



Migration And Education Experiences Of Refugee Children In The East Region Of Cameroon: Appraisal From The Perspective Of Barriers To Effective Schooling And Proposed Strategies To Overcome These Barriers.

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ABSTRACT

Education is vital and recognized as a universal human right yet more than 70% of refugee children in the East Region of Cameroon do not effectively school. This study investigated the pre and post migration and education experiences of refugee children in the East Region of Cameroon. Two hundred and eleven refugee children, two head teachers, seven teachers, ten parents, one regional delegate, two workers of UNHCR, two workers of the Red Cross and two community leaders participated in the study. Both qualitative and quantitative designs were used. Questionnaire, school and classroom observations and individual interviews were used to collect data. Results revealed that academic barriers like absenteeism(79.9%),fast methods of teaching (58.8%),lack of academic/parental support at home (33.5%),economic barriers like low socio-economic status of parents (35.5%),hunger and starvation (36.7%),socio-cultural barriers (7.7%),and psychological barriers(14.0%), have a negative effect on effective schooling thereby leading to high dropout rate. Informal schooling,provisional of educational needs, modification of curriculum and pedagogic practices, additional/specialized programming, modeling/mentoring by nationals and resident refugees, community participation and a favorable school climate were proposed strategies to overcome these barriers. Collaborative efforts of policy makers, administrators, teachers and service providers to ensure access, quality, equity and relevance in education for refugees were recommended.



KEY WORDS: Migration, Refugees, Barriers

Introduction

Since 2006, there has been an unprecedented increase in the influx of refugees from neighboring countries like Chad, Nigeria and Central Africa Republic (CAR) to Cameroon (Press T.V February 2014). Following this reports, as of March 2013, 44.252 refugees from CAR sought refuge in Cameroon and of recent, Cameroon Calling News of 22nd Dec. 2013 mentioned that 5.3000 refugees entered Cameroon from CAR with approximately half being children. Most of this war displaced and refugee children stay in boarder towns like Garoua-Boulai, Kenzou and Yokadouma in the East and Ngawoui, Yamba and Gbatoua-Godoli in the neighboring Adamawa Region.

These refugees are at high social risk and as a result, lose social stability and access to education through many of their experiences (Boydem et al., 2002; Tolleyson, 1989). Consequently, these children may suffer from inability to life long learning, growing unemployment and social alienation there by reducing economic and social opportunities available to them in their country and the host country.

The increase in the number of refugees in Cameroon has generally not been accompanied by appropriate education and other specialized support specifically targeted to assist these refugees from disrupted schooling background and ethnic diversities. As education is vital for refugee children's social adjustment, the 1951 convention relating to the status of the refugee affirms in Art.22 the responsibility of the government of the country of asylum to provide education for refugees. Further, the United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Executive Committee in 1992 asked that "the basic primary education needs of refugee children be provided and that even in the early stages of education, requirements should be identified so that prompt attention may be given to such needs, (Conclusions and decisions 31 (d) 1992)



Statement of the problem

The East Region of Cameroon for the past 10 years has experienced growth in the number of refugees from CAR., with more than half of them being children of school going age. These children have traumatic experience that can cause them to experience greater difficulties adjusting to and integrating into new society and may be slow in learning academic concepts, skills and new language (Praire Center of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration (PCELL) and population Research Laboratory, 2001; Mac Kay & Tavares, 2005).

The UNHCR (2002) stated that education is not only a fundamental human right but also an essential component of refugee children rehabilitation. Despite this, the refugees in East Cameroon are at high risk because their presence has not been accompanied by policies to improve educational outcomes and enhance emotional well being for young people from war-affected backgrounds. Educators and those who work in the school environment are considered key elements in facilitating socialization and acculturation of immigrants (Hones & Cha, 1999; Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton, 1990).

Unfortunately, because of refugees' distinct cultural and social background accompanied by disrupted schooling, refugee children/ families find it difficult to interact with those who work in the school system (head teachers, teachers, support staff, parents) in Cameroon. Likewise, classroom teachers are challenged by the task of providing educational intervention for diverse refugees. As a consequence, when teachers do not understand the needs, difficulties and experiences of these children, they frequently have different expectation. Such expectations and misinterpretations of these children lead to low academic performance, tracking, Stereotyping and labeling (Manning, 2009). The result is inability to lifelong learning as well as high dropout rates, growing unemployment and social alienation. This study is therefore an investigation into the Barriers to effective schooling for refugees in the East Region of Cameroon.

Purpose of the Study



The purpose of this study is to investigate the barriers to effective schooling for refugee children who are settled in the East Region of Cameroon, in order to gain an understanding of their unique education experiences, their barriers to effective schooling and the interventions that are promising for overcoming the barriers faced.

This study is carried out in the East Region of Cameroon. Bertoua which is the Headquarters of the region .Bertoua is located between latitude 4°28' and 4°40' north of the equator. It extends to Mandjou which is a Sub Division in the East Region and Bindia which is a village in Mandjou Sub-Division. The Map below (figure 2a) shows the areas in Cameroon where refugees are found and figure 2b shows the location of the study area.

Sketch map showing Areas where refugees are found in Cameroon.

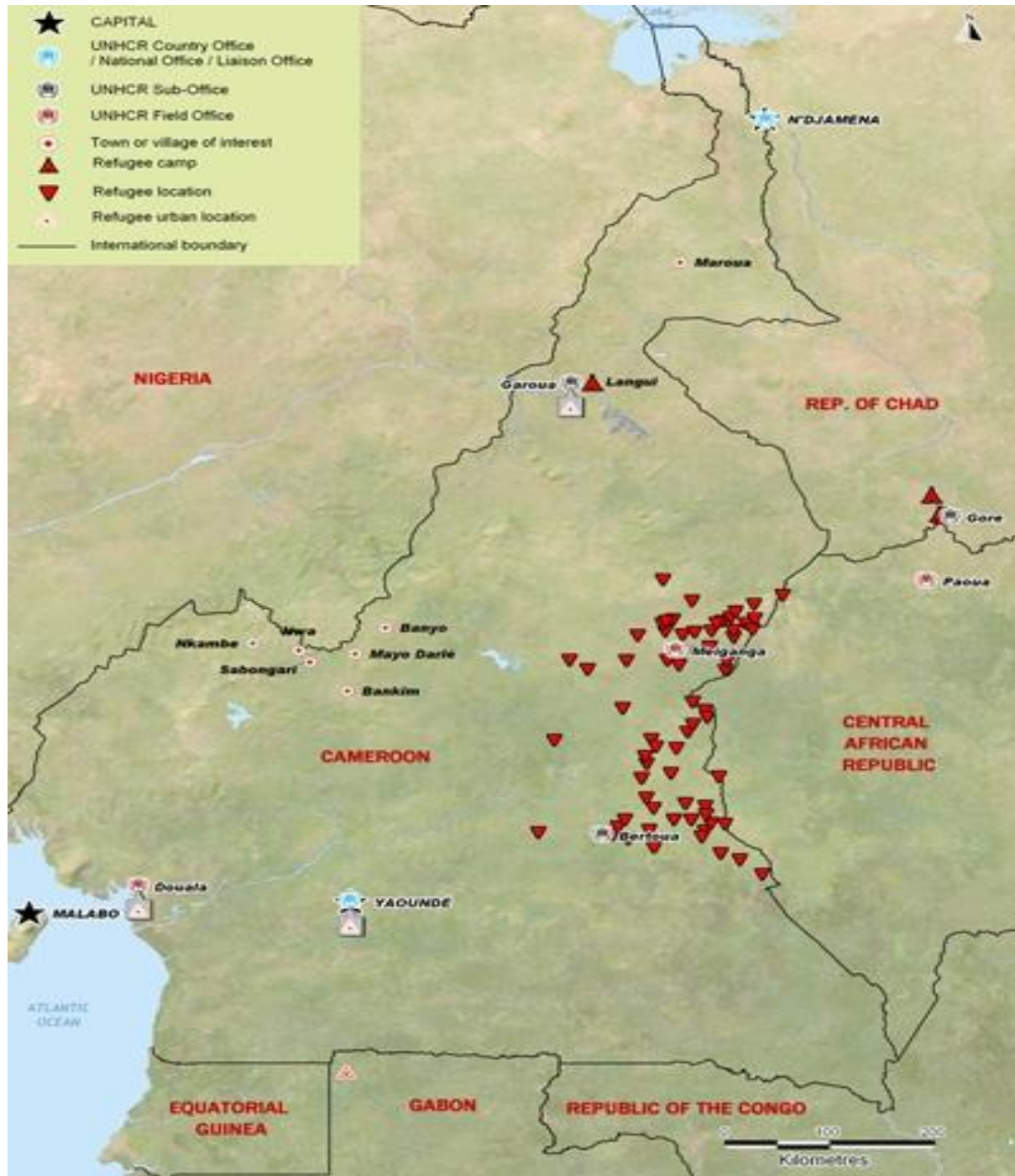


Figure 1: Areas where refugees are found in Cameroon.

