple random sampling was used. A sample size of 221 teachers was chosen. Simple random sampling technique was also used to select a sample size of 28 head teachers.

Primary data were collected through the use of semi structured questionnaires and interview guide. Validity and reliability test were conducted to ensure that research instruments are adequate and reliable. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researchers evaluated, analyze and interpret the data. Quantitative data collected by use of questionnaires were presented in frequency tables. Chi square was used to check on the relationship between the variables. Qualitative data collected by use of interview guide was analyzed qualitatively through content analysis and presented in prose form.

4.0 Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

4.1 Instruments' Response Rate

The return rate provides a profile of respondents who participated in the study. The respondents of the study were Board of management members and principals. Response rate for the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents category	Administered	Returned	Unreturned	Percentage returned
Teachers	221	161	60	72.9
Head teachers	28	25	3	89.3

The response rate for teachers was 72.9% while that for head teachers was 89.3%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003); Kothari (2004) a response rate of above 50 percent is adequate for a descriptive study. Based on these assertions from renowned scholars, a response rate of 72.9% for teachers and a response rate of 89.3% for head teachers were very good for the study.

4.2 Teachers' Instructional Skills and Academic Performance of Refugee Children

The study sought to establish the influence of teachers' instructional skills on the performance of refugee children. Tutors instructed to teach refugee children are expected to have acquired instructional skills to aid in guiding and counselling of children with diverse needs. Results of the study are presented in Table 2. The respondents were further asked to respond on whether teachers' instructional skills influenced academic performance of refugees' children. Tutors instructed to teach refugee children are expected to have acquired instructional skills to aid in guiding and counselling of children with diverse needs. The responses were rated on a five Likert scale and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers’ instructional skills and performance of refugee children

Teachers instructional skills	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
Relevant instructional materials can help handle refugee pupils	10.6%	9.3%	7.5%	31.7%	41.0%	3.8	1.3
Teachers’ pedagogical skills matters in developing refugee pupil	9.9%	8.7%	11.8%	27.3%	42.2%	3.8	1.3
I believe training teachers on how to handle refugee pupils can help improve their performance	8.7%	10.6%	6.8%	35.4%	38.5%	3.8	1.3
Applying different methods of teaching can help refugee pupils perform better in class	3.7%	9.9%	3.7%	37.3%	45.3%	4.1	1.1
In service training can help in building mentorship skills	5.6%	6.8%	6.8%	39.1%	41.6%	4.0	1.1
Average						3.9	1.2

Results in Table 2 revealed that majority of the teachers who were 72.7percent agreed that relevant instructional materials can help handle refugee pupils. The results also showed that majority of the teachers 69.5 percent agreed that teachers’ pedagogical skills matters in developing refugee pupil. The results also showed that majority of the teachers who were 73.9 percent of the respondents agreed that training teachers on how to handle refugee pupils can help improve their performance. The results also show that 82.6 percent of the teachers agreed that the applying different methods of teaching can help refugee pupils perform better in class. Results also showed that 80.6 percent of the teachers agreed that in-service training can help in building mentorship skills.

On a five point scale, the average mean of the responses was 3.9 which means that majority of the teachers were agreeing to the statements in the questionnaire. The standard deviation was 1.2 meaning that the responses were clustered around the mean response. The results agree with that of Bigelow (2010) that there is limited professional training and support provided to secondary school teachers to meet the academic, psychosocial and social emotional needs of refugee secondary school students. The INEE states that teachers will be

competent and well trained and knowledgeable in the subject matter and pedagogy (UNESCO, 2014). The study agrees also with that of Njeri (2015) that all teachers needed to develop instructional skills to effectively teach and handle refugee pupils. The results also agree with that of Eze (2011) that showed that administrators’ post observation conferences with teachers about the use of instruction strategy designed to include differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, and teaching for higher order thinking skills had the most significant relationship with student achievement. Mumo and Kibos (2015) agreed that the relationship between supervisory skills and students’ academic performance showed a significant relationship between supervisory skills used by Head teachers and students’ academic performance.

Further, a cross tabulation table of teachers’ instructional skills and academic performance of refugee children was presented. Teachers’ instructional skills were categorized into poor and better instructional skills. This was tabulated against academic performance that was categorized into high academic performance and low academic performance. Table 3 shows how academic performance was evaluated against teachers’ instructional skills.

Table 3: Cross tabulation of instructional skills and academic performance

Instructional skills	Academic performance		Chi-square (p value)
	Low academic performance	High academic performance	
Poor instructional skills	109	1	138.648(0.000)
Better instructional skills	4	47	

Schools where teachers’ instructional skills were poor lead to poor academic performance than those schools with better teachers’ instructional skills. Result findings indicated that, academic performance was low when teachers’ instructional skills were rated low by 109 teachers as compared to 4 teachers who rated it better. Further, academic performance was high when teachers’ instructional skills were rated better by 47 teachers as compared to only 1 teacher who rated it poor. The study findings were statistically significant supported by a chi square of ($\lambda=138.648, p=0.000$).

During an interview session with head teachers regarding training, the head teachers agreed that it was necessary to train teachers/head teachers on how to handle refugee children. This will ensure that teachers and head teachers will be gain new instructional and pedagogical skills to handle refugee pupils.

5.0 Conclusions

It is also concluded that teachers’ instructional skills influences academic performance of refugees’ children in public primary schools in Ruiru Sub County. The development of teachers’ instructional skills enables teachers to protect refugee children in the school system by sensitizing them regarding the needs of the refugee children.

6.0 Recommendations

Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) need to organize training programmes through seminars and workshop for both teachers and head teachers. These training should include skills on how to manage, handle and care for refugee children. The development of teachers’ instructional skills will enable teachers to protect refugee children in the school system by sensitizing them regarding the needs of the refugee children.

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