

ASSISTING LESS PRIVILEGED CHILDREN AND YOUTHS ON COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT BY YOUTHS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AT OPEN EVANGELISTIC STUDENT CENTRE IN MOSHI MUNICIPALITY, TANZANIA

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Abstract

The aim of study was to evaluate Youth Development Project for Less Privileged Children and Youths at Open Evangelistic Student Centre in Moshi Municipality, Tanzania: particularly finding out if its goal and objective of helping the less privileged children and youths through their cognitive development and release them from poverty is achieved. The study used mixed methods approach under convergent parallel design in data collection, analysis and presentation; the study employed direct selection and stratified random sampling techniques. The target population was composed of project manager, administrators, children and youth's teachers and learners. Data was gathered through Interview guide, focused group discussion and questionnaires. The qualitative findings were analyzed by transcription, developing themes and patterns, quotations and narration while quantitative findings were analyzed by using descriptive statistics with the use of SPSS and findings were presented using tables of frequency distributions and percentages. Reliability of teacher's questionnaire was 0.85 and administrators were 0.72. The study found out that Youth Development Project had achieved its objective of helping less privileged children and youths in cognitive development. The study recommended that the community and all well wishers should provide their support so as to serve many neediest children in the community and national at large.

Key Words: children, youths, less, privileged, cognitive, development.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty and inequality are certainly among the main concerns in the developing world. A typical developing country is characterized by high levels of material deprivation and large dispersion in individual well-being, at least when compared to a typical high income economy. Fighting poverty and minimizing the unjust inequalities are top priorities in the developing world. The United Nations, in the famous declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), proposed as target number 1 to halve income poverty between 2000 to 2015 (Alvaredo & Gasparini, 2015).

With 2015 marking the transition from the Millennium to the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community can celebrate many development successes since 2000. However three key challenges stand out: the depth of remaining poor, the unevenness in shared prosperity, and the persistent disparities in non-income dimensions of development. First, the policy discourse needs to focus more directly on the poorest among the poor. (Cruz, Foster, Quillin & Schellekens, 2015).

According to the World Bank report “Accelerating Poverty Reduction in Africa”, Africans living in extreme poverty have fallen substantially from 54% in 1990 to 41% in 2015 but due to high population growth during the same period, the number of poor people in Africa has actually increased from 278 million in 1990 to 413 million in 2015. If circumstances remain the same, the poverty rate is expected to decline to 23% only, by 2030 and global poverty will become increasingly African, rising from 55% in 2015 to 90% in 2030. The 82% of people living in extreme poverty in Africa live in rural areas and earn what little money they have primarily from farming. Fragile and conflict-affected states have notably higher poverty rates, and lack of education, health, and skills as well as persistent inequality between men and women make poverty reduction harder (Beegle, Kathleen, Christiaensen & Luc, 2019).

According to Belghith, Hassine, Wendy, Talbert, Ann, Boisseson and Antoine (2019), on Poverty Assessment Report in Tanzania-Mainland, the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction has dampened in recent years. During 2007-12 a 10% increase in gross domestic product per capita growth produced a 10% decline in the proportion of poor people. Today, poor families are burdened with a large number of dependents, lower access to basic services and particularly low human capital, limiting their potential to access productive employment opportunities.

Therefore Moshi Municipality as it is part of Tanzania-Mainland; most of residents are living in poverty. Although, the residents of this area are engaged in various economic activities most of them are not able to earn their basic requirements such as food, shelter and clothes. This situation is caused by factors such as low social-economic background, that most of them inherited poverty from their parents and guardians, low level of education that will lead them to various employment opportunities, diseases such as HIV and AIDS and malaria, low capital for the individuals to run their businesses while others lack capital to start and engage in entrepreneurship. Due to these factors parents and guardians face difficulties in providing basic needs for their children such as food, shelter, clothes and basic education.