Source: 2013 UNHCR country operations profile – Cameroon

Map of Bertoua and its Environs.

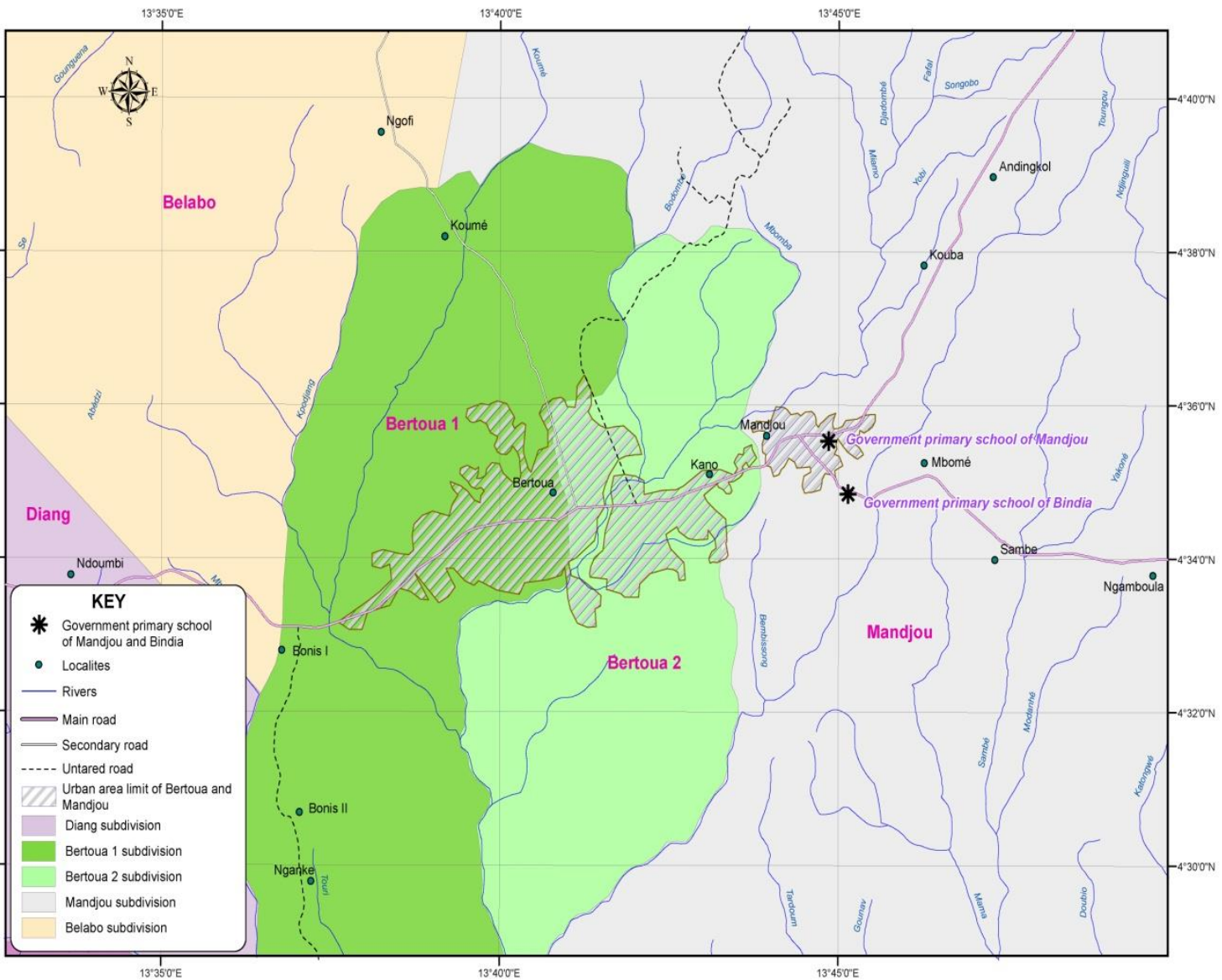


Figure 2:Source: Drawn by Zogning Olivier



BACKGROUND

The deterioration of security in Central Africa Republic, Chad, Nigeria, and Africans fleeing persecution during political instability represent traditional refugees to Cameroon. The last 10 years have witnessed a rapid growth in the number of refugees resident in Cameroon. The US Committee for Refugees and Immigration in its World Refugee Survey 2009: Cameroon reports that Cameroon hosted about 91.900 refugee and asylum seekers including about 65.200, from Central Africa Republic (CAR), 20.000 from Chad, 3.000 from Nigeria and several thousands more from Rwanda, The Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo Kinshasa), Burundi, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Liberia, among others (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2009).

Furthermore, following that same report, in February 2008, at least 37.000 people crossed a river into the border town of Kousseri to escape fighting in Chadian capital of N'Djamena. Mukete (2009) reports that as of 31 Dec. 2009, the exact number of refugees in Cameroon was unknown. According to census carried out by UN Refugee Agency between January and March 2008, Cameroon hosted a total of 97.400 Refugees and asylum seekers within the last quarter of 2007 and early 2008. This included 49.000 from CAR, 41.000 from Chad, and several others from Nigeria, Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ivory Coast. Most of these refugees live in urban centers like Yaoundé, Douala, Bertoua, Ngoundere, kousseri and Garoua.

Looking at the refugee laws and their right to education, Cameroon is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugee. This convention affirms in Art. 22 the responsibility of the government of the country of asylum to provide education for refugees. The fact remains that many of these refugees with disrupted schooling background do not receive basic education



in Cameroon. Though the UNHCR Executive Committee in 1992 asked that basic primary education needs for refugee children be provided, and even in the early stage of emergencies, their requirements be identified so that prompt attention may be given to such needs (conclusion and decision 31(d) 1992), Cameroon does not fully implement this decision. Attending school provides continuity for children and contributes enormously to their well being. For this reason education for refugee is a priority in terms of protection and assistance activities yet it is viewed as a luxury to refugees in Cameroon.

Following UNICEF reports of 2002, most of the traditional refugees to the Eastern part of Cameroon were hosted by the local community who shared all their basic resources with them together with educational resources. There were no refugee camps in 2002, but there was peaceful co-existence between Cameroonians and Central Africans, who were fleeing kidnappings and killings by armed groups and bandits in CAR. The refugees – primarily from the Mbororo ethnic group, which spans the region – are nomadic pastoralists and have a long history of shepherding their cattle across the Cameroon-CAR border. Their familiarity with the terrain and the local villages made relatively easy integration, as most of the refugees began living alongside Cameroonians from the early years of 2004. Moving away from the traditional pattern has also meant adjusting to village life for refugee families including schooling for Mbororo children. Before 2008, the host community welcomed them despite their cultural differences since they were few. By 2008 the school attendance in the East Region of Cameroon doubled filling already crowded classes with children from refugee families. Despite this increase, about two thirds of the 28,000 refugee children were not still in school (Gilliam, 2009). Reasons can be attributed to social, political and economic factors. “They were about 150 students before,” explained the Director of the Manju Primary School in East Cameroon, Gilbert Nouab. “Now there are more than 300.” Mr. Nouab said there are many more children who would like to attend school, but there is no infrastructure to support them: “We simply don’t have the buildings” (Gilliam, 2009).



The International Federation of the Red Cross is offering to help pay the school fees of children whose families are unable to do so, but if all the children were to come to school, there would be no place for them. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF has contributed to infrastructure where possible, yet resources remain insufficient (Gilliam, 2009). This clearly indicates that effective schooling for refugees in Cameroon over the past years has been a night mare.

Since 2013, many more refugees have sought refuge in East Cameroon and the host community can not support them socially, economically, and educationally as before. Also, due to several months of disrupted schooling, most of them have low level of education and skills coupled with limited resources provided by the host country. Even those who are schooling in Cameroon have several challenges to cope with at the beginning of their studies. They actually lack appropriate and sufficient support programs targeted towards them, consequently the quality of education they receive may be poor, number of study hours limited, there by affecting effective schooling which May have long term implications to society like ; drop out, teenage pregnancy, increase crime rate, prostitution among others.

In her survey of education designed for emergency situations, Sinclair (2001) argued that education should be viewed as an essential element of humanitarian response to crisis. Although funders often view education as a luxury alongside the essential needs of water, food, and shelter, Sinclair's report revealed a major need for successful adjustment (meeting the psychological and social needs of stressed and traumatized children through education). McBrein(2009) found that psychosocial wellbeing of refugee students (a predominant theme which includes a sense of safety, a sense of self, and an adjustment to the cultural expectations of a new country while maintaining connection to their heritage) and language acquisition where the main needs.

