

Quality Early Childhood Education: The Case of Internally Displaced Children in Camps in Nyandarua County, Kenya.

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Abstract

Children's right to education is grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and buttressed by international agreements such as Education for All and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Early Childhood Education (ECE) which is an integral part of basic education is necessary for the holistic development of the child and for sustainable development. Kenya affirms these international commitments in Article 53 of the 2010 Constitution which requires the state and its organs to fulfil a child's right to free, compulsory basic education, nutrition, healthcare, shelter and protection. Demand for ECE has been fuelled by the collapse of traditional child rearing arrangements and the increasing participation of women in the workforce resulting in rapid increase in ECE centres and wide variations in quality. Violence, conflicts and displacement constitute the gravest threat to attainment of the Education for All in Kenya. The disputed 2007 presidential elections was responsible for the displacement of the participants of this study. Minimal government funding, poverty and malnutrition adversely affects pre-school enrolment currently estimated at just over 50%. Children in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps face many challenges in accessing quality ECE. This research, in response to the identified research problem of quality of ECE provided for pre-school children living in IDP camps in Nyandarua County, sought to understand and describe it from the participant's perspective. It sought their views on infrastructure, educational resources, structural and pedagogical issues as well as external support received. Teacher qualifications, competence, adaptation, community involvement, child rights framework and acceptance were investigated as factors that can help mitigate the negative effects of displacement on ECE. Lev Vygotsky's Social Cultural Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Theory were used as theoretical frameworks with child right as an additional lens to interrogate participant's perception of quality ECE. Stratified purposive sampling was used to select participants within an IDP camp. The sample size of 31 participants comprised of 17 children, 12 parents and two teachers. This phenomenographic case study used semi-structured interviews and participant observations to obtain in-depth descriptions of the situation from the participant's perspective. Data analysis was undertaken through repeated scrutiny of the data collected to determine relationships, patterns, groupings, similarities and differences between the perspectives of the participants then grouped into themes. Findings were reported in descriptive and narrative format with rich and thick descriptions supported by the voices of the participants. The research expected challenges to providing quality ECE and found lack of infrastructure and play facilities, a deficient learning environment, poor sanitation, lack of primary healthcare systems, health facilities, poverty amongst IDPs, lack of feeding programs and poor implementation of children's rights hindered the provision of quality ECE. It recommends financing of infrastructure, running costs and

feeding programs by the government or donors) mobile clinics and further research. The findings will inform teacher, policy maker and donor decisions to improve the quality of ECE for displaced children.

Key words: Quality Early Childhood Education, The Case of Internally Displaced Children in Camps, Nyandarua County, Kenya

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