Therefore, the Open Evangelistic Student Center was formed with the aim of helping children and youths from these poor families to release from poverty. It was inaugurated in July, 2012 located in Moshi Municipality, with the aim of helping the less privileged poor children in the areas of

physical, spiritual, cognitive and social emotion to attain fully grown up persons who are self-reliant, who know God and are prepared to help others to serve the community and our nation at large.

The Open Evangelistic Student Centre focuses on helping youths and children suffering from poverty in the community by providing them with all school requirements (for formal education in their respective schools) and training them in physical development, cognitive development and social emotional development at the centre. The focus is for each beneficiary to discover his/her God-given desires, gifts and abilities and find a way to achieve them – through their own means as well as support from others (for example Partnerships and Alliances; Local Resources; Compassion). The purpose is to ensure that each beneficiary upon exiting project he/she is truly on a path towards being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the Youth development project in responding to helping the less privileged poor children and youths in the community. In so doing the study carried out formative evaluation and objectively assessed the effective implementation of the project to provide information that could be used by the project stakeholders especially the decision makers to improve the project. It, therefore, focused on evaluating the extent to which the Youth development project has been able to achieve the set objective of helping less privileged children and youths in cognitive development. Since the project started in the year 2012, there was no study to find out the efficiency and effectiveness of the project and its influence on reducing poverty among the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project. This evaluation was therefore meant to serve that purpose.

Evaluation Questions

This evaluation was guided by the following question:

1. How does the project assist the less privileged children and youths in cognitive development at Open Evangelistic Student Centre at Moshi Municipality?

Evaluation Model

The evaluation was guided by CIPP (Context-Input-Process-Product) model to evaluate Youths Development Strategy project. The proponent of this model is Daniel Stufflebeam (1971). The purpose of this model is to provide relevant information to decision makers. This model suggests cyclical approach in which feedback is continuously provided to decision makers. It emphasizes the evaluation report as it is used for decision making and the purpose of evaluation is to provide feedback to decision makers on Youths Development Project for Less privileged Children and Youths. The following are the stages of the model:

Context Evaluation: The stage involves assessing the setting or environment within which the program or project activity is taking place. Its purpose is to provide a justification for determination of objectives. Context evaluation assesses needs, asserts and problems within which the project takes place. In this case it was Open Evangelistic Student Centre at Moshi municipal.

Input Evaluation: The aim of this evaluation is to give information for determining the resources to achieve program or educational objectives, mission or goals.

Process Evaluation: It monitors, documents and assesses the program activities taking place within the program. This is carried out during the implementation of the program to provide feedback to program administrators.

Product Evaluation: At this stage evaluation measures and interprets the achievement of program objectives, mission and goals.

Strengths of CIPP Model

The model allows evaluation to take place at any stage of the program. It is sensitive to feedback from various stakeholders of the program about the context, inputs, process and products (Ogula, 2002). It gives data to administrators and stakeholders on regular basis. The model assists the evaluator to assess the extent to which the program objective have been achieved and help in transforming the youths to become responsible persons and overcome poverty in their community.

Weaknesses of CIPP Model

The evaluator has no say on decision making after analysis of data rather than presenting them to the project developers. As the model provides the possibility of evaluating one aspect of a program or project it may lead to incomplete judgment because the achievement and weaknesses of the program or project is brought about by assessing all the stages. Therefore the evaluator used this model since its strengths outweigh the weaknesses.

Application of CIPP model to the Current Study

The evaluator applied the four stages of CIPP evaluation model in the study which were Context, Input, Process and Product (outcomes) in relation to evaluation question guiding the study. The evaluator carefully assessed these stages and observed performance indicators and compared the performance indicators with the program objective to help the evaluator to determine the extent to which the Youth Development Project for Less Privileged Children and Youths objective have been attained in helping less privileged children and youths in the community.

Context Evaluation

The stage examines the environment within which the Youth Development Project for Children and Youths activities were carried out. It involves state of basic requirements of the beneficiaries such as food, shelter, clothes and access to basic education and criteria for admission into Open Evangelistic Student Centre. The aim was to provide justification for determination of objective of the project.