The school system is one of the first institutions that immigrant children encounter in their new country. In a study done by Davies (2008) on the adaptation of Sierra Leone refugees in New York City Public Schools, students identified the school as the most significant influence on their



adaptation. They were able to gain self-confidence, resilience, and the ability to overcome previous trauma they experienced as a result of the caring, sharing, trusting community created by the school. This contributed positively to their educational achievement. But most schools else where hardly provides such climate for smooth integration and adjustment of refugees.

Looking at adjustment as a major need, Sokoloff et al.(1984) had a close examination of the subjects. More than 90% of the 643 children included in their study arrived the USA in 1974 or 1975; thus Sokoloff, Carlin, and Pham examined those arriving in the first wave of exodus from Southeast Asia, generally those from the educated and financially well-off classes. In addition, 72% were adopted by American parents; only 8% were with their own refugee parents (20% were foster children); and the mean age was 5 years, 5 months. Therefore, the majority were welcomed into U.S. families as infants and toddlers. The researchers gathered information using three questionnaires (two completed by parents, one by any children over the age of 10, which excluded approximately half of the children from participating). Sokoloff and colleagues found that most adjustment difficulties were experienced and overcome in the first year after migration. The researchers concluded that the children and their families were thriving economically, physically, developmentally, emotionally, and socially. Sokoloff et al. (1984) defined "thriving" by stating that initial physical and mental health problems had dissipated, the children were making good progress in school, and very few families reported negative reactions to the children. This indicates that the easier the adjustment pattern of refugees to an environment the faster and better is their ability to cope in. school.

According to Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) framework of segmented assimilation, the receptive situation was positive and welcoming. Most of the children grew up in U.S. homes, largely separated from their first culture. Because they were babies upon arrival, they had not yet learned the cultural heritage of their homeland. Most did not speak Vietnamese. Thus most of the children in this study were highly assimilated into U.S. culture in a subtractive but upwardly mobile sense, and they were provided with family and social resources to accommodate their assimilation.



The findings of Sokoloff and colleagues (1984) were unique. Most discussions of psychosocial adjustment of refugees pointed to the difficulties of moving on from traumatic memories. One study indicated that after 5 years, more than 80% still had serious concerns about their separation from missing family members; nearly 70% retained stressful memories of the war and their flight from their home country; and nearly 60% were still homesick and worried about communication difficulties with friends and families still in Asia (Stein, 1980; as cite in Ascher, 1985). Once resettled, adults often took lower-skilled jobs with less status than those they had held in their home countries (Fernandez-Kelly & Curran, 2001). The Southeast Asian fear of "losing face" deterred many from asking for help or expressing their frustration. Also, the shame of rape and culturally different gender expectations added new stresses on families (Ascher, 1985). Because adults were anxious about these concerns, they were often ill-equipped to provide their children with the emotional support and positive models that they needed to succeed socially and academically.

In a review of literature on mental health and social adjustment for refugee children, Eisenbruch (1988) found that not only personal bereavement but also cultural bereavement is an important factor in a refugee child's adjustment and educational success. Basing his work on the theories of Erikson, Eisenbruch noted the significance of "uprooting" as a disruption of a person's concept of self. Eisenbruch stated that adolescents may have difficulty in balancing loyalty to family with the American ideal of individual progress. He concluded that schools can be centers for acculturation and that, effective teachers and programs can reduce environmental barriers and increase the child's sense of competence.

Eisenbruch emphasised that effective programs respect the native cultures of refugee children and allow them ample time to adjust and learn the language of their new host country. Eisenbruch argued that rapid acculturation can negatively affect children's ability to complete their grieving process and claim their cultural identity. Psychosocial adjustment is difficult to measure consistently because of the changing and inconsistent definitions of key concepts over time.



Researching on Southeast Vietnamese refugees, Nguyen and Henkin (1980) worked from a theoretical framework in which subtractive cultural assimilation was the goal. Using a 5-point Likert scale, Nguyen and Henkin tested 96 Laotian and Vietnamese high school students who were completing their fourth year in a U.S. school. In rating their perceived adaptation to their new schools, Nguyen and Henkin found that the refugees did not feel that they had adjusted. The researchers concluded that an important factor in the students' adjustment and success was their perception of acceptance and integration in the new school setting.

Mosselson's (2002) research with 15 adolescent Muslim refugee girls from Bosnia gives evidence of the complexity of the adjustment. Mosselson found that the girls worked hard to attain high grades (all had GPAs of 3.6 or higher), and that they were cognizant that their high achievement status moved them from being viewed as alien to an identity that could blend into the general culture. In this case, many stated that they worked hard in order to avoid the spotlight that academic deficits would create. A problem with this anonymity was that the girls' depression was also overlooked. Many of their experiences in U.S. schools were negative. One girl spoke of how alienated she felt in an all-girl Catholic school in which "everyone is blonde and everyone wants to get married and have babies" (p. 192). The same student said that teachers asked questions "like I came from some kind of jungle" (p. 192). She made a distinction between school, which she hated, and her U.S. education, which she loved. She became an A student and found that her academic achievement gained her some invisibility (in that staff no longer had concern for her, despite the fact that she was depressed). Mosselson pointed out that school success did not fit with the traditional psychosocial model of poor adjustment or depression, in other words, school success has nothing to do with level of adjustment. So, the students' needs which had to do with creating an enabling environment by the school authority for their psychosocial adjustment were ignored. In this case, some of the students were succeeding academically, but their psychosocial adjustment was poor.

Kanu (2008) carried out a qualitative study on the educational needs and barriers for diverse African refugee students in two inner-city high schools in Manitoba. Forty African refugee



students, two principals, eight teachers, four parents, and four community leaders participated in the study. Five focus groups, individual interviews, and school and classroom observations were used to collect data. Results revealed that academic, economic, and psychosocial challenges facing African refugee students adversely affected their ability to integrate and cope well in school. In the findings, cultural dissonance, acculturation stress; difficulty with academic skills, limited English language proficiency, academic gaps due to disrupted schooling, fast-paced curriculum, fear and distrust of authority figures like teachers, fear of speaking out in class, grade placement based on age and English language assessment tests rather than academic ability and lack of academic support were listed as some academic challenges faced by African refugees. These barriers may be similar to those prevailing in the East Region of Cameroon which has diverse groups of refugees.

Gitlin et al., (2003) noted that marginalizing practices such as placement in the school, lack of sufficient and quality curricula, and lack of ESL-certified teachers-were problems common with African refugee in the United States. The Prairie Centre of Excellence's (2001) study of Kosovar refugees in Northern Alberta supports the findings from Kanu study on student placement. The Centre's study revealed that over 50 per cent of refugee youth aged 15 to 18 years arriving in Canada were placed in inappropriate grades. Administrators in the East Region of Cameroon may encounter the same difficulties in the placement of refugee children in school and this may pose a problem.

The trauma experienced by refugee children can impede their ability to study. (Sinclair, 2001). Resettled infants can suffer from preverbal memories that surface in nightmares. Children relocated in their developmental period of rapid language acquisition and cultural socialization, are prone to language related learning problems and social confusion (Rong & Preissle, 1998; Sokoloff, Carlin, & Pham, 1984). Trauma experienced during flight, in refugee camps, and during resettlement causes many refugees to become distrustful or fearful of people in authority (Hynes, 2003). For school children, this group in authority may include teachers (Igoa, 1995).



According to data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) found an average of 3%-10% school attrition rate, depending on nationality, and 14%-25% "inactive" rate (this rate includes children who simply stopped going to school, although they may not have officially dropped out; it also includes those who may have moved to another district without officially transferring). School dropout of immigrant and refugee students results from a complex mixture of factors, including self-perceptions of their academic ability (House, 2001), antisocial behavior and rejection by peers (French & Conrad, 2001).

The problem of lack of parental involvement mentioned by Kanu (2008) confirms Smith-Hefner (1990) research on how the absence of parental involvement affects schooling for refugees. Smith-Hefner conducted a 10-month qualitative study in which she interviewed and observed 35 Khmer Cambodian refugees families in the Boston area. She triangulated these interviews with interviews of Khmer teachers, leaders of ethnic associations, and religious leaders, using both standardized questions to compare responses on key issues and open-ended questions to allow for individual responses and concerns. The researcher concluded that because of their spiritual beliefs related to identity formation and reincarnation, parents tended not to encourage their children to attend bilingual classes, even though they favored bilingual education. This negatively affected the children's performance in school. In line with the above, there exist some cultural diversity between Cameroon and Central Africa Republic and these differences may likely have an impact on refugees schooling in the East Region of Cameroon.

Follow-up research conducted by Smith-Hefner (1999) reconfirmed her earlier findings. In addition, she pointed out that most Khmer adult refugees had not attended school in Cambodia, so they had little experience of school by which to guide their own children. In general, U.S. teachers viewed Khmer parents as uninvolved and uninterested in their children's education. The Refugees in the study area are likely to face the same problem since their parents did not school in Cameroon.

