

Access to Basic Education by Young Carers of Visually Impaired Adult Beggars in Tanzania: A Critical Engagement with Policies

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Abstract

This paper examines the extent to which Most Vulnerable Children policies and Education and Training Policies enhance access to basic education among young carers of visually impaired adult beggars in Tanzania. Intrinsic case study design was used to conduct the study in Dodoma Municipality where begging using children as guides is deeply rooted. A total of 22 respondents were purposefully sampled. Data were collected through interviews and documentary reviews. The findings indicated that the policies did not adequately enhance access to basic education among young carers of visually impaired adult beggars. Lack of resources impaired policy implementation and that policies should attain legal framework. Interventions at policy and practice levels are welcome in order to widen basic education access for every child in Dodoma municipality.

Key words: Basic Education, Policies, , Visually Impaired Adult Beggars, and Young Carers.

1. Introduction

A big number of children worldwide are involved in some kind of caring for members of their families, often parents. The 2001 census figures show that there were 175,000 young carers living in the United Kingdom (UK) alone (Evans and Becker, 2007). In most of the developed countries both groups, the young carers, the recipient of the care and street children in general, usually attract sympathy and there are policies and programmes developed specifically to support them (Fives., Kennan., Canavan., Brady., and Cairns, 2010, Seni, 2015).

In the United Kingdom, for instance a number of legislations are in place, including Carers Recognition and Services Act of 1995, Carers and Disabled Children Act of 2001, and Carers Equal Opportunities Act (Fives *et al*; 2010). In the USA, a number of people with disabilities are cared for by community- based agencies (Angrosino, 1992). Policy attention regarding MVC, including YCVIABs in developing countries, is relatively dismal or non- existent.

Tanzania is among the developing countries with young carers where about 4 percent of children aged between seven (7) and 14 years in Tanzania are documented to engage in care giving (Robson., Ansell., Huber., Gould., and Van Blerk, 2006). Young Carers of Visually Impaired Adult Beggars (YCVIABs) are a group of street children between the ages of five (7) and seventeen (17) who constitute one of the categories of the Most Vulnerable Children (MVC) in Tanzania and Dodoma Municipality in particular.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child proclaims that children have the right to be protected from work that threatens their education (Sattaur, 1993). Notwithstanding, this

international recognition, presence of various MVC policies such as the Law of the Child Act of 2009, Child Development Policy of 1996, costed plan of Action for MVC of 2010 and ETPs of 1995 and 2014 in Tanzania, the MVC including YCVIABs have been by far reached and there has been paucity of research on young carers generally, and YCVIABs particularly.

Evans and Becker (2007) focused on Children caring for parents with HIV and AIDS in Tanzania and UK, Skovdal (2009), Skovdal and Ogutu (2009) used the method of participatory action research to study the coping mechanisms of young carers of HIV/AIDS patients in Western Kenya. Aldridge and Becker (2003) focused on children caring for parents with mental illness. Cree (2003) focused on problems of young carers and mental health. Based on the synthesis of the reviewed literature, it was apparent that there were content, geographical and methodological gaps. Few studies (if any) both locally and internationally have been conducted to address the extent to which policies enhance basic education access among YCVIABs. Vacuum of knowledge in this area impairs policy and practice that would overcome the problem facing YCVIABs in Tanzania. To that effect, this study strives to bridge this knowledge gap.

2. Research Purpose and Questions

The primary concern of this paper is to assess the extent to which MVC-related policies and ETPs of 1995 and 2014 in Tanzania enhance access to basic education among YCVIABs. This study is a significant contribution to the understanding of the efficacy of policies in addressing basic education access of MVC generally and YCVIABs in particular. The study thus embarked to answer the following research questions:

- i. To what extent do the policies on MVC in Tanzania and ETPs of 1995 and 2014 have enhanced access to basic education among YCVIABs?
- ii. What are the challenges surrounding implementation of MVC- related policies and ETPs of 1995 and 2014 with regard to basic education access among YCVIABs?
- iii. What solutions can be put in place to enhance basic education access among YCVIABs?