Input Evaluation

At this stage the evaluation focused on resources used to achieve the project objective and goals. It involves all the work force that is human resource, financial resource such as donors, surrounding community, or well-wishers individuals, material resource and time.

Process Evaluation

At this level, the evaluator assessed the implementation of various project activities on children and youths social-emotional development such as educational activities and vocational training

activities. At this level the evaluator assessed the interaction between context and input of the project in achieving the set objective.

Product Evaluation

This evaluation level assessed the extent to which the Youth Development Project for Children and Youths at Open Evangelistic Student Centre achieved the objective and goals of helping less privileged children and youths in the community in their cognitive and helped them become persons who are capable of helping their community to relief from poverty. Therefore, this study was guided by the following model:

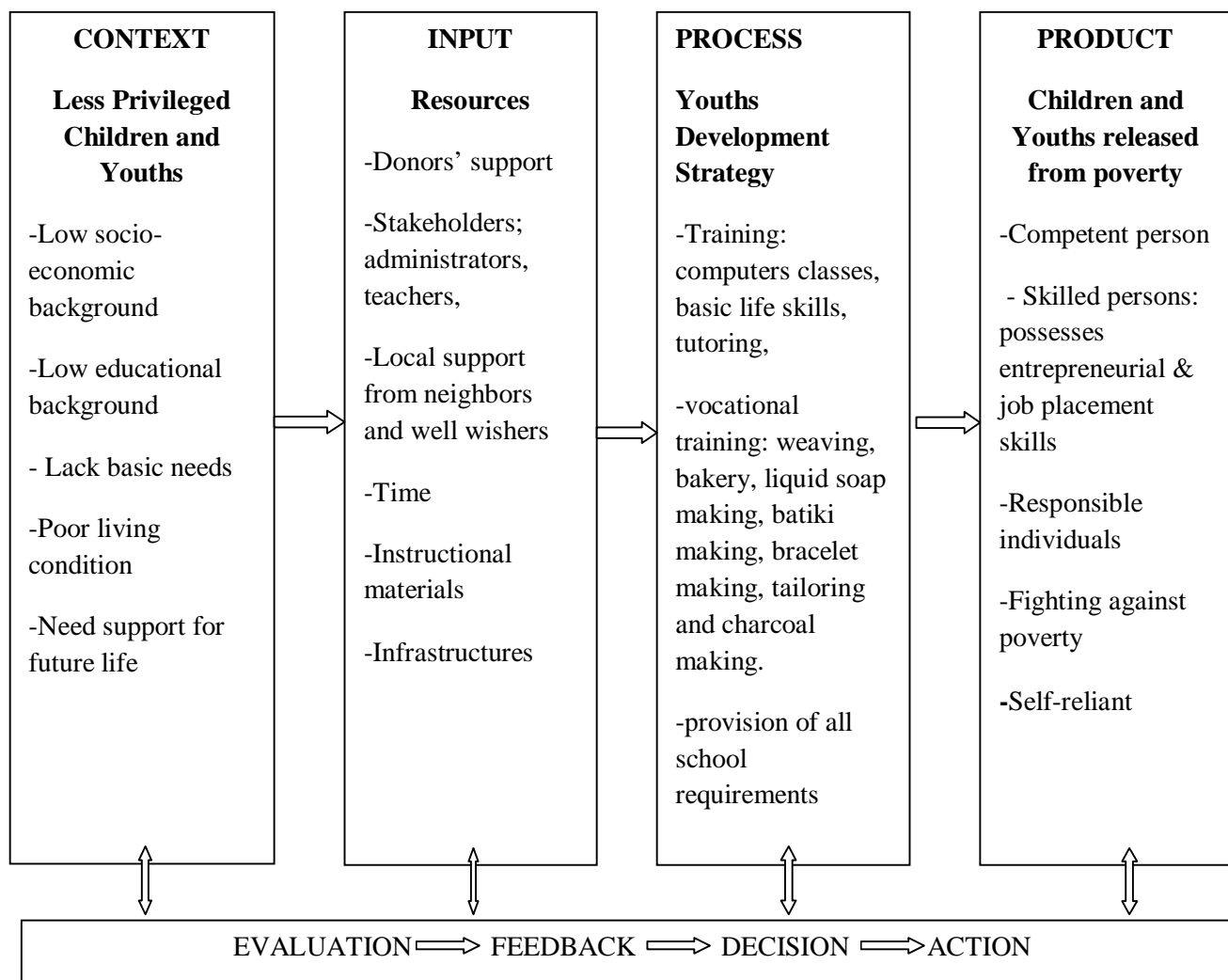


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework for evaluation of Youth Development Project for Less