Parents and parental involvement in their children's education are frequently cited as factors in student success. Data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (Portes & Rumbaut,



2001) indicate that refugee and immigrant children are positively affected by parental support and interest in their children's education. Although that support is not necessarily manifested in ways such as direct parental involvement or collaboration in the schools campus, the fact that the parents' shows moral support towards their children's education motivates the children. However, some parental factors were coded as obstacles to refugee children's success. For instance, because refugee parents frequently are victims of trauma, they are not always able to provide emotional support (Ascher, 1985).

Goldstein (1988) conducted an ethnographic study of two U.S. high schools and a Hmong community to examine how education for Hmong girls was shaped by their educational and societal environments. She supplemented her interviews of the girls with observations and interviews of school staff, family members, and community leaders. Goldstein's research examined Hmong adolescent girls in an academically demanding high school she named "Ashmont" and in a less competitive school, "Logan." Ironically, for different reasons, the Hmong girls were marginalized in both cases because of school policies. In Ashmont, the bilingual program separated the girls from the mainstream students; at Logan, a school that prided itself on racial/ethnic integration, the mainstreaming of low-English-proficient students kept them in low-level classes. Hmong female students generally exhibited docile behavior that teachers rewarded; however, they were not afforded advanced opportunities in academic classes. Gender bias is common among the Muslim refugees in Cameroon and the female refugees might encounter some academic challenges.

In both schools where Goldstein was an observer, the Hmong were relegated to classes that segregated them from their U.S. peers or placed them only in vocational classes. Goldstein (1988) observed that Hmong and U.S. students were ineffective in communicating with one another because the Hmong girls were not adept in the nuances of U. S. adolescent speech. Furthermore, U.S. students did not see that they had anything to gain from befriending Hmong. A weakness in the study was that teachers received a blanket indictment. Goldstein stated that they were more concerned with classroom order than with helping the Hmong in their



acculturation process. She did not point out any exceptions among school staff, although the range of her study was extensive. Goldstein concluded that the girls were trying to challenge the boundaries of gender expectations within their cultural societies but that they also experienced restrictions because of language limitations and marginalization by the dominant society.

The Norwegian Refugee Council report of 2013 indicates that Economic considerations, including transport costs and the cost of learning materials, are cited as one of the main barriers to education for refugees. The report indicates that as refugee numbers increase economic opportunities are becoming more limited and refugee households are less able to bear the costs associated with sending their children to school. Getting children and youth back to school will require support for transport, learning materials and other education costs, as well as greater livelihood opportunities to increase the overall income of Syrian refugee households.

Kanu (2008) carried out research on Educational Needs and Barriers for diverse African refugees in Manitumba and his work confirms that lack of economic resources available to the refugee students and their families posed a severe challenge for social integration and educational success for the students. More than half the 40 students who participated in her study reported holding full-time jobs (either from 4:00 p.m. till midnight or from 11:00 p.m. till 7:00 a.m.) to support themselves and surviving family members in Africa, and to repay or help parents and relatives repay money (loans) that the Canadian federal government has spent on their airfares, initial housing, and other refugee resettlement programs. The teachers agreed that a direct correlation occurred between the poor academic performance of the refugee students and the long hours spent on their full-time jobs.

Poverty also explains why many of these students and their families remain restricted to government-subsidized housing, often in rough, inner-city neighborhoods that the students characterized as “tough,” “full of gangs,” and “drug and prostitution activities.” The students reported living in constant fear of the gangs and drug dealers in their neighborhoods. According to one of the school principals in this study,



The answer to this question may seem obvious: Provide social services to facilitate refugee children's adjustment, provide language instruction for students and their parents, and combat discrimination. An evaluation of the Rapid Response Education Program developed to help children from Freetown, Sierra Leone, after the 1999 violence-indicated healing measures in just 2 weeks after implementation of the program. Recurrent mental pictures of traumatic events were reduced by 8%, sleep difficulties declined by 49%, and more than half of the children interviewed (the number is not given) reported a sense of relief when they drew pictures, wrote, or talked about their war experiences.

However, some proposed solutions have been unsuccessful. Three ESL programs that Gebhard (2003) researched on indicated that, two were problematic. Because language is important to refugee students' acculturation, one might conclude that rapid English acquisition is necessary. However, many researchers, especially those whose work has been published since the late 1980s, have warned against rapid acculturation (Ascher, 1989; Eisenbruch, 1988; Olsen, 2000). Both parents and teachers draw mistaken conclusions about cultural cues (Trueba et al., 1990), another example of good intentions going awry. For example, in the study by Trueba and colleagues (1990), the parents were often without the benefit of interpreters at parent-teacher conferences, and the parents misunderstood what teachers were asking of them. In the same study, teachers misinterpreted the Asian custom of smiling and shaking one's head up and down as understanding and agreement, when, in fact, it was the parents' way of being polite.

Using a sample of 150 Hmong students in three schools ranging from Grade 5 through Grade 12, Timm, Chiang, and Finn (1998) administered the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) to assess Hmong students' learning styles. The researchers found that students with the least amount of time in U.S. schools were most likely to have scores indicating field dependent learning styles. A field-dependent style is characterized by a student's preference for group work, the need for outside encouragement, and sensitivity toward others. In contrast, field-independent characteristics include the propensity to work independently, to be intrinsically motivated and self-directed, and to seek personal recognition for accomplishments. Timm and colleagues



pointed out that the field-independent and dependent learning styles are not indicative of high or low intelligence. However, according to Timm et al., U.S. teachers and administrators tend to associate field independence with higher intelligence. The researchers noted that characteristics of field-sensitive cognitive styles, such as attention to context and sensitivity to others, are valuable and that educators ought to consider ways to encourage both styles. The longer students had lived in the United States, the more likely they were to be field-independent learners, indicating cognitive acculturation patterns. The longevity of refugees schooling in Cameroon can determine the strategies school administrators can take to curb their challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of the qualitative research design though with some little triangulation. The decision to select qualitative design is based on the fact that qualitative design seeks understanding of a social reality and is more descriptive in its analysis. It coincides with Patton (2002) findings that qualitative design allows the researcher to get closer to the respondents and their environment to get their living testimonies and the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally. Realizing that the research was exploring new grounds, qualitative design was chosen to enable the gathering of information from the respondents via capturing their thoughts, accessing their feelings, emotions and imaginations on the case being pursued (Patton, 2002; Bryman, 2004). Another reason for the selection of qualitative design for this study is that, it allows for the researcher to probe or make inquiries into what the respondents are saying. Government primary School Mandjou and Bindia being a real world setting provided the opportunity where the researcher and the respondents were free in the interchange of ideas

The quantitative dimension of the study helped in weighing indicators and measuring the relationships among them (Nana, 2012). The cross-sectional survey design was adopted to facilitate the study. Surveys are used to gather data that cannot be directly observed from a sample of a population at a particular time. According to Babbie (1990), the basic idea behind survey methodology is to measure variables by asking people questions and trying to examine the relationship between variables. In most instances, the survey attempts to capture attitudes or

patterns of past behaviors. This study adopts the non- probability sampling and a typical sampling size of 217.

Population of the Study

The population was made up of the refugees, teachers, Head teachers and community leaders in Bindia and Mandjou, workers of the UNHCR and the International Red Cross in Bertoua, and workers at the Delegation of Basic Education in Bertoua. Table 1 below illustrates the population of the study area.

Table 7: Population of the Study Area.

Population category	No. of people
Refugees in schools	525
Teachers / head teachers	20
Community leaders	4
Refugee parents	150
UNHCR / Red Cross workers	10
Workers at the delegation of basic education	12

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Sampling Techniques

The purposive sampling was used in this study. According to Nworgu (1992: 55); as cited in Trochim (2004), " this design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data considered to be representative of the entire group." In this type of sampling, the researcher uses his/her judgment or common sense regarding the participants from whom



information will be collected. Seven categories of participants were involved in the study namely the refugee children, parents, their teachers, the educational administrators (Head teachers and Regional Delegate), and humanitarian bodies or NGOs and Community leaders.

Sampling of Refugees

The sampling of refugees was purposive because only the refugees schooling in the study areas were involved in the study. They were selected following a simple random sampling selection procedure whereby the heart and draw method was used in which yes and no was written and put in a plate. The refugees who picked yes were considered respondents. The number of pieces carrying yes was equivalent to the sample size.

Sampling of Teachers

The sampling of teachers was purposive and convenient whereby only those teachers who had refugees in their classes were sampled. Those available were selected until the targeted number of seven was met.

Sampling of Educational and School Administrators

The sampling of administrators was purposive where by only head teachers who had refugees in their schools were interviewed. Two head teachers and the Regional Delegate of Basic Education were sampled as school administrators.

Sampling of Humanitarian Organizations

This was highly purposive as only humanitarian organizations involved in humanitarian activities related to the refugees were involved. This involved the UNHCR and the Red Cross Organization and four of their workers were interviewed.

