

The Role of Community-Based Early Childhood Programmes in Children Learning: The Concept of Funds of Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

In Turkey, the Government aims to implement a community-based early childhood programme for those who come from economically disadvantaged areas. This is highlighted in the 2023 Education Vision, which was released in 2018. Nurseries, local educational authorities and other local institutions such as municipalities in such areas are expected to prepare for the community-based programme. The goal of this study is to examine the implemented community-based early childhood programmes in different countries and to indicate how such programmes connect homes and communities to school. This study reviews literature on community-based early childhood programmes in different countries. It shows that such programmes can develop children cognitive and language skills, and readiness for future academic life. It also suggests that community-based early childhood programmes need to focus on how children transmit their learning from home and community to school, and from school to home.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education has a great impact on young children development. For example, young children's brain grows more rapidly in the first three years than later years (The EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006). Early childhood education enables a child to complete basic skill and have a chance of getting out of poverty and disadvantage (The EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006). In recent years, the Ministry of Education in Turkey has aimed to develop a community-based early childhood education. In 2018, the Ministry of Education released the 2023 Education Vision, which highlights the Government goals for all school levels. With regard to preschool education, the Government aims to initiative a community-based of early childhood education. The goal is to provide preschool education to those who come from disadvantaged areas and are from immigrant families. This study reviews studies examining the role of a community-based early childhood programmes in such children learning in different countries and Turkey. Here disadvantaged refers to being deprived of economic recourses and not having access to preschool education because of geographic location. This study then continues to discuss sociocultural approaches that argue that children draw on learning from home and community to develop their school learning. This study further argues that learning is intimately linked to context in which a child lives and suggests that community-based programmes need to connect homes and communities to school.

Situation of the Problem

The Ministry of National Education aims to implement community-based early childhood programmes for disadvantaged children. However, it seems that researchers and scholars have not paid enough attention to community-based early childhood programmes, for example, how these programmes were implemented in different countries. This study seeks to examine such programmes implemented in different countries. By doing so, it aims to contribute our knowledge of community-based early childhood programme.

Aim of the Study

The goal of this study is to point out the gap community-based early childhood programmes leave between home and communities, and school. Although community-based early childhood programmes have a profound impact on young children development, there is still a lack of recognition of the importance of learning from homes and communities in such programmes. To achieve this, programmes should focus on what children bring with them from homes and communities to school.

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Literature Review

According to Dunne et al. (2016), the goal of community-based early childhood programmes is to support communities and families that face poverty and socio-economic deprivation. These communities and families can be those who are far to be reached, migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. The authors argue that community-based programmes are different from standard early childhood programmes as they aim to provide those who may not attend early years settings with early childhood education. These programmes can be supported by governments and voluntaries. Such programmes can be integrated into preschool settings, community centres and other centres such as municipalities (Dunne et al., 2016). Similarly, Brinkman, Hasan, Jung, Kinnell and Pradhan (2016) conducted a project, which aimed to examine the impact of community based early years services (mainly playgroups) on young children in rural Indonesia. 300 villages and 50 districts of Indonesia participated in this project. The goal of their project was to increase the awareness of the importance of early childhood development among selected communities. Communities were provided with funding to establish or develop preschool services to which they send their children. The age of participant children varied from 1 to 6. The majority of selected communities established playgroups. Methodologically, the project used experimental and non-experimental methods. The main finding of Brinkman et al.'s (2016) project was that the project improved participant children's development and their readiness for later schooling. Other findings were that the project developed children's language and cognitive skills, improved emotional development of 4 years old compared to those who did not have access to such services provided by the project. What Brinkman et al.'s study showed was that low cost of community based early years programmes can improve and develop skills such as language, cognitive and academic readiness of children who have disadvantaged backgrounds (Brinkman et al., 2016).

