

Maids Training Curriculum and Infant Care in Lusaka Urban, Zambia

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the curriculum used by Maids Training Centres in Lusaka urban in Zambia to train housemaids in infant care. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. Interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and questionnaires were designed and used to collect data. The findings revealed that the curriculum for training housemaids was verbal and did not include the component of infant care. It was found that maids training centers were not registered; their curriculum not approved by any organization and no quality assurance policy was in place. The study recommends that the curriculum for training housemaids in infant care should be standardized, quality assured and minimum standards for curriculum implementation be put in place. Therefore, it was felt that there was need for government regulation, policy guidelines and monitoring systems in the training process of housemaids in order to enhance infant care.

Keywords: Housemaids; Infant care; Curriculum; Training; Maids Training Centre

1.0 Introduction

Infants develop within the context of interactions with people in their lives. These interactions offer a sense of safety and freedom to explore, play and learn. These experiences set a secure base for later school success (Head Start, 2012). However, many child development studies dealing with parenting focus on mothers as the principal caregivers. Housemaids, as substitute caregivers have not been the focus of these studies. Some scholars acknowledge the important role of substitute caregivers for infants whose parents work outside the home but very few have taken a comprehensive examination of housemaids' role in infant care and more precisely the curriculum used to train these housemaids. In Zambia, housemaids are trained by Maids Training Centres (MTCs). The issue of training and the curriculum used by MTCs is very critical. This is because both training and curriculum determine the quality of care the infant receives. The limited studies in this area is despite the fact that many people across the globe grow up with a housemaid as substitute caregiver. The lack of research in this area has resulted in lack of documented knowledge and understanding of the role which housemaids play in the lives of infants especially in present day Zambia. Consequently the curriculum used by the trainers has not been interrogated.

According to Bilbao, et al. (2008) the term curriculum means different things to different people. Here are some definitions of what constitutes curriculum as presented by different people: a) the total learning experience provided by a learning institution e.g. a school or training centre (Kelly, 2009). It includes the content of courses (the syllabus), the methods used (strategies), and other aspects, like norms and values, which relate to the way the school is organized. b) The total number of courses of study given in a learning environment (Braslavsky, 2003). The courses are arranged in a sequence to make learning a subject easier. c) Curriculum can refer to the entire program provided by a classroom, school, district, state, or country (Hancock, Dyk, & Jones, 2012). A comprehensive curriculum is that which offers expanded daily support, guidance, and inspiration to instructors or teachers and housemaids as caregivers of infants. The curriculum in MTCs should be adequate for preparing trainees to give holistic care and facilitate learning and holistic development to infants.

1.1 Designing the curriculum used in maids training centers.

According to Taba (1962:421) "Curriculum design is a statement which identifies the elements of the curriculum, states what their relationships are to each other, and indicates the principals of organization and the requirements of that organization for the administrative conditions for which it is to operate.

A design of course needs to be supported with and to make explicit a curriculum theory which establishes the sources to consider and the principles to apply". Curriculum design takes into account not only the development of cognitive faculties of the learners but character development too. The curriculum design is always linked to selected philosophies of those who are involved in the design and development process. The developers of the curriculum for the MTCs should have all these factors in mind as they embark on the task.

The need for a curriculum in maids training programming cannot be over emphasized. It is widely recognized that, a curriculum acts as a guide to the personnel in training programme. It also helps to ensure that staff cover important learning areas, adopt a common pedagogical approach and reach for a certain level of quality across all learning groups and regions of the country. This is true especially in training programmes that prepare young adults like housemaids to take care of infants. Thus, a curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally, contextually and linguistically responsive, and comprehensive is likely to promote positive outcomes for all trainees. A maids training curriculum therefore, needs to be broad in scope in order to contribute to the infants' overall development. To achieve these outcomes however, there are a number of benchmarks that would culminate into an effective maids training curriculum.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The MTCs in Zambia are mostly privately owned and are not registered with the Ministry of Local Government and Housing. Housemaids in Zambia are generally employed to do house chore but they find themselves taking care of infants as well. Most parents prefer employing the trained housemaids to untrained. However, the content of the curriculum and length of the programme have not been documented in Zambia and are therefore of interest to this study.

1.2 The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the curriculum used in MTCs in Zambia, to prepare housemaids for infant care. Despite the availability of MTCs in Lusaka and parents hiring these housemaids, there have been no documented study on the curriculum being used in these centres.

1.3 Research objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To establish the type curriculum the maids training centers use in preparing trainee housemaids for infant care.
2. To determine the effectiveness of the curriculum used in training housemaids for infant care.
3. To establish the institutions that quality assures the curriculum for maids training.
4. To examine the content of the curriculum used by MTCs

1.4 Research questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What type of curriculum do MTCs use in preparing trainees for infant care?
2. How effective is the curriculum used in training housemaids for infant care?
3. Which institution(s) quality assures the curriculum for maids training?
4. What is the content of the curriculum used by MTCs?

