

Issues of Child Right as Reflected in the School
Environment: the Case of Selected Kindergarten and
Primary Schools in Bhardar, Amhara National Regional
State, Ethiopia

Presented at European Teacher Education Network
Annual (ETEN) Conference

Austria, Vienna

From 21 – 24/2022

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Objectives of the Study

- To provide data assisted results on child rights in the school environment
- To show the gaps of practices under implementation to aware children on their rights and obligations in schools
- To share experiences of instructional mediums laid out to relate children with their rights and obligations

Introduction

This study is conducted in Amhara one of the constituting regional states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia .

Ethiopia is bordered by **Eritrea to the north, Sudan to the west, Kenya to the south, Somalia to the east and Djibouti to the northeast.**

It is Population in **2022 is about 120,146,540 million**

More than **28 per cent** is aged **15 to 29**.

Youth unemployment is estimated at **nearly 27 per cent**.

One reason for the high youth unemployment rate is **low literacy (68 per cent)**.

A Brief Overview on the Ethiopian Educational System

- There is some ***pre-primary education for children aged 4 to 6 years but provision is patchy.***
- Primary school education has **two cycles from age 7 to 10 years (grades 1 to 4) and from age 11 to 14 years (grades 5 to 8).**

- Regional exams are taken at the end of grade 8 (Primary school certificate exam).
- Secondary education has two cycles from **age 15 to 16 years (grades 9 and 10)** and from **age 17 to 18 years (grades 11 to 12)** leading up to the **national exams**.

- The Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE) is taken at the end of **grade 10** and **requires a pass in at least 5 subjects to pass to the next level.**

- The Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination (EHEEE) **is taken at the end of grade 12.**
- Students passing the EHEEE are **eligible for university if their grades are sufficiently high.**
- Alternative basic education (ABE) **provides flexible, community based first cycle primary schooling for out of school children.**

- **Students leaving at the end of grade 10 can go to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions or colleges of teacher training (CTT).**
- **TVETs provide an alternative route to university.**

Child Rights and International Covenants

The Implementation Handbook of the UNCRC incorporates the ethical aspects of administering discipline to the obligations in article 19 of the UNCRC.

The article underlines children's right to protection from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse" (Hodgkin & Newell 2002, p. 424).

In particular, UNCRC has made it clear that all forms of physical punishment, however light, are unacceptable forms of discipline in schools or elsewhere (Hodgkin & Newell 2002).

Children are among the most vulnerable members of any society and therefore require special care and assistance.

Conceptually, the rights of children regarding education are enshrined in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

That article also states that parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present conventions.

During the past decade, the educational discourse on children's rights to education in developing countries, has tended to focus primarily on access to education for all.

Ethiopia has made tremendous progress in achieving universal primary education (EFA, 2015).

Rationale of the Study

The study aims at examining the mechanisms in place to aware issues of children rights reflected in the school environment.

Studies conducted to understand the right of children in the school environment are dearth and few.

Studies looking at children focuses on punishments to discipline students, school feeding and achievements.

Demealsh and Elisabeth (2019) reported that children are exposed to various forms of physical punishments in schools.

Evidence from previous studies also indicates that children living in difficult economic situations demonstrated their honesty by helping their families and meeting their own needs through (street) work (Daniel, 2017).

It is, hence, the studies conducted focused on the psychological and social impacts children learn as a result of the school environment.

This study is thus projected to examine the platforms laid out to aware children about their rights and obligation, as reflected in the school environment.

Methods of the Study

The study is a case study by design. The case in point accounts children and teachers reflection on child rights and obligations in the school environment.

As Stake (1995) noted, case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case with the aim of understanding its activity within its specific context.

The unit population of the study were children, teachers, principals, and members of parent–teacher associations (PTAs).

The schools and interviewees were selected using purposive sampling following the criteria suggested by Herbert and Irene (1995, p. 66) to select informants more proximate to the study undertaken.

In the study, 6 children, 6 teachers, 3 principals and 6 members of parent associations in the schools participate

The case study combined semi-structured interviewing and questionnaires; underpinned by non-participant observation in the schools where the study was undertaken.

The semi-structured interviews held with individual principals, teachers, children and

The interview took 90 minutes with each participant and was concluded in two weeks.

All research material was initially prepared in Amharic (local language in the study area) and translated into English by employing language experts to maintain the accuracy of translation.

In addition, the study employed observation as a means to check whether the acts listed in the questionnaires are still present.

The observation was conducted for a week in three primary schools and grades undertaken into observation were 5 to 8.

The local researcher being together with his one male and one female assistant observed the situation carefully across the whole day.

Findings of the Study

Awareness raising and usage of mediums

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia constitution clearly stipulates to use all means of medium instruction to enhance the awareness of children in schools.

Schools post various information on the wall to help students know about the Ethiopian constitution.

One interviewee said that the constitution is well communicated, even though there are grievances listened from the public on the acts enacted.

It is totally unjust document and approved by few groups and individuals in power

Teachers Cynicism on Children Awareness of the Rights and Obligations

One interviewee said that children learning in kinder garden are nearly below age seven.

Hence, it is impractical and not important to raise their awareness on their rights and obligations during this age.

The Role of Clubs and Mini Medias

All the schools have mini medias to transmit various information including the democratic rights and obligations reflected in various covenants and constitutional orders.

Schools agree that in addition to the mini medias students civics education is the one keen to raise their awareness on their rights and obligations

Exercising Democratic Rights

They are encouraged to exercise their democratic rights in various ways.

But to some extent influenced by patriarchal mentality .

Protecting children from any form of abuse is strictly prohibited by the Ethiopian constitution.

Students exercise their right in the time of electing class representatives or members of various clubs such as HIV prevention, sport, and student clubs.

They have no any place where they do exercise their democratic rights than in the class.

The gaps here is that the environment in the school setting is not freeing them to freely reflect what they feel about their rights.

It is confined with strict rules suppressing children to speak up their feelings unreservedly

Sessions of Dialogue and Developing Tolerance

- There are no sessions of dialogues to help students develop tolerance.
- Most of them are not well aware of what democratic right mean in general and treating ideas equally.
- Lack of sessions of dialogues in the school, as said by the interviewees, weakens the sentiment of tolerance among students to view ideas positively.
- The curriculum by itself did not invite students to carry dialogues.

The Focus of Mini Medias in School Setting

- The mini medias motivate students to be hard worker and score good result, aware the importance of education to shoulder up the responsibilities of the future Ethiopia.
- They inform the importance of educational competition, love their country, respect each other children, teacher and their family.
- Despite all, students are not supported by the mini medias to get knowledge on the rights and obligations claimed in the constitution of the country.

Conclusion

The study was able to discover that students are getting lesson from various forms of communications posted on the wall.

Teachers scepticism towards the constitution is reducing their motivation to make students informed about the rights and obligations ascertained in the acts.

Lack of the curriclums to entail the major acts is seemingly a greater gap creating the loop to students learning

The mini medias released every day during the flag ceremony in the morning are recounted

Little attention given to exercise the democratic rights in school settings are considered as blockade to get room for more

Students are not exposed to dialogue to develop the mentality of accepting facts in reason and justifications

Many Thanks for Your Attention!
Questions And Comments!