Sampling of Parents

Sampling was purposive as only the parents who had refugee children registered in school were interviewed. Four male and six female refugee parents willingly accepted to be interviewed.

Sampling of Community Leaders

Random sampling was used to select the community leaders and it was also based on their willingness to be interviewed. The Leaders of the refugees were interviewed in Bindia while another community leader (Cameroonian) was interviewed in Mandjou.

To obtain the sample size for refugees, all the schools in Mandjou and Bindia which had refugees were listed by population. Table 2 shows the schools with registered refugees and sample size.

Table 8: School with Registered Refugees and Sample Size

Schools	Population	Sample size
Government primary school Mandjou A	32	28
Government primary school Mandjou B	83	66
Government primary school Bindia	410	124
Total	525	217

Sample size was estimated using sample calculation for one population proportion proportion with the support of EpiInfo 6.04d (CDC, 2001).

$$n = \frac{NZ^2P(1-P)}{d^2(1-1)+Z^2P(1-P)}$$

Where N=total population (here 525 refugee children), Z= Z value corresponding to the confidence level, d= absolute precision, P=expected proportion in the population, n effective=n*Design Effect.

It was identified as key indicating driving force or indicator for effective schooling of refugees. Their academic performance conjecturing 80% pass considering drop-out as failure. The precision was 4%, a design effect (marginal error) of 1 given that simple random sampling was

used. Using a confidence interval for the prevalence at the 95% confidence level, the sample size was situated within a 95% confidence level as follows:

First of all we have to situate P within 95% CI using the formula below.

$$P - (Z_{\alpha/2}) \sqrt{pq/n} < P < P + (Z_{\alpha/2}) \sqrt{pq/n}$$

Where:

- P= prevalence
- n= sample size at a given expected prevalence (here 80%); considering this prevalence, a confidence level of 95%, a design effect of 1 and an expected precision of 4.
- q= 1-P
- $Z_{\alpha/2}$ =level of significance = 1.96.

The conjectured prevalence within 95% Confidence Interval (CI) was then obtained.

$$80.88 < 80 < 87.019.$$

Secondly, we could now calculate the sample size for the ranged values of P at 95% CI using the prevalence range and applying the formula above. For a total study population of 525, the estimated sample size at 95% CI calculated as explained above was $180 < 218 < 223$. This sample size was shared to the various schools after being weighted by the population size. Prospecting 10% missing for precautionary reasons, the minimum number of questionnaires to be administered were 198 though 217 questionnaires were finally administered based on Krejcie and Morgan (as cited in Amin 2005) assumption that if a population is between 500 and 550 a sample size of 217 should be used.

FINDINGS

The finding of this study was effected in cognizant to key variables set out to examine the underlying concerns.

Absenteeism and Dropout

Findings were done on the number of children who enrolled at the beginning of the school year and those who effectively attended school. The major barriers to effective schooling as perceived by school administrators and humanitarian bodies were high rate of absenteeism/ dropout, lack of parental support, and congestion in classes. This can be illustrated on table 9 and 10 below with data from Government Primary School Mandjou B

Table 9: Registration/Results /Dropout rates of refugee pupils for the first term in Government Primary School Mandjou B

Class	Registered			Present			Pass			Drop out		
	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T
1	18	9	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	9	27
2	6	9	15	4	4	8	3	2	5	2	5	7
3	4	9	13	3	5	8	1	4	5	1	5	6
4	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
5	2	2	4	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	3
6	3	0	3	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	2
Total	34 (53.1 %)	30 (46.9 %)	64	10 (29.4 %)	9 (30.0 %)	19 (29.7 %)	7 (70 %)	6 (66.7 %)	13 (68.4 %)	24 (70.6 %)	22 (73.3 %)	46 (71.9 %)

Table above shows that there were a total of 64 refugees who registered at the beginning of the term but only 18 stayed till the end with 46 (71.9%) dropping out in the course of the term.

Table 10: Registration/ Results/Dropout rates of refugee pupils for the second term in Government Primary School Mandjou B term

Class	Registered			Present			Pass			Drop out		
	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T
1	9	4	13	5	3	8	3	2	5	4	1	5

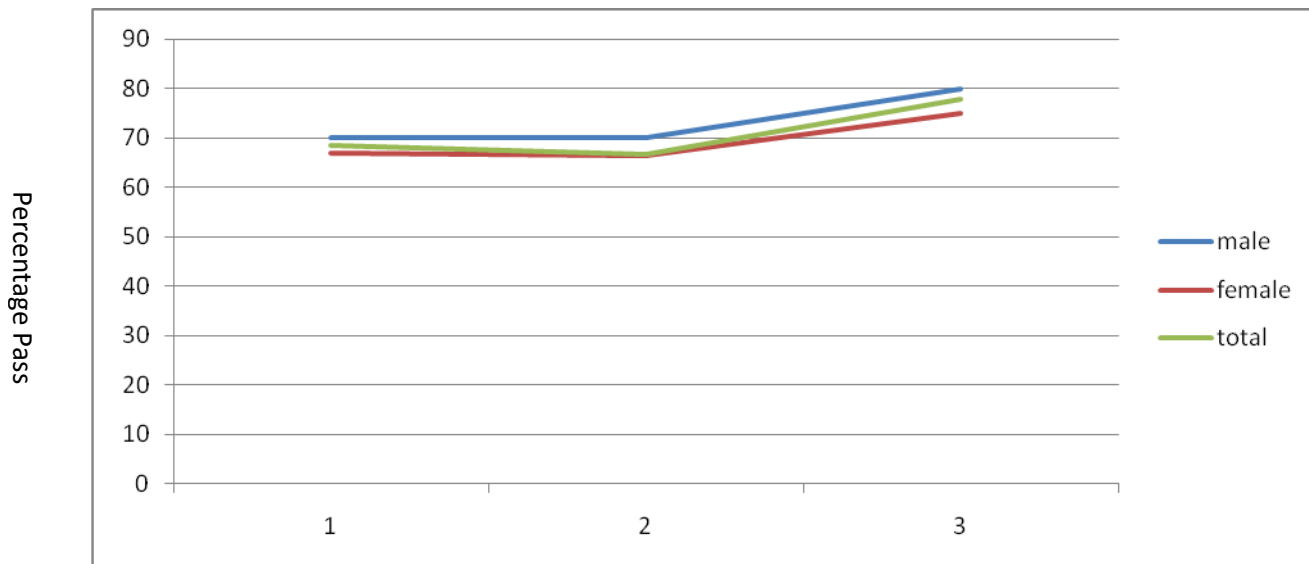
2	4	4	8	1	3	4	1	2	3	3	1	4
3	2	5	7	1	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3
4	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
5	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
6	2	0	2	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total	18 (56.3 %)	14 (43.7 %)	32	10 (55.6 %)	11 (78.6 %)	19 (59.4 %)	7 (70 %)	7 (63.6 %)	14 (66.7 %)	8 (44.4 %)	4 (28.6 %)	12 (37.5 %)

Table 9b reveals that 32 refugees were in school at the beginning of the term and 20 completed the term. 12(37.5%) dropped by the end of the term.

Table 11: Registration/Results /Dropout rates of refugee pupils for the third term in Government Primary School Mandjou B

	Registered			Sat			Pass			Drop out		
	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T	Boys	Girls	T
SIL	9	4	13	7	3	10	5	2	7	2	1	3
CP	4	4	8	3	4	7	3	3	6	1	0	1
CE I	2	5	7	2	4	6	2	3	5	0	1	1
CE II	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
CM I	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
CM II	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0
Total	18 (56.3 %)	14 (43.7 %)	32	15 (83.3 %)	12 (85.7 %)	27 (84.4 %)	12 (80 %)	9 (75 %)	21 (77.7 %)	3 (16.7 %)	2 (14.2 %)	5 (15.6 %)

The academic performance of the refugee children who actually completed the school year in Government primary School Mandjou B was really satisfactory with a total pass rate of 13 (68.4%) shared as 7 (70.0%) for the male and 6 (66.7%) for the female. Investigated between the male and female performance and performance by term was carried out as can be seen on figure 6 below.