2.0 Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used. The questionnaires used to collect quantitative data were: 1) questionnaire for trainers; 2) questionnaire for housemaids; and, 3) questionnaire for owners and managers of the MTCs. The second instrument used to collect data was the interview. The interview was in two forms that is personal interview, in-depth interview in the form of Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The FGD was recorded and later transcribed. Third, in order to examine the curriculum content and its implementation, document analysis was conducted. The different methods of data collection were used in order to triangulate the information obtained.

3.0 Data analysis

A mixed approach which involved a simultaneous triangulation of methodological and data sources was used during data analysis. Consequently, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures were used. The data obtained through interviews and FGD were analyzed thematically using content analysis.

Quantitative data from questionnaires was first coded, entered into the computer and later analyzed statistically using the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 16.0. This was aimed at generating simple descriptive statistics in form of frequencies, tables and graphs. While the two data types were analyzed separately, they were triangulated for easy interpretation. This was done by looking for key themes in both the qualitative and quantitative data, which could be put together into single categories.

4.0 Results

4.1 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The recordings obtained during focus group discussion were transcribed and themes categorized. The following were the main findings: From the FGD, it was clear that the curriculum that was used for training housemaids was verbal and was approved by the owners of the MTCs. The certificates too were issued by the owners of the MTCs. There are no government or independent bodies that quality assures the curriculum or issues certificates in Lusaka Urban. The verbal curriculum content was found to be: Home Economics; Housekeeping, Home Management, catering. None of the housemaids in the FGD indicated that they had any training or lessons in infant management, development, stimulation or care. The FGD described the curriculum as practical and hands-on. This notwithstanding, housemaids were required to take care of infants when their employers had an infant in the home.

4.2 Document analysis

The document analysis was conducted in order to examine the curriculum content as well as its implementation. Document or documentary analysis is a social research method and is an important research tool in its own right. It is a significant part of most methods of triangulation. It refers to the various procedures involved in analyzing and understanding data produced from the analysis of documents and records applicable to a particular study (Robson, 2011). Data was supposed to be collected from attendance registers, examination/test papers and results, student practical/internship records, timetables, lesson plans, schemes of work, teaching files. Other sources of secondary data were affiliation documents, names of current and former trainees, records of placement of these trainees after training, inspection reports and other documents related to the qualifications of trainers; owners and centre managers. The analysis of documents included documents that show ownership of the centre buildings and financial records.

The document analysis revealed that 90% of the MTCs visited do not have attendance registers and 85% did not have class lists. All of them (100%) did not have any written down curriculum to guide their training activities. They all did not have timetable or activity schedules to guide their teaching or curriculum implementation. The timetables were not written and planning of daily activities was done verbally in the morning of each day. The verbal plans were not segmented according to hours and subjects but a day could be allocated for just laundry and other days for cleaning windows or floors. This notwithstanding, the owners, who also acted as accounts clerks, kept records of all the trainees who paid for the maids training programme. There was neither a day set aside for learning anything in infant care nor were there any lecture notes or module prepared or given out. In addition there was no evidence of trainees' written work nor notebooks or lecture notes were found to indicate lectures take place. The document analysis further revealed that there were no schemes of work, lesson plans or evaluation reports nor tests are written by students but they were conducted orally and practically. The document analysis showed no evidence of the verbal curriculum including infant care.

In the training of housemaids there are no regulations and monitoring from either the Ministry of General Education or the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, the housemaids who graduate from these MTCs are not trained for infant care but are expected to give age appropriate care and stimulate learning in the infants. Document analysis also revealed poor record keeping as the records of previous trainees who had graduated from the centres were either absent or on pieces of unfiled papers. These findings were triangulated with the findings obtained from questionnaires of housemaids, trainers and the owners and managers of the MTCs.

5. Discussion

A curriculum for training housemaids helps trainees to understand that children are active constructors of knowledge and that development and learning are the result of interactive processes.

The curriculum for maids training programmes should recognize that infants' play is a highly supportive context for these developing processes (Piaget, 1952; Fein, 1981; Bergen, 1988; Smilansky and Shefatya, 1990;

Fromberg, 1992; Berk and Winsler, 1995). Play gives infants opportunities to understand the world, interact with others in social ways, express and control emotions, and develop their symbolic capabilities. Play provides a context for infants to practice newly acquired skills and also to function on the edge of their developing capacities to take on new social roles, attempt novel or challenging tasks, and solve complex problems that they would not (or could not) otherwise do (Mallory and New, 1994b). Vygotsky (1978) believed that play leads to development, with written language growing out of oral language through the vehicle of symbolic play that promotes the development of symbolic representation abilities. Trainee housemaids, who will be taking care of infants, should be helped to understand this and this should be in their curriculum. Curriculum goals should be clearly defined, shared, and understood by all (for example, programme administrators, trainers, and families). The curriculum and related activities and teaching strategies are designed to help achieve these goals in a unified, coherent way.

An effective curriculum is considered to be the type of curriculum that is based on evidence that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for the trainees who will experience the curriculum. It is organized around principles of pedagogy and learning. The content should be learned through investigation, play and focused intentional teaching. Trainees learn by exploring, thinking about, and inquiring about all sorts of phenomena. These experiences help learners investigate “big ideas”, those that are important to their career and are connected to later learning. Pedagogy or teaching strategies are tailored to learners’ developmental capacities, language and culture, and abilities or disabilities (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008).