Another study was conducted by Munthali et al. (2014) to investigate the impact of community-based early years centres on children learning and development in Malawi. These early years centres were facilitated by the government and managed by communities themselves. Their research methods were questionnaire and participant observation. These communities provided buildings and support for caregivers. They provided early years centres with kitchen utensils. They also provided participant children with food and play materials. Their study suggested that these early centres improved participant children's cognitive and mental development (Munthali et al., 2014). Examining different early child education programmes in different countries (Haiti, Uganda, Trinidad and Tobago, Kenya and Pakistan), Kirpal (2002) argued that a successful early years programme has the following features: "child-centred approach, parental involvement and family support, community ownership, cultural and financial sustainability, and building capacity" (p.298).

In Turkey some scholars also paid attention to the role of community-based early childhood programmes. For example, Kağıtçıbaşı and her colleagues conducted an early childhood programme to support young children who had a lower socioeconomic background in Istanbul. They also trained mothers of these children to develop their children's cognitive skills and self-care skills (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010). In 2013, the Ministry of Education released a guideline for community-based early childhood education. According to the guideline, local institutions should aim to provide children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This guideline defines community-based early childhood programmes as:

- a) supported by municipalities, other local institutions, NGOs and communities
- b) reaching those who do not have access to early childhood education, refugees and minorities such as Roman
- c) free, flexible (they can be part time or full time) and run by play bus

According to this guideline, community-based programmes can be run by partnerships of different local institutions such as municipalities, local education authority and NGOs. It aims to provide socioeconomically disadvantaged children with early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2013).

METHOD

In this study, studies on the importance of community-based early childhood programmes are reviewed. Although it does not specify a period of time in which reviewed studies were conducted, this study mainly focuses on recent studies. In this study, documentary data is also used as a data collection method. Bowen (2009) highlights the use of documents as a way of gathering data about a context within

which participants participate. This study uses official documents as a data collection method. These documents include 'the guideline for community-based early childhood services' and 'the 2023 Education Vision', published respectively in 2013 and 2018. These documents were published by the Ministry of National Education. This study analyses these studies to compare them with community-based early childhood programmes in different countries. Documentary data can inform us about the aims of an institution and its principles. In this case, documentary data informs us about the goals of the Ministry of National Education for the community-based early childhood programme.

Discussion, Conclusion

In this study, community-based early childhood programmes have been reviewed in terms of different children developmental areas such as cognitive, language and readiness for future schooling. It seems that these programmes mainly used quantitative methodology. So, many of them relied on figures and numbers. However, qualitative approaches, which Moll et al. (2005) used for the concept of funds of knowledge, "subjective and holistic" (Greig & Taylor, 1999, p.47). This study argues that each child's understanding, knowledge and sense of value and meaning emerge his or her interactions with others. In other words, community-based early childhood programmes need to take the process of children learning into account. By doing so, they can observe skills and learning children acquire as the time progresses. This can also be helpful for classroom practices. For example, Rodriguez (2013) suggests that teachers can develop their instructional practices by integrating what children bring to school.

Another important finding of reviewing programmes was that studies seem to do not focus how children transmit their learning from homes and communities to schools. Although these studies highlight the role of community-based programmes in young children development, they do not pay attention to the importance of learning from household and communities in learning in schools. This study argues that a community-based programme, aims to develop young children learning and prepare them for future schooling, needs to examine how children from disadvantaged areas draw on their home and community learning. In this study, different community-based early childhood programmes have been reviewed and discussed in relation to the concept of funds of knowledge. Reviewing of literature has suggested that community-based programmes play an important role in learning of children from economically disadvantaged areas and do not have access to early childhood education. This study has highlighted that sociocultural concepts such as funds of knowledge can be used to analyse how children from lower socioeconomic background and ethnic minorities such as Roman draw on their learning from homes and communities to develop their learning in classroom activities such as language and cognitive skills.

This study suggests that community-based early childhood programmes are important to provide disadvantaged children with education and services. It also suggests that new community-based programmes can have new approaches that help disadvantaged children to connect homes and communities to schools.

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