3. Methodology

Qualitative approach was used due to the intention of the researcher to obtain in-depth data, regarding the efficacy of policies in enhancing access to basic education among YCVIABs. The study used intrinsic case study which according to Ary, et al, (2010) is used to investigate one of unusual, unique, and complex phenomenon. The phenomenon of children guiding VIABs consumes a lot of their time thus deprive them with their right to access basic education. It is unusual, unique, and complex. The location of the study was Dodoma Municipality of Tanzania since, unlike other regions of the country, it has more VIABs (Namwata, *et al.*, 2010). There is also a rapidly increasing number of MVC generally and YCVIABs in particular. The estimated figure of MVC by 2012 was 7,635, while that of street children including YCVIABs was around 170 (Seni, 2015).

The total sample for this study was 22 respondents including four Ward Executive Officers (WEOs), three ward education coordinators (WECs), three head teachers, four ward councilors, three religious leaders, three Non- Governmental Organization (NGO) Coordinators, one social welfare officer and one Community Development Officer. Saturation of information guided the number of each category of participants.

Purposive sampling was employed to sample the influential community members namely ward councilors, religious leaders, NGO coordinators, social welfare officers and community development officers as they were considered to be information rich on issues pertaining to policies

and can represent the entire community members. Though YCVIABs and the VIABs were the key targets of this study, they were not included in the sample units out of the knowledge that they may not offer rich information on issues pertaining to policies and may serve as areas for further research.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and documentary reviews in particular ETPs of 1995 and 2014. Other documents reviewed were MVC related policies namely Child Development Policy of 1996, The Law of the Child Act of 2009, and National Costed Plan of Action for Most Vulnerable Children of 2010. The data analysis process was guided by Pellegrin's (1998) two principles of qualitative data analysis, namely homogeneity and mutual exclusiveness in which both deductive and inductive processes were used to determine the main themes and sub- themes respectively (Ezzy, 2002). All the data sets from interviews and documents were analyzed following procedures recommended by Miles and Hubberman (1994); that is data organization, data reduction and data interpretation. According to Farrell (2001), in research intending to evaluate the policy text, the researcher can only carry out a textual analysis. But if it involves a study of the practice side, empirical investigation is necessary. In this study, the researcher conducted both textual analysis and empirical investigation on the extent to which MVC-related policies and ETPs of 1995 and 2014 enhanced basic education access among YCVIABs. Textual analysis was guided by looking at inclusiveness and specificity of key policy statements and implementation part was taped through interviews with influential community members namely WEOs, WECs, head teachers, ward councilors, religious leaders, NGO Coordinators, social welfare officer and Community Development Officer. The study assumed that MVC-related policies and ETP of 1995 and 2014 did not adequately enhance access to basic education among YCVIABs. Regarding the accuracy, truthfulness, credibility of the findings and the degree of consistency of data collection instruments, as recommended by (Ary, *et al*; 2010), a pilot study was conducted in one ward (Makole) from the study location. The researcher used one research assistant who asked identical questions and then looked for consistency of the responses as argued by Drever and Munn (1990).

The researcher triangulated in-depth interviews and documentary data with an understanding that data emerging from different sources attract more trust (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Thick description was used where several quotations from participants provide more insights about the findings to the part of the reader (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 and Ary, *et al* , 2010). Back translation in which interview guides were translated from English into Kiswahili (the national language) to ease communication with participants (Cohen, *et al*; 2000). The researcher obtained a formal research clearance from the University of Dodoma authority as permit to conduct the study . Explanations regarding the objectives of the study to the research participants were given as recommended by Cohen, *et al*; (2001). As argued by Denzin, (2000) all personal data were made public behind the shield of anonymity. Thus the use of the position held such as religious leader, head teacher, WEO, CDO, SWO, and NGO coordinator rather than names.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 The Extent to which Policies Enhance Basic Education Access among YCVIABs

The study found that MVC-related policies and ETPs of 1995 and 2014 did not adequately enhance access to basic education among YCVIABs. The begging phenomenon involving children as guides prevailed despite the presence of the policies.

While ETPs have been in place since 1995 and 2014 respectively, the Child Development Policy since 1996, and the Law of the Child Act since 2009, there was persistence of the begging

phenomenon involving children as guides. The unfolding plight including inaccess to and poor participation in basic education was also prevailing. Four years after the deadline of the implementation of the Tanzania National Costed Plan of Action for MVC of 2010, the begging phenomenon involving children as guides instead of attending at school, has been increasingly visible within Dodoma Municipality. The subsequent statement from one of the interviewed WEO validate this;

“The begging culture using children as guides is taking root in Dodoma municipality. When you arrive and sit in a restaurant for lunch you find a visually impaired beggar escorted by a child standing before you asking for something to eat. Before you finish the meal you are asked for a help by another beggar”