The content and application of the curriculum builds on trainees’ prior individual, cultural-related, and contextual learning, is inclusive of trainees with disabilities, and is supportive of background knowledge gained at home and in the community. An appropriate curriculum is one that supports, trainees whose familiar language is not English in building a solid base for learning and later working with infants (Brown, 2015).

The curriculum ought be all-inclusive and cover critical areas of development including infants’ physical well-being and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; language development; and cognition and general knowledge; and subject matter areas such as science, mathematics, language, literacy, social studies, and the arts. It is necessary to have a comprehensive curriculum for trainee housemaids to adequately prepare them for infant care (Briggs, 2007).

Lastly, the subject matter ought to be authenticated by professional standards. This is depicted in subject-specific curricula that are appropriate, and meet the standards of relevant professional organizational organizations (Hubball et al., 2007). Other evidence indicates that the curriculum, if implemented as intended, is likely to have beneficial effects. These benefits include a wide range of outcomes. When evidence is not yet available, plans are developed to obtain this evidence. In order to ensure a dynamic and quality curriculum there is need to have a quality assurance body.

According to Schindler et al. (2015) quality assurance in any human resource preparation institution is a planned and systematic way of observing and measuring with a view of improving quality of services on a continuous basis. This should take into consideration the availability of resources. Quality assurance is intended to ensure that the services that are offered by MTCs are both cost effective and responsive to the needs of the trainees. The need for a standardized way of doing things, intensive training and supervision and the strengthening of supervisory and regulatory systems need to be established in Zambia.

The quality of training is always measured by the availability of adequate, contextually and culturally appropriate teaching and learning materials. These teaching and learning materials should also be appropriate for the attainment of the intended programme outcome. And in this case training housemaids for infant care.

Colombo (2007), noted that the curriculum used is considered relevant when it contains tools and techniques used to navigate the complexity of tasks by professionals and it also helps in ensuring that housemaids successfully gain comprehensive knowledge and skills of how to provide valuable services of good quality. In this case good quality infant care. According to Barber (1999), the curriculum used gives the trainees some hands on experience; therefore they obtain knowledge of principles and methods needed to attend to tasks and duties, hence, making it relevant in the training of housemaids. According to Groark and McCall (2011), the relevance of the curriculum is based on the fact that it encompasses knowledge, work style and work value aspects where knowledge on how to perform certain tasks is obtained and value addition to work is learnt. In this case quality infant care.

Furthermore, McCal et al. (2010), point out that its practical nature make the curriculum used to train housemaids for infant care relevant for it results in having housemaids that are warm, sensitive, skilled and responsive which

independent of other changes can positively impact infants development. Barber and Taylor, (2005), add on to say that the hand on curriculum used provides that kind of training that housemaids need in order to complete the job specific demonstrations successfully.

Frantz (2008), says in most cases the curriculum used is relevant in that it helps in transmission of essential skills to trainee housemaids. Hence, with these skills the housemaids can effectively attend to their duties effectively based on the knowledge and skills obtained. According to Barber and Taylor (2005), the curriculum that is mostly used by maids training centers is that which is not formal in nature but rather that which helps housemaids to learn their skills on the job while working with experienced trainers. The curriculum offers types of training that is most valuable, practical rather than theoretical promoting specific behavior changes in caregiving interactions and encouraging trainees to care for the infant as though they were it parents (Groark and McCall, 2011). Furthermore, Colombo (2007) says that the curriculum used is that which contains good background information, skills training and introductory information of a particular skill and how it is used on the job.

In the training of housemaids a competence based curriculum is also used. In this curriculum the course provides the trainees with so many competences that they can use when working, such as planning and organizing work, responding effectively to difficult/challenging behavior, providing care and support to children and to respond to emergencies. Learner Based curricula are available for entry level position of nanny and chambermaid in the United Kingdom and it is written for each position for the learner for the success of each task or duty carried out. The curriculum would assist in developing housemaids to a professional level (Glăveanua, and Gherghinescua, 2014). In Zambia, however, such curriculum is not available and housemaids take care of children in the absence of parents using trial and error methods of infant care. This puts infants at risk in their developmental trajectory.

5.0 Conclusion

The main findings for the study on the curriculum used by MTCs to train housemaids for infant care in Lusaka have been presented. Different methods of data collection were used in order to triangulate data obtained. The results however, show that there is no standardized curriculum in the training centres that also priorities infant care. The curriculum was found to be unwritten and was not quality assured.

It is therefore recommended that the Government of the Republic of Zambia should: a) Provide a standardized maids training curriculum for infant care; b) Recognize infant care as a specialized field; c) Acknowledge the important role housemaids play in modern day Zambian households where both parents work outside the home and all older siblings go to school and put in place policies to guide the training and monitoring of housemaids.

It is also recommended that the MTCs should: a) Meet the minimum standards for training housemaids in infant care; b) Put quality curriculum assurance mechanisms in place; c) Engage government on the need for a standardized curriculum for all MTCs that train housemaids for infant care.

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