

Journal of Education



Stratford
Peer Reviewed Journals & books

Influence of Inclusive Curriculum Development on Academic Performance of Refugees Children in Public Primary Schools in Ruiru Sub County

Kago Agnes Njoki, Dr. Grace Nyagah & Dr. Rosemary Imonje

Influence of Inclusive Curriculum Development on Academic Performance of Refugees Children in Public Primary Schools in Ruiru Sub County

^{1*}Kago Agnes Njoki, ²Dr. Grace Nyagah and ³Dr. Rosemary Imonje

¹Postgraduate Student, University of Nairobi

²Senior Lecturer
Department of Educational Administration and Planning
University of Nairobi

³Lecturer
Department of Educational Administration and Planning
University of Nairobi

*Corresponding email address: agnes.njoki59@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose for this study was to establish influence of inclusive curriculum development on academic performance of refugee 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. The findings showed that inclusive curriculum development influence the academic performance of refugee children. Based on research findings, it can be concluded that that inclusive curriculum development influences academic performance of refugees' children in public primary schools in Ruiru Sub County. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is recommended to include conflict resolution studies in the curriculum. An appropriate curriculum emphasizes deeper understanding student thinking and development of cognitive skills. This will ensure that the refugee children are healed and get integrated to the home place and to the current society.

Key words: *curriculum development, academic performance, refugee children, 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).

The curriculum to be adopted for the refugees' programmes should be the curriculum of the country of origin (Tawil, Harley & Braslavsky, 2004). An appropriate curriculum emphasizes deeper understanding student thinking and development of cognitive skills. This is not always the case and so is bound to affect academic performance of the refugee children.

In order to achieve positive outcomes in refugee education the education system must inculcate inclusive education practices. Inclusive education in the context of refugee education implies a radical reform of the school in terms of curriculum, assessment, instructional development and grouping of pupils. It is based on a value system that welcomes and celebrates diversity arising from gender, nationality, race, language of origin, social background and level of educational achievement for disabled (Mitler, 2000). Inclusive education by definition from United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA, 2013) is a right-based approach to education, one which appreciates the diversity of all learners and caters for their needs placing particular emphasis on the needs of children vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. From a data set selected from five schools that include Mwiki, Gitothua, Githunguri Ranching, Kimbo and Matopeni of Ruiru Sub County the number of refugee pupils enrolled was 309 (County Education office, 2016).

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 (Thu, 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 inappropriate curriculum that do not suit the needs of refugee child. 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. Poorly developed curricula for refugee children have been characterized in most public primary schools in Ruiru Sub County. This undermines the initiative to fully absorb the refugee children into the school system.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To examine the influence of inclusive curriculum development on academic performance of refugees children in public primary schools in Ruiru Sub County

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Inclusive Curriculum Development and Academic Performance

A study by UNHCR (2012) observed that the nature of the refugee education context in Kenya requires support from the ministry of education (MoE) to establish a more sustainable and strengthened approach to education that can address the challenges facing the sector and bring benefits to the national system. Curriculum is often a difficult and contentious undertaking as it is a process of defining and selecting legitimate knowledge (Tawil & Harley, 2004). Curriculum involves the teaching and learning that take place once children are enrolled in and in attendance at school.

As stated in INEE Guidance Notes on Teaching and Learning in times of emergencies never take place in a vacuum and there are reasons to make context specific. It recommends curriculum choices including following a curriculum from a country of origin from a host country and enriching the curriculum with specific priority areas such as life skills or peace education (INEE, 2010). The content that is included in the curricula shapes what children know and how they think about themselves, anticipating for a better future both for themselves and their society.

Kirk (2009) suggested three approaches to what curriculum should be used for the formal schooling of refugee children and youth. In the first approach, the home-country curriculum can be carried over for use in the refugee context; in the second approach, the curriculum of the host-country can be adopted and children can be educated in either separate schools or integrated into the host-country education system. Finally, the third approach called hybrid curriculum, typically addresses language problem between the home and host country and this approach may contain elements of both countries' curricula.

Mwangi (2014) conducted a study to investigate the school factors influencing refugee children access to primary education within Kasarani district, Nairobi, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Results of the study showed that curriculum development affected educational outcomes of refugee children.

Tawil, (2004) curriculum is often a difficult and contentious undertaking as it is a process of defining and selecting legitimate knowledge. Curriculum involves the teaching and learning that take place once children are enrolled in and in attendance at school. The majority (77%) of the refugee children indicated that they had to start all over again the education. 85.8% of the respondents indicated that the schools they attend didn't recognize the progress they had attained in their country of origin. The study further established that the majority (71.7%) of respondents indicated that there were some differences in the Kenyan education system as compared to that of their country.

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

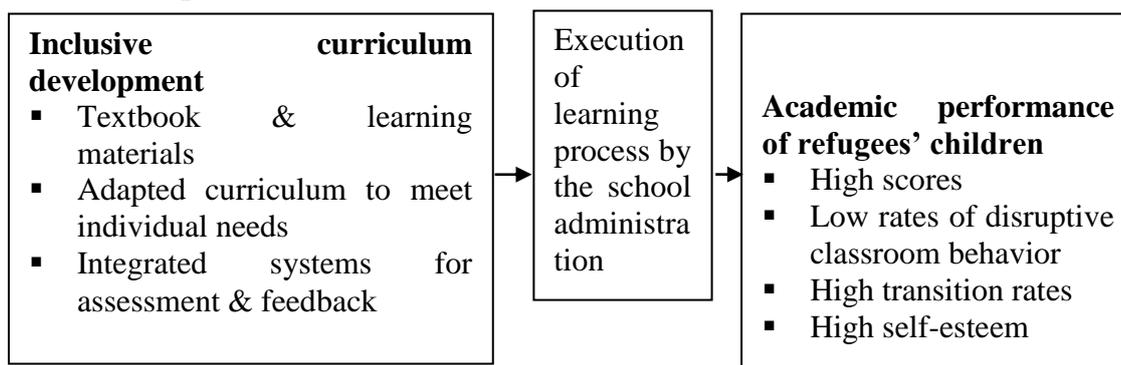


Figure 1: Relationship between inclusive curriculum development and academic performance