YCVIABs are still not accorded proper protection and their basic needs and rights such as those of accessing and participating fully in basic education are still in paper works than in practice. Documentary analysis of the the Tanzania ETPs (1995 and 2014) indicate that the policies recognize that a good system of education must be effective on quantitative front in which there would be access to education for all (URT, 1995). Despite this recognition of the 1995 and 2014 ETPs, the presence of YCVIABs in Dodoma Municipality suggests how access to basic education is not yet realized to these children. Imbalance between policy and practice is similar to the findings by (Anangisye, 2011) who reported that there were prevalence of school dropout cases in Tanzania for the past 10 years amidst subscriptions to UPE.

4.2 Challenges Facing MVC- Related Policies, ETPs of 1995 and 2014

Two outstanding challenges emerged from the responses of most respondents namely unavailability of the policy documents to the wider community and lack of resources to implement the policies. Other challenges were embezzlement and misuse of the mobilized resources for MVC and YCVIABs, over reliance of money to implement every intervention and lack of specificity and inclusiveness to the part of policies.

With the exception of technocrats, politicians and leaders, normal people including the YCVIABs and the VIABs they guide, have never seen the MVC policies and ETP of 1995 and 2014. These findings suggest a drawback towards attainment of their rights. It also implies limited exposure to possibilities of assistance networks or support structure consequently strengthens the bottlenecks for basic education access among YCVIABs. In this regard, one of the participant head teachers narrated;

“The policies rest on technocrats, politicians, and leaders but normal people are not aware of the policies. I am a long service teacher but I have never set my eyes on the policy. Certainly, YCVABs and VIABs are not even aware of the presence of policies which are meant for them”

It was further revealed that lack of resources in terms of fiscal resources and training for CDOs, SWOs and teachers inhibited effective policy implementation. When asked to explain the challenges facing MVC policies in enhancing access to basic education among YCVIABs, the interviewed social welfare officer (SWO) said;

“Lack of resources hinders practice, though we have good policies and directives, but resources have not been fully committed to this plight. The problem is there but not much visible to the part of decision makers. I have for instance, not received any training regarding MVC generally, and YCVIABs in

particular, but I use my skills and experience. I am an expert in social work generally”

There was also over reliance on money to implement every intervention. Responding to the question on the challenges which face MVC policies and ETPs of 1995 and 2014, one of the participant religious leader remarked;

“Yes, we have good policies but the implementation part is a problem. Everyone is in need of money to implement anything; I could say there is over reliance of money among the community. People should not rely much on money to make every intervention”

The findings that government agencies responsible for the implementation of policies cite lack of resources but other stakeholders view over reliance of resources in terms of money to implement every intervention as undesirable are also evident in Ghana. Though lack of resources is cited by policy implementers for their failure, there are some views that call for more commitment to carry out interventions with less reliance on money (Boaten, 2006).

Embezzlement and misuse of the mobilized resources for MVC and YCVIABs in particular, was another drawback towards realization of basic education access to this unique group of MVC. It was intimated that some NGOs were only hidden income sources for groups of people, and did not intend to serve the MVC including YCVIABs. The support did not reach the targeted people due to embezzlement. One of the interviewed ward councilor revealed;

“We have good policies but implementation is a problem. In particular there was a mushrooming of organizations in cover of assisting the MVC, but in reality serving as a way of a group of people to have hidden incomes. The fund solicited for the purposes of assisting MVC do not reach the targeted people”

Documentary analysis of the ETP (MOEC, 1995) revealed that in the 149 key policy statements, only four (4) statements were related to creation of access for basic education to children in general and only one (1) statement was categorical for basic education access for disadvantaged groups. Some of the key policy statements from MVC related policies are presented subsequently.

There was a need to make the parents with means responsible for their children who are living on the streets (**Child Development Policy of 1996**). Children found begging or living on the streets may be returned to their families (**Law of the Child Act of 2009**). Securing MVC access to primary education for children affected by poverty and HIV/AIDS is important (**National Costed Plan of Action for MVC of 2010**).

