Social Constructions of Street Children and National Policies

Assessing national policy implications of prevailing social constructions of street children, using aspirations and viewpoints of street children in Kenya’s cities as benchmarks

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The street children phenomena is a critical global issue that is in many ways a by-product of among other factors rapid globalization, structural adjustment programmes and increasing poverty and urbanization. In Kenya street children have become part of the landscape in most cities and towns. Since education offers a common solution to many of the world’s serious problem, children having to live and work on the streets is one of the problems that can be solved through education. In order of education to have the vast impact that is possible, all children should access that education.

In Kenya several strategies have been put in place one of them being the implementation of the free primary education (FPE) programme. Despite such efforts attaining education for all (EFA) has remained elusive. There still exists children on the streets during school hours. In view of this therefore this study seeks to find out the factors that might be contributing to the marginalization of some children to the streets and thus their exclusions from formal schooling particularly FPE.

The study seeks to explore the diverse social constructions of street children and to establish how this influences national policy decisions on the welfare of such children with a special focus on educational policies. The study will target street children on the streets, those in a rehabilitation institution and those in a formal primary schools. It will also be important to interact with various stakeholders such as officials from the children’s department, the ministry of education and other service providers.

A qualitative approach will be adopted to enable an indepth understanding of the research subjects. To ensure maximum interaction with the subjects in their natural environments, the data will be collected using informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). Content analysis of relevant publications, grey literature and journals will be done to identify gaps in the education policy reforms that might be contributing to the exclusion of street children from the FPE programme. Data analysis will be an ongoing process during the research. Validating the accuracy of the findings will be achieved by triangulating different data sources of information. The development of categories of themes through coding the information from the field will be done. These themes will be presented according to the relevant research questions.

The findings are expected to add useful insight to the debate on improving of quality, equity and relevance of contemporary education. The revelations should serve as a springboard for policy directives concerning these children.