FINANCING MECHANISMS FOR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUITY AND CHILDREN'S LITERACY AND NUMERACY DEVELOPMENT IN TANZANIA

Aneth Komba, University of Dar es salaam, School of Education, Department of Educational Foundations Management and Lifelong Learning

komba@udsm.ac.tz

Abstract

This study explores: (1) the existing financing mechanisms in public pre-primary classes; (2) the equity implications of the existing financing strategies; (3) the implications of the existing financing mechanism for children's literacy and numeracy development; and (4) viable financing mechanisms for enhancing children's literacy and numeracy development while safeguarding equity across children in different geographical and economic settings. The qualitative research methodology and a comparative case study design were employed in rural and urban schools in the Dar es salaam and Pwani regions. Data were collected using documents, interviews and observation, and analysed using Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis framework. The findings reveal that, while the government has introduced pre-primary classes in all public primary schools, nothing has been revealed concerning the mechanisms for financing this level of education. Hence, the pre-primary classes in the studied areas were mainly financed and provided via private finance and the government provision mode, whereby parents paid fees varying from 500-3000 and 5000-15,000 Tanzanian shillings per month in the rural and urban districts respectively. This variation in fees contributed to variations in the quality and quantity of physical and human resources between the rural and urban schools, implying an unequal provision of pre-primary education across schools located in different geographical locations. Regarding human resources, the findings reveal the existence of an acute shortage of teachers who specialize in teaching pre-primary classes. Hence, schools either use primary teachers (usually those approaching retirement age) or part-time teachers (retired primary teachers as well as primary and secondary school graduates). Notably, part-time teachers were paid an allowance ranging between 30,000-50,000 and 50,000-200,000 Tsh. per month, in the rural and urban districts respectively. Indeed, the lack of proper financing mechanisms inhibited the children's acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. The study concludes by recommending that a viable equitable financing mechanism would enhance equity, as well as children's literacy and numeracy development.