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' Inclusive Curriculum Development and Academic Performance of Refugee Children

The study sought to establish the influence of inclusive curriculum development on the performance of refugee children. A curriculum to be adopted for the refugees' programmes should be the curriculum of the country of origin. An appropriate curriculum emphasizes deeper understanding student thinking and development of cognitive skills. The teachers were further asked to respond on whether inclusive curriculum development influenced academic performance of refugees' children. The responses were rated on a five Likert scale and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Inclusive curriculum development and performance of refugee children

Curriculum development	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
Including guiding & counseling in curriculum is necessary for refugee pupils	11.2%	8.1%	8.7%	37.9%	34.2%	3.8	1.3
Suitable curriculum for refugee children is necessary for better educational outputs	9.9%	5.0%	5.6%	34.2%	45.3%	4.0	1.3
The type of curriculum in this school do not favour refugee pupils	10.6%	14.3%	9.3%	29.2%	36.6%	3.7	1.4
Incorporating guiding and counseling can help grow refugee pupils psychologically	11.8%	11.2%	6.2%	31.1%	39.8%	3.8	1.4
Incorporating conflict resolution in the curriculum can help heal refugee pupils which improves their academic outcomes	15.5%	12.4%	14.3%	19.9%	37.9%	3.5	1.5
Average						3.7	1.4

Results in Table 2 revealed that majority of the teachers who were 72.1 percent agreed that including guiding & counseling in curriculum is necessary for refugee pupils. The results also

showed that majority of the teachers 79.5 percent agreed that suitable curriculum for refugee children are necessary for better educational outputs. The results also showed that majority of the teachers who were 65.8 percent of the teachers agreed that the type of curriculum in this school do not favour refugee pupils. The results also show that 70.9 percent of the teachers agreed that incorporating guiding and counseling can help grow refugee pupils psychologically. Results also showed that 57.8 percent of the teachers agreed that incorporating conflict resolution in the curriculum can help heal refugee pupils which improve their academic outcomes.

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 Karanja (2010) on teacher preparedness and inclusion, that teachers must be familiarized with the new curricula, methods of teaching and trained in addressing student performance. Without training and capacity building teachers cannot be able to handle refugee pupils effectively. Curriculum involves the teaching and learning that take place once children are enrolled in and in attendance at school. Kirk (2009) suggested three approaches to what curriculum should be used for the formal schooling of refugee children and youth. In the first approach, the home-country curriculum can be carried over for use in the refugee context; in the second approach, the curriculum of the host-country can be adopted and children can be educated in either separate schools or integrated into the host-country education system. Finally, the third approach called hybrid curriculum, typically addresses language problem between the home and host country and this approach may contain elements of both countries' curricula.

Further, a cross tabulation table of curriculum development and academic performance of refugee children was presented. Curriculum development was categorized into non inclusive curriculum and inclusive curriculum. 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 curriculum development.

Table 3: Curriculum Development and Academic Performance

Curriculum development	Academic performance		Chi-square (p value)
	Low academic performance	High academic performance	
Non-inclusive curriculum	106	2	122.585(0.000)
Inclusive curriculum	7	46	

Schools where curriculum development was not inclusive lead to poor academic performance than those schools with inclusive curriculum. Result findings indicated that, academic performance was low when curriculum development was rated non-inclusive by 106 teachers as compared to 7 teachers who rated it inclusive. Further, academic performance was high when curriculum development was rated inclusive by 46 teachers as compared to only 2 teachers who rated it non-inclusive. The study findings were statistically significant supported by a chi square of ($\lambda=122.585, p=0.000$).

During an interview session with head teachers, majority acknowledge that the type of curriculum influenced the performance of refugee children. The curriculum to be adopted for the refugees' programmes should be the curriculum of the country of origin. An appropriate curriculum emphasizes deeper understanding student thinking and development of cognitive

skills. This is not always the case and so is bound to affect academic performance of the refugee children.

5.0 Conclusions

Based on research finding it can be concluded that inclusive curriculum development influences academic performance of refugees' children in public primary schools in Ruiru Sub County.

6.0 Recommendations for study

The Ministry of Education (MoE) are recommended to include conflict resolution studies in the curriculum. An appropriate curriculum emphasizes deeper understanding student thinking and development of cognitive skills. This will ensure that the refugee children are healed and get integrated to the home place and to the current society.

7.0 References

- Dryden-Peterson S. & Hovil L. (2004). "A Remaining Hope for Durable Solutions: Local Integration of Refugees and Their Hosts in the Case of Uganda," *Refuge* 22, no. 1:
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). (2010). "*Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery.*" New York: INEE.
- Karanja, L. (2010). The educational pursuits and obstacles for urban refugee students in Kenya. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education*, 1(3), 1-9.
- Kirk, J. (2009) *Certification of the learning attainments of refugee and internally displaced pupils*. International seminar. Paris: IIEP.
- Mwangi, L. N. (2014). *School factors influencing refugee children access to primary education in Kasarani district Nairobi, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- UNESCO (2001). *Developing Sustainable Inclusion Policies and Practices Journal of educational change*, 6(2), 109-124.