Privileged Children and Youths at Open Evangelistic Student Centre.

Source: Evaluator (2020) modified from classroom discussion

Context: This refers to the setting where Youths Development Project is implemented. At this stage the evaluator assessed the children and youths background; lack their basic needs, low socioeconomic status, educational level, poor living condition and their needs for support for future life.

Input: Implementation of youth development project requires enough funds, human resource (project implementers), target group (children and youth), instructional materials, infrastructure facilities and time. Therefore evaluator assessed whether these aspects were put in place to support the effective implementation of the youth development project.

Process: At this stage the evaluator assessed all designed project activities that are facilitated by the funds and availability of different resources and facilities. For the project to run smoothly monitoring and evaluation of the project is highly recommended. Therefore the evaluation focused on the interaction between the context and input. Project administrators carry out regular supervision to ensure that all the program activities are done as stated in the policy objectives.

Product: This stage assessed the extent to which less privileged children and youths had changed in terms of their perception towards life, skilled acquired, self-supporting, and fight against poverty.

Review of literature

The study conducted by Rao, Sun, Chen and Ip (2016), on Effectiveness of Early Childhood Interventions in Promoting Cognitive Development in Developing Countries in Hong Kong, a systematic review and meta-analysis were conducted to compare the effectiveness of different types of early childhood interventions in enhancing cognitive development of children in developing countries, and identified factors related to intervention efficacy. The meta-analysis included 106 interventions from 62 studies in 30 developing countries, published between 1992 and 2012. Participants included were 43,696 children below 8 years. The results indicated that comprehensive programs were the most effective, followed by child-focused education and stimulation, parent-focused support, income supplementation, and nutrition and health interventions respectively. The researchers concluded that early childhood development interventions were effective in improving cognitive development of children in developing countries. However, the analysis relied on early childhood development interventions such as comprehensive programs, child-focused education and stimulation, parent-focused support, income supplementation and nutrition and health interventions in improving cognitive development of children in Hong Kong, the study focused on many aspects which may lead to bias in generalizing the findings.

The study carried out by Burger (2010) investigated how early childhood care and education affect cognitive development in Switzerland, an international review of the effects of early interventions for children from different social backgrounds, assessed the effects of various preschool programs on cognitive development, recent key studies were reviewed. The extent to which these programs could establish equal educational opportunities for children from different social backgrounds was evaluated. Program start, intensity, and duration were considered. The findings indicated that the

vast majority of recent early education and care programs had considerable positive short-term effects and somewhat smaller long-term effects on cognitive development and that in relative terms children from socio-economically disadvantaged families made as much or slightly more progress than their more advantaged peers. Early childhood education and care cannot compensate completely for developmental deficits due to unfavorable learning conditions in disadvantaged milieus. However the study focused on early education and care programs for children from different social backgrounds on their cognitive development, the study may lead to bias findings as it combines children from different social economics with different context and needs.

