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**Educational Practice in Community-Based Childcare Centre in Malawi**

### **Research Objective**

The objective of this study is to analyze educational practices in Community-Based Childcare Centers (CBCCs) in Malawi.

### **Background**

Research on early childhood education in developing countries has recently focused on the effects of early childhood education and the measurement of skills based on specific indicators. However, studies analyzing the actual educational practices in preschool facilities are very scarce (Miwa, 2016). Preschool education has been highlighted in global education goals, such as the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), which call for improved access to high-quality facilities. Early intervention from infancy is believed to contribute to poverty reduction, mitigation of inequality, and reduction of social and economic costs. Additionally, the development of non-cognitive skills is crucial during early childhood, with significant impacts observed, especially among impoverished groups (Heckman & Savelyev, 2012). Furthermore, preschool education serves as a preparatory stage for primary education, reducing repetition and dropout rates in lower primary grades and influencing academic performance in primary education.

### **Early Childhood Education in Malawi**

In Malawi, the number of preschool facilities has significantly increased, from 7,801 in 2007 to 12,220 in 2018. Preschool facilities are mainly divided into free CBCCs and paid facilities, with CBCCs accounting for 70% of all preschool facilities. In Malawi, there are no formal institutions for training childcare providers. Most receive a two-week training conducted by the government or aid organizations, with 47.3% of childcare providers having received such training (MoGCDSW, 2021). Additionally, CBCC caregivers are typically unpaid volunteers. The government has issued a national curriculum and caregiver guidebooks for early childhood education.

## **Methodology**

The study was conducted in Nkhata Bay district, located in northern Malawi. The subjects of the study were 17 caregivers and 29 community members from five CBCCs. In each CBCC, two days of activity observation and semi-structured interviews with caregivers were conducted, along with focus group discussions with community members. The fieldwork was carried out in September 2022, May 2023, and December 2023.

## **Findings**

Educational practices varied across the CBCCs. All facilities primarily focused on school readiness, with teacher-led activities emphasizing memorization of calendars, alphabets, numbers, and names of body parts. The national curriculum issued by the government was not observed in any of the CBCCs studied, although some facilities had caregiver guidebooks. This discrepancy is because many CBCCs were established before the government's recent interventions.

Facilities A, B, and C had about half of their caregivers trained and implemented activities based on their training and personal ideas. Facility A operated with a structured timetable similar to primary education. Facility B relied on the caregivers' knowledge, while Facility C had caregivers who created and followed activity plans. On the other hand, all caregivers in Facilities D and E underwent a two-week training provided by donors and conducted activities based on the books obtained from the training.