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Curriculum development in an urban refugee centre in South Africa

Peter Pausigere



A research report submitted to the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education (Curriculum Studies) by coursework and research report.

Johannesburg, February 2010

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Curriculum Studies) to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.



Pausigere Peter

February 2010

DEDICATIONS

I wholly dedicate this research project to all Zimbabwean refugees and asylum seekers who have suffered and endured the pain of living in foreign lands.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation and sincere gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr Devika Naidoo, for her gentle and purposeful guidance, insight and encouragement right from the start up to the completion of the research report. I am equally grateful to Bishop Paul Verryn, the generous and kind father of the Zimbabwean refugees who granted me permission and unrestricted access to the refugee community, thus enabling me to undertake this study. Many thanks also go to the Head and teachers of the Refugee School, leaders of training centres, the various refugee committees, the refugees themselves and the accompanied and unaccompanied learners who in different ways participated in this research and willingly answered my questions. Without the co-operation of the above mentioned people, this research would not have been possible.

ABSTRACT

The Zimbabwean refugees sheltered at Holy Cross Church* in central Johannesburg have taken the initiative to develop their own curriculum. There have been many orientations to curriculum development with current reconceptualisations emphasising practical and descriptive curriculum development approaches. This research is framed specifically by Walker's naturalistic curriculum development model, the community-based approach to education development, literature on refugee education and generally by broader theories of curriculum. The study employed the ethnographic research method and gathered data through non-participant observation, interviews and document analysis. Taking a wider approach to curriculum development and in the context of displaced people, the research redefined the term curriculum developer to mean ordinary people and refugees in their communal social setting. This study provides an analysis and description of how the refugees successfully initiated and developed effective learning and training programmes which resulted in the establishment of a school, early childhood, adult-education and vocational training centres. The refugee meetings and school council deliberation forums guided by common values and political, social and economic factors made practically defensible, education and training resolutions on language, school policies, curriculum options, pedagogy, knowledge and certification issues. On the forms of refugee-emergency education, the refugee school curriculum followed that of the country of origin, with some minor modifications thereby preparing learners for return to their country. The training programmes utilised a slightly adjusted curriculum of the host country in synergies with local private colleges and prepared the refugees to integrate into the host country's economic communities. To improve the quality of education and training at Holy Cross there is need for intervention from government and international humanitarian organisations. In addition to the academic curriculum, subjects with a social reconstructionist ideology, double-shift schooling and democratic teaching and learning approaches must be introduced as well as awarding refugees with regionally recognised training certificates.

*(fictitious name)

KEY WORDS: *Refugee education, emergency education, refugees, community-based approach, naturalistic approach, curriculum development, deliberation, values, beliefs*

ABBREVIATIONS

ABET	Adult Basic Education Training
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders)
NACCW	National Association of Child Care Workers
NGO(s)	Non Governmental Organisation(s)
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund/ United Nations Children's Fund

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