Tandon, Tovar, Welker, Scholar, Compel and Ward (2016), conducted two different researches of MEDLINE, Psycho INFO, and ERIC in USA. Each research included either physical activity (including gross motor skills) or diet terms, and neurocognitive development outcome terms. Included studies were in English, published since 2005, and of any study design in which the physical activity or diet measure occurred prior to age five. For physical activity, twelve studies were included. Eleven studies reported evidence suggesting that physical activity or gross motor skills were related to cognition learning. Both acute bouts and longer term exposures showed benefit. For diet, eight studies were included consisting of secondary analyses from longitudinal cohort studies. A healthier dietary pattern was associated with better cognitive outcomes in all studies, although some of the reported associations were weak and the measures used varied across the studies. The results revealed that Physical activity and healthy diets in early childhood are associated with better cognitive outcomes in young children. However, the study was done on physical activities and diet measures only on better cognitive outcomes in children, the study left out other aspects like provision of education and basic life skills training as activities that may associate with better cognitive development.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluator employed mixed methods approach under convergent parallel design which enables the application of different instruments in the collection of qualitative and quantitative data at the same time so as to generate a deep understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2012). The target population of the study was comprised project manager, children developmental workers (administrators), children and youths teachers and learners. The population was comprised of 1 project manager, 4 administrators, 7 teachers and 272 learners. On sample and sampling procedures, since this was mixed methods approach study, both probability and non-probability sampling procedures were used. The evaluation instruments used were questionnaire, interview guide and focused group discussion. To ensure content validity, the evaluation instruments were given to two experts to assess. The experts' from Mwenge Catholic University read through the instruments and ascertained whether they addressed the variables of the study adequately and observed the appropriateness of the language used. The comments from the experts were in cooperated in the final draft. The reliability of instruments was assessed using Cronbach Alpha. Reliability of teacher's questionnaire was 0.85 and administrators were 0.72.

Evaluation Results and Discussion

Project Support to the Cognitive Development of Children and Youths

The aim of this evaluation question was to determine how the project assists the less privileged children and youths in cognitive development at Open Evangelistic Student Centre at Moshi, Municipality through provision of education, computers classes, basic life skills training, tutoring, vocational training, provision of school uniform, fees and all other school requirements in their respective schools and conducting study tours by learners in order to exhibit the motivation and skills to be economically self-supporting through understanding entrepreneurial and job placement skills, cultivates unique vocational interests and intelligence, learns and utilizes at list one (1) income-generating skill and complete at least primary education. The evaluator collected data from project administrators, teachers, learners as well as the project manager. The study findings have been presented in Table 5.8 followed by narrations from respective involved participants.

Table 1 Administrators Response on how the Project Assists the less Privileged Children and Youths in Cognitive Development.

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners who receive educational training become responsible individuals	0	0	0	0	1	25	1	25	2	50
Learners who are engaged in bakery, liquid soap making, batiki making, weaving, bracelet making and computer classes become self-supporting	0	0	0	0	1	25	1	25	2	50
Learners who are provided with entrepreneurship skills and job placement skills improve the quality of their lives	0	0	1	25	0	0	2	50	1	25
Children and youths who are provided with school requirements improves their intellectual development	0	0	0	0	2	50	1	25	1	25
Children and youths who are trained on life skills become self-reliant	0	0	0	0	1	25	2	50	1	25

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 5.8 shows that 75% of administrators agreed that learners who receive educational training become responsible individuals. On the other side 25% of respondent were neutral. This indicates that the educational training provided to the learners at the Centre enable them to become responsible persons who work to serve their families and their community at large.

Furthermore 75% of administrators agreed that learners who are engaged in bakery, liquid soap making, batiki making, weaving, and bracelets making and computer classes become self-supporting. This finding can be supported by the quoted learner in FGD who argued that:

We offered skills on tailoring, batiki making, liquid soap making, bracelets making, bakery, charcoal making and computer classes which makes me creative

The learner further argues that:

All the goods we produce our teachers use them to train us on entrepreneurship. For example we bake breads at the Centre and make liquid soap which we buy them at lower price from our teachers and sell them to other customers at high price.

Also the project manager quoted argued that:

Learners utilize these skills by themselves. For example, one of our learners did computer and the student is working while studying. Even the breads are sold at high rate especially during holidays.

This implies that through these various project activities offered to the learners particularly those related to vocational trainings, most of them become self-supporting leading to relief them from poverty.