Although the national costed plan of action, ETPs of 1995 and 2014 are explicit in the need to create access to basic education to disadvantaged social and cultural groups. The key statements are however, too general making it unclear on how to address the plight of the marginalized groups such as those studied here. Making the parents responsible as outlined in child development act of 1996 is not detailed as such limited access to basic education among YCVIABs persisted. Outlining the need to return home the children found begging by the law of the child act of 2009 without detailing the follow up interventions is rather theoretical than practical. The findings that policies lacked specificity are also in akin to those by (Mtahabwa, 2007), in this regard most people would

confine in creating access to basic education for “orphans and disabled children” leaving out YCVIABs which is the fast growing category of MVC. These findings also reinforce what Skovdal (2009) and Boaten (2006) referred to as invisibility of young carers in Kenya and street children in Ghana respectively.

4.3 Emerging Solutions for Enhancing Basic Education Access among YCVIABs

The study found that there are a number of possible solutions that can help in enhancing basic education access among YCVIABs. Such solutions include, but not limited to, policies to attain legal framework, carrying out intervention practices including assisting the VIABs and the YCVIABs to have a sustainable means of livelihood. Another possible solution is creation of awareness to stakeholders regarding the plights facing YCVIABs. The subsequent voices of the head teacher and WEO interviewed depict this;

“The policies should have legal power so as to reinforce practices and as the law regarding beggary seems to be loose, the government officials sing rather than taking action. Using the policy, they sing education is the basic right for children but the children who are out of school are not identified and assisted”

“We need to have by-laws and those involved in beggary should be arrested and sent back to their villages. Though arresting was tried, the beggars and their young carers returned back to carry on with their begging business. The reason for that failure was lack of intervention such as giving them assistance”

The use of laws in addressing the challenges surrounding the policies that would have enhanced access to basic education among YCVIABs cannot be underestimated. Mtahabwa (2007) contends that the relationship between policy and practice is also reflected in the use of law, to enforce performance at the required standards.

The need to provide direct assistance to YCVIABs and the VIABs was articulated as one of the possible solutions towards pulling YCVIABs out of the dreadful situation they face consequently enhance their access to basic education. The subsequent statements from one of the interviewed religious leader and SWO testify this;

“I had a camp for the poorest elders at Hombolo (a place within Dodoma Municipality). I kept these vulnerable people using scarce resources. At the camp they learnt a lot of vocational skills including basketry and needle works. So the government may think of doing so as it has more resources than the church”

“Visually impaired adult beggars may be given training and capital to start business. If they are capacitated these people can be productive and even care for people who have no disability. This will not only relieve them from a shameful beggary life but will rescue children from the guidance role and attend to school”

These findings are in akin to those by Skovdal (2009) who reports that churches and their members were sources of food and emotional support to young carers in Kenya. Regarding the need for awareness to stakeholders on the plight facing YCVIABs, one of the interviewed ward councilor said;

“The plight of YCVIABs should be an agenda in every meeting from the grassroots as we do for HIV/AIDS. In so doing, we shall raise awareness regarding the phenomenon and devise ways of combating the problem. The social welfare officers should be trained so that they can deal effectively with this category of MVC”

Importance of awareness creation to stakeholder regarding policy and practice of YCVIABs’ issues is similar to the findings by Mtahabwa (2007) who found that majority of the teachers had neither seen nor read the policy document.

Based on the findings, this paper argues that policies alone, are not sufficient in addressing the issue of begging using children as guides and its unfolding plight including limited access to basic education among YCVIABs. More is needed including a “call” and political will to the part of decision makers. Setting aside sufficient resources for training of social workers, and for intervening the phenomenon and its unfolding plights. Lack of after- effect intervention strategies such as provision of assistance to YCVIABs and the VIABs they guided should be addressed as it impairs the match between policies and practices.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

It is clear that MVC-related policies such as Child Development Policy of 1996, Law of the Child Act of 2009, Costed Plan of Action for MVC of 2010 and ETPs of 1995 and 2014 did not adequately enhance access to basic education among YCVIABs hence their efficacy extent were low. Through the policy for the elders and policies catering for people with disabilities, the VIABs should be assisted. The government should set aside sufficient resources to establish residence centers for the VIABs. In the residence centers, the VIABs should be trained to perform light activities for production such as needle work, basketry, raising chicken etc. Keeping the VIABs in residence centers may release YCVIABs from their guidance role and making it easy for them to enroll and attend to school. Provision of capital to start income generating activities could assist in reducing and even alleviating dependency among the VIABs. But, before being given capital, they should be given training on how to manage the projects they wish to commence. In relation to recommendations for further research, there is a need to conduct a comparative study on the academic performance between YCVIABs and children who are non-young carers.

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