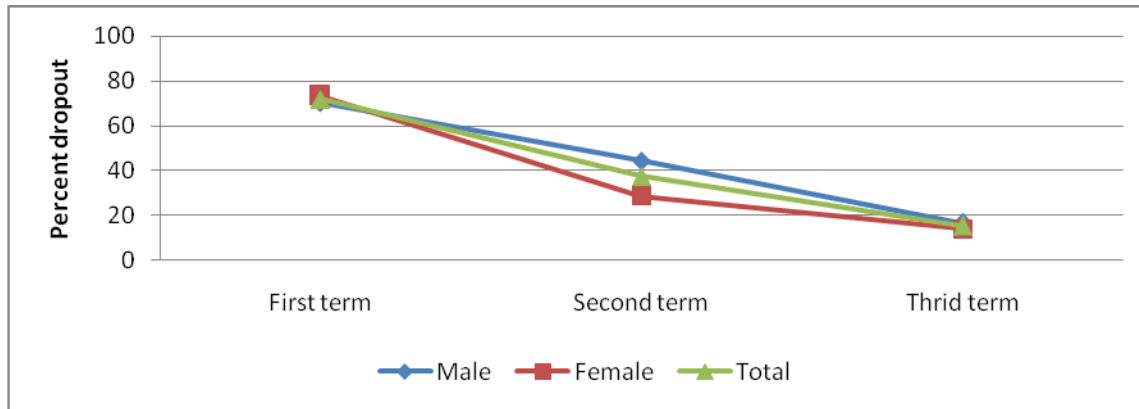
Comparing performance between male and female: χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=0.04$; $df=2$; $P=0.982$.

Comparing performance by term: χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=0.70$; $df=2$; $P=0.704$.

Figure 6: Comparing performance between male and female refugees and across terms

Figure 3 shows that the performance between the boys and the girls and by term was statistically not significant.

The rate of dropout was however really critical whereby 24 (70.6%) of the male dropout and 22 (73.3%) for the female making a total of 46 (71.9%) for the first term.



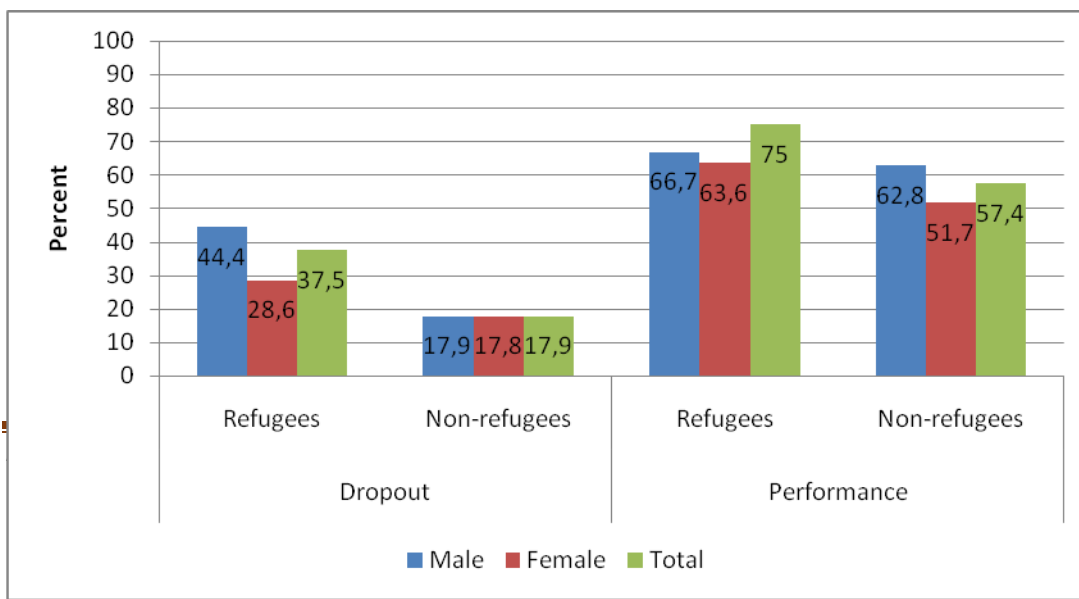
Comparing dropout between male and female: χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=2.68$; $df=2$; $P=0.304$

Comparing dropout by term: χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=29.35$; $df=2$; $P<0.001$

Figure 4: Comparing dropout between male and female refugees and across term

The dropout rate was high during the first term and drop drastically by the third term. The difference between the male and the female dropout was not too wide. Figure 7 shows that the difference between male and female dropout rate was how ever not statistically significant (χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=2.68$; $df=2$; $P=0.304$) but the difference between the drop out rate by terms was very significant (χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=29.35$; $df=2$; $P<0.001$).

According to investigations from the field, it was noticed that the rate of drop out was high among the refugees than the non refugees as can be seen on figure 8 below



Comparing dropout between refugees and non-refugees: χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=7.79$; $df=1$; $P=0.005$.

Comparing performance between refugees and non-refugees: χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=3.90$; $df=1$; $P=0.048$.

Figure 5: Comparing performance and dropout between refugee and non-refugee pupils.

The difference between the refugees and the non refugees considering these two parameters was statistically significant (χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=0.09$; $df=1$; $P=0.005$) as can be seen on figure 8 above. The refugees had a dropout rate of total 37.5% while the nationals had only 17.9%.

Lack of parental support

Ten parents were interviewed and their background information was distributed as presented on table 10 below.

Table 12: Parental Background of Refugee children

Background indicators	Categories	N0 (%)
Sex	Male	4 (40%)
	Female	6 (60%)
Schooling level	No formal education	6 (60%)
	Primary	2 (20%)
	Secondary	2 (20%)
Occupation	Housewife	3 (30%)
	Trader	5 (50%)

	Pastoralist	2 (20%)
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Majority of the parents 6(60%) that were interviewed were female while only 4(40%) were male. Only 2(2%) had gone above primary education while the rest had either primary or no formal education. 3(30%) were housewife, 5 (50%) were traders, and 2(20%) were pastoralist.

Findings were also done concerning the registration of their children in school from the parents and the findings are presented on figure 9 below.

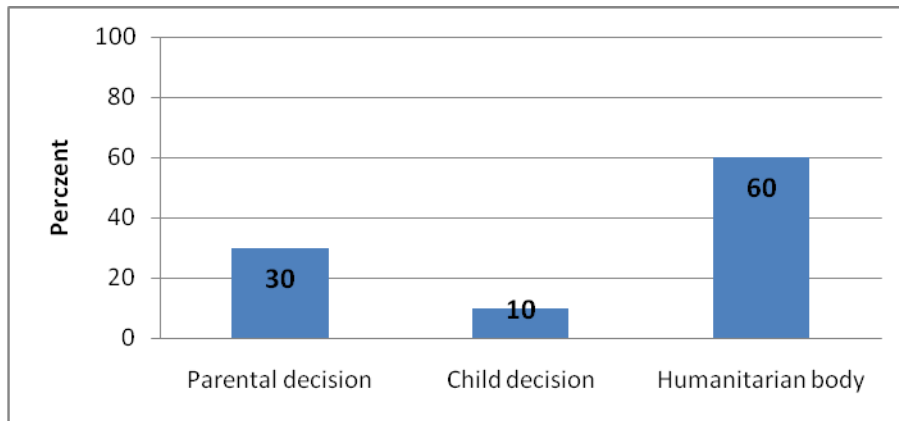


Figure 6: Decision on refugee children registration in school from parents' perspective

According to the findings, as can be seen on figure 9 above, 60% of the children were registered by humanitarian bodies while only 30% of the parents willingly registered their children in school. 10% of the children took their decision to be enrolled in school.

Investigations were done on why parents do not support their children who are schooling and the following reasons were advanced .Figure 10 below describes their reasons.

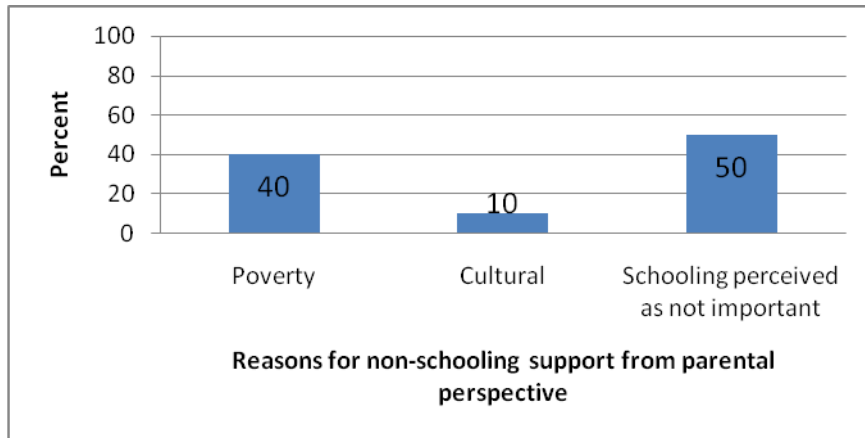


Figure 7: Reason’s why parents do not support their children who are schooling from parental perspective

Figure 10 above, indicates that 50% of the parents did not support their children in school because they perceived schooling as not being important, 40% said it was due to poverty while 10% said it was due to cultural reason.

Parents had the following views as to who finance their children’s education as can be seen on figure 11 below.

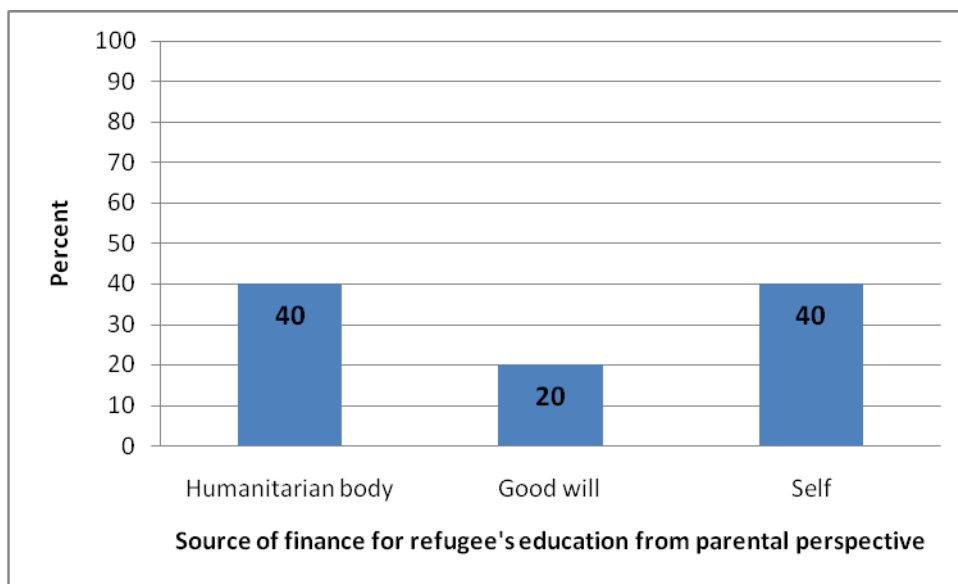


Figure 8: Source of finance for refugee’s education from parental perspective

Figure 8 above reveals that 40% of refugee pupils’ education is financed by the parents themselves while 60% is done by humanitarian body and goodwill people.

The researcher also investigated the relationship that exist between the parent and the school/child’s teacher and figure 12 below shows the details of the findings.

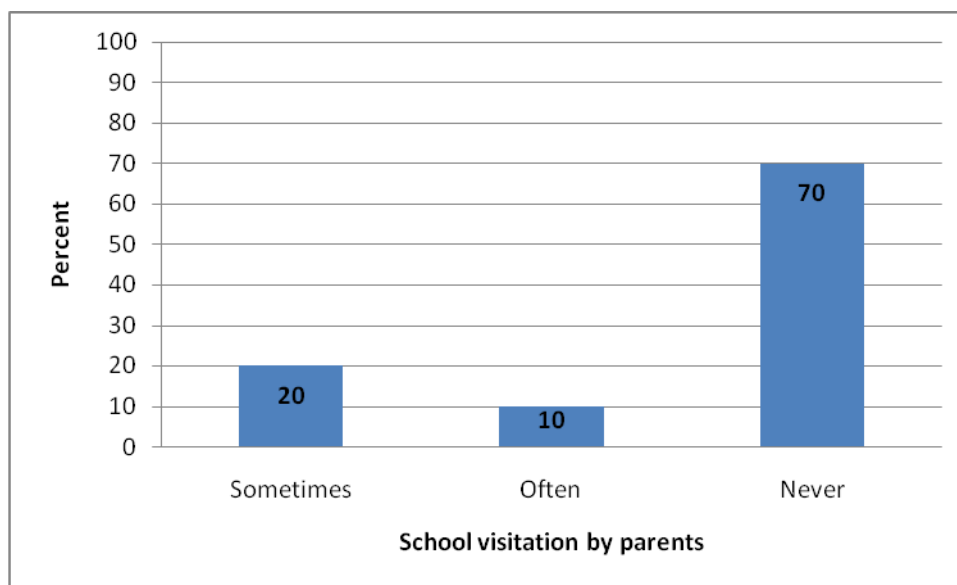


Figure 9: Parent/school collaboration

The results obtained from the findings reveal that 70% of the parents do not collaborate with the school/ their children’s teacher. Only 20% visit their children’s school at times while 10% always visit the school environment as can be seen on figure 12 above

Table 13: Barriers to effective schooling for refugee children in the East Region of Cameroon as perceived by the refugee children

Code	Code	Grounding	Quotation
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	description		
Academic	-Discrimination in class	13 (5.9%)	<i>“Teachers ask questions only to Cameroonians. Even when she ask me a question, she does not give me time to think then she calls another person to answer.”</i>
	Fast Method of teaching	130 (58.8%)	<i>“Teachers way of talking is very fast and she does not care if we understand”</i>
	Lack of academic /parental support at home	74 (33.5%)	<i>“There is no body at home to help me do my homework” “My friends do not want to show me how to write and even when their brother is teaching them, they drive me away.”</i>
	Congestion in classes	10 (4.5%)	<i>“We are so many in my class and I cannot sit well. I cannot even writ well so at times I don’t copy what is on the board.”</i>
	Curriculum difference	45 (20.4%)	<i>“What we learn here is different and more difficult than what we learnt in our country.”</i>
	language barrier	73 (33.0%)	<i>“It takes me time to understand French because of the way the teacher talks and pronounce .I can speak but to write it is my problem.”</i>

economic	Low Socio-economic status of parents	78 (35.3%)	<p><i>“My parents say I should come back before closing and sell so I cannot stay in school the whole day”</i></p> <p><i>“We work after school so as to earn money. I come back tired and have no time to do my home work.”</i></p>
	Hunger and starvation	81 (36.7%)	<p><i>“Due to hunger and starvation I can’t come to school every day. We hardly eat in the morning so I go home during break and when there is no food; I don’t come back to school.”</i></p>
psychological	Discrimination, absence of love and care	31 (14.0%)	<p><i>“I need people to show me love. People call and abuse me refugee.”</i></p>
	Psychological trauma	15 (6.8%)	<p><i>“Death of my family member disturbs me. Each time, I remember how my father was shot while running, the gun shoot frightens me.”</i></p>
Socio/Cultural reason	Matibos influence	17 (7.7%)	<p><i>“Matibo says schooling is not important like the Coranic school.”</i></p>
	accommodation	3 (1.4%)	<p><i>“Noise because we do not have a home , we sleep in the street.”</i></p>

Table 13 above, reveals that the barriers to effective schooling for refugees include; academic, socio-cultural, economic and psychological barriers.

Other stakeholders of education brought out some barrier to effective schooling for refugees which are explained on figure 13 below.

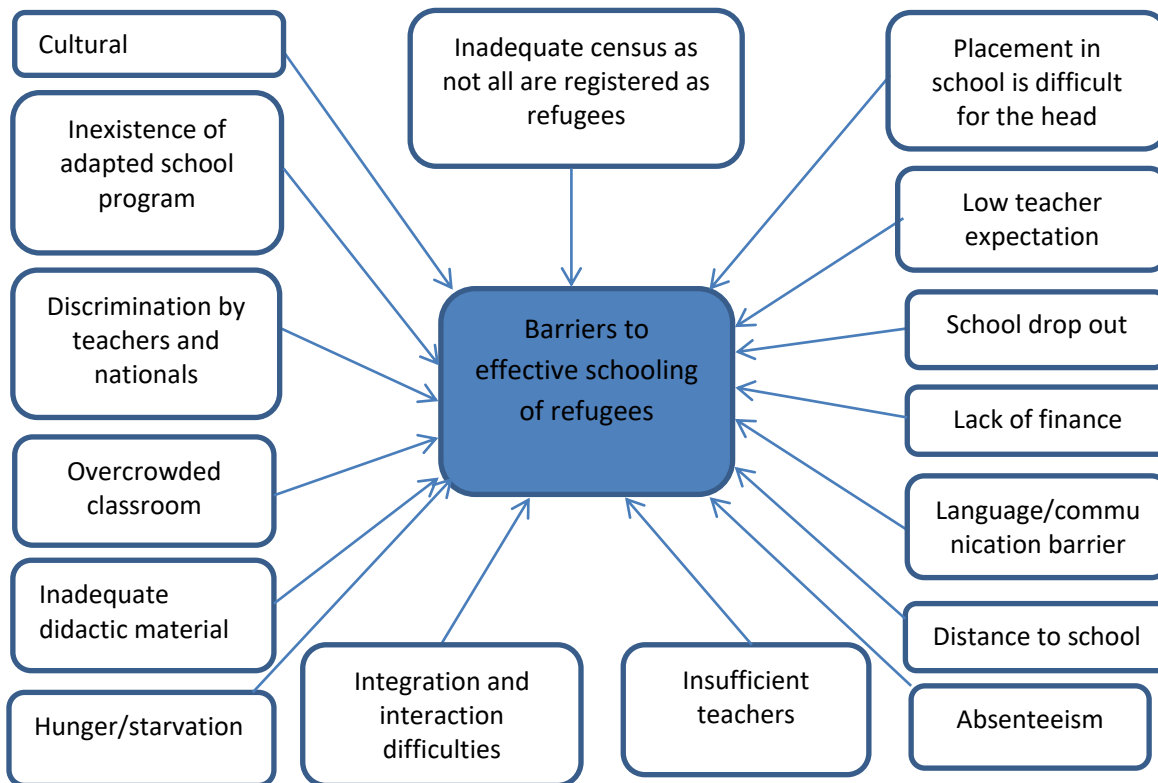


Figure 12: Barriers to effective schooling for refugees as perceived by stakeholders in education in the East Region of Cameroon.

From figure 13 above the barriers to effective schooling as perceived by stakeholders range from academic, social, economic, psychological and cultural barriers.

Strategies to prevent/overcome these barriers.

Table 14: Proposed Strategies to prevent/overcome barriers to effective schooling by refugees.

Question	Code	Code description	Grounding	Quotation
What should be done to better the living conditions of refugees?	Accommodation	Better houses/medical care	103 (46.6%)	
	Social	Provision of food	79 (35.7%)	<i>“Give us food every day in school as was done before.”</i>
		stop discrimination	11 (5.0%)	
	Academic	Pay our school fees	43 (19.5%)	
	Financial aid	Economic empowerment (Providing parents with capital to start business)	5 (2.3%)	<i>“Our parents should be given money to start business so that they can raise money to take care of us.”</i>
What should be done to better refugees schooling conditions	Academic	Congestion in class should be reduced	2 (0.1%)	
		Improving teaching method (Teacher should teach slowly)	54 (24.4%)	<i>“Teachers should teach slowly and explain homework to us.”</i>
		School needs	104 (47.1%)	<i>“Give us books, pens, pencils and uniforms.”</i>
	Resources	Good benches should be provided	6 (2.7%)	
	Social	Provide food during break	38 (17.2%)	<i>“All the refugees should be given food during break because we don’t eat before</i>

				<i>coming to school.”</i>
		stop discrimination, and people should accept us	66 (29.9%)	<i>“We should be treated like other Cameroonians.”</i>
	Parental support	Parents should encourage children to go to school	16 (7.2%)	<i>“My mother should be told to allow me to go to school every day.”</i>

N=221

From table 12 above, the children had multiple proposals made. 158 (71%) of the children believed that improvement of the teaching methods and provision of school needs will help them. 66(29.9%) proposed that discrimination should be discouraged while 38(17.2%) proposed that they should be feed during break in school. Only 16(7.2%) of the children proposed that parental support for their education should be encouraged.

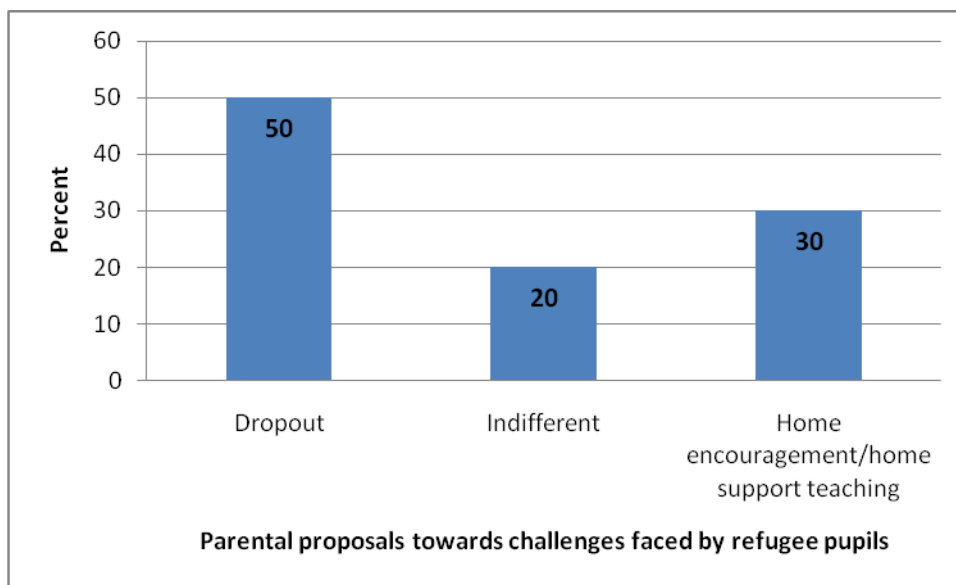
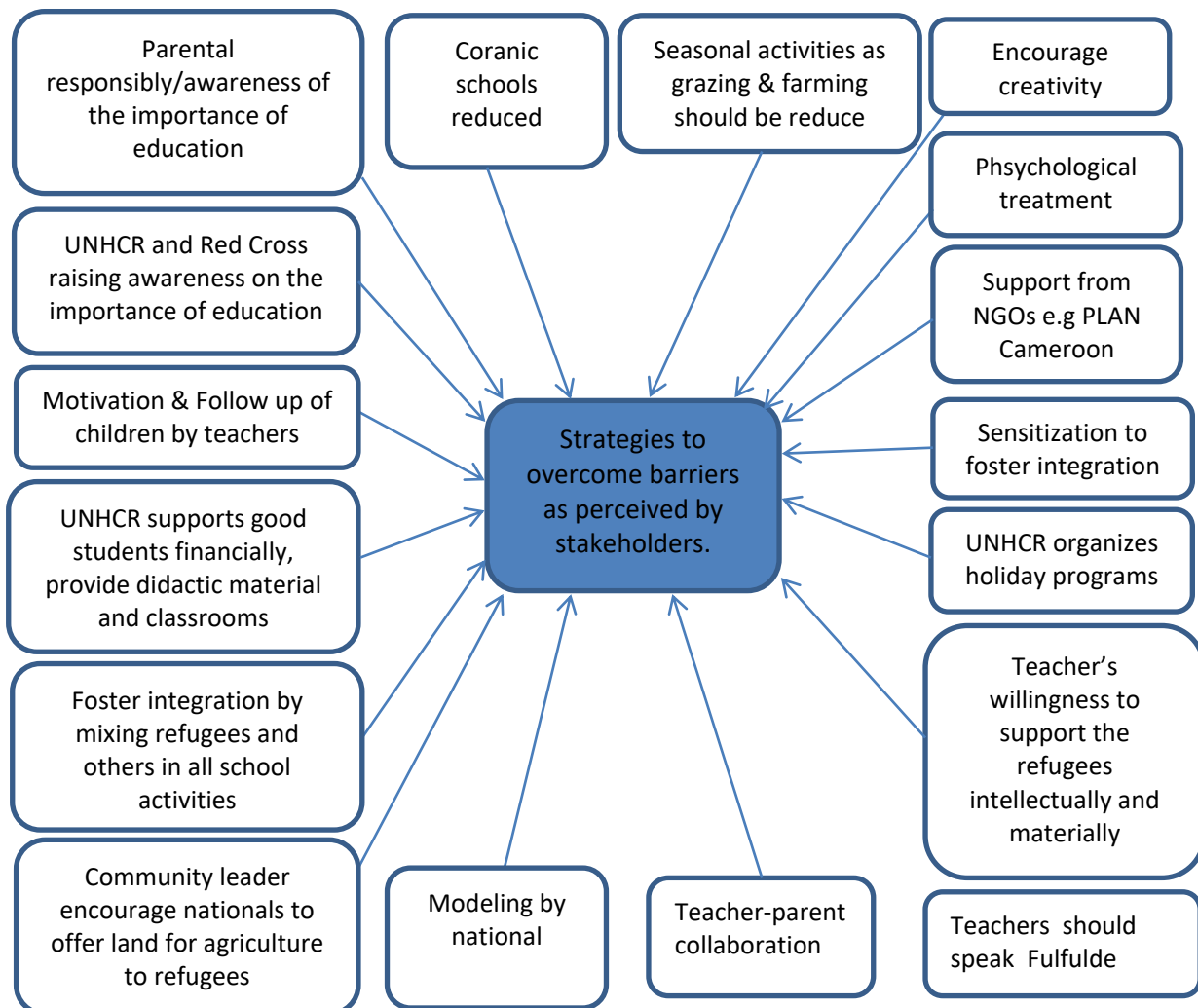


Figure 14: Parental proposals concerning challenges faced by refugees

In relation to the proposals made by the parents concerning the challenges faced by their children in school, figure 14 shows that, 50% of the parents proposed that the children should dropout while 30% proposed that the children should be encouragement and have home. 20% had no proposals as to what could be done to encourage effective schooling.

Facilitating factors to effective schooling for refugees as perceived by stakeholders of education in the east region in Cameroon in presented on figure 15 below.



Strategies to overcome barriers to effective schooling as perceived by stakeholders.



Academic Barriers

Teaching method

Most of the children in this study expressed frustration in the teaching method. They said their teachers teach very fast and do not care if they understood or not. They also complained that their teachers copy notes and wipe the board when they had not finished. A class four pupil commented:

“The teacher asks questions only to Cameroonians. Even when she asks me a question