Similarly, 75% of administrators agreed that learners who are provided with entrepreneurship skills and job placement skills improve the quality of their lives. On the other side 25% of respondent disagreed on the statement learners who are provided with entrepreneurship skills and job placement skills improve the quality of their lives. This indicates that most of learners trained on entrepreneurship and job placement skills their quality of lives improved. The findings can be supported by learner on FGD who quoted states that:

Through these skills I manage to make my own properties which become source of income. They also provide us capital to start small businesses and engage in various activities like domestication of chicken and green vegetables cultivation. The produced money we save it as 'VICOBA' for future use like for university fees.

This was emphasized by Nzilu (2011) who argued that Majority (85.0%) of the OVC attended school with no significant difference between girls and boys in school attendance. The reasons for not attending school were: lack of school uniforms, school levies, looking after other siblings and working in order to earn income to feed the family. Moreover, 50% of respondents were neutral on the statement that children and youths who are provided with school requirements improves their intellectual development while 50% agreed that learners who are provided with school requirements improves their intellectual development. This implies that not all the learners provided with school requirements like school uniforms, exercise books, school fees and all other demanded school requirements improve their intellectual development. But other learners who are provided with school requirements improve their intellectual development as they will have all school materials that he/she used in class and concentrates on learning rather than finding these materials for their learning.

Nevertheless, 75% of administrators agreed to the statement that children and youths who are trained on life skills become self-reliant while on the other side 25% was neutral. This indicates that majority of learners at the project offered basic life skills training enable them to become self-reliant as these skills enable them to face and cope with various situations within their communities.

On the other hand the responses from the teachers on children and youths cognitive development were as follow:

Table 2 Teachers Responses on how the project assists the less privileged children and youths in cognitive development (n=4)

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The educational activities offered to children and youths help them to become self-supporting	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	50	2	50
Entrepreneurship skills and job placement skills offered to children and youths improves the quality of their lives	0	0	0	0	1	25	3	75	0	0
School requirements offered to children and youths improves their intellectual development	0	0	1	25	2	50	1	25	0	0
Vocational training such as bakery, liquid soap making, weaving, bracelet making and computer classes offered to children and youths enable them to become self-reliant	0	0	0	0	1	25	1	25	2	50

Source: Field Data (2020).

Table 5.9 show that 100% of teachers agreed on the statement that educational activities offered to children and youths help them to become self-supporting. This indicates different educational activities provided to learners enable them throughout their lives and become self-supporting and hence fight against poverty.

Also, 75% of teachers agreed on the statement that entrepreneurship skills and job placement skills offered to children and youths improve the quality of their lives while 25% were neutral. This implies that training learners on entrepreneurship and job placement skills help them in their lives as majority of learners utilizes these skills in various ways to generate income as supported by responses from majority of teachers.

Furthermore, 50% of teachers were neutral and 25% disagreed on the statement that school requirements offered to children and youths improves their intellectual development while on the other side 25% of then agreed on the statement. This shows that the provision of school requirements like school fees, uniforms, shoes, exercise books and all others requirement was not clear whether improve the intellectual development of learners

Moreover, 50% of teachers strongly agreed and 25% agreed that vocational training such as bakery, liquid soap making, weaving, bracelet making and computer classes offered to children and youths enable them to become self-reliant. On the other hand 25% was neutral. This indicates that most learners who engaged in various trainings at the Centre use these skills become self-reliant.

Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating how the project assists the less privileged children and youths on their cognitive development. The study found that children and youths were assisted by the project on their cognitive development through provision of all school requirements such as uniform, shoes, exercise books and all other requirements in their respective schools, they were offered trainings at the Centre on entrepreneurship skills like domestication of chicken and green vegetable cultivation, job placement skills, computer skills, weaving, batiki making, liquid soap making, bakery, bracelet making, tailoring and charcoal making and learners utilize these skills to generate income and become self-supporting.

Recommendation

Parents/guardians and the surrounding community should continue work in cooperation to support their children so that each child can get his or her rights as stated in the convention of human rights. The project should develop a funding strategy in order to support less privileged children rather than relying on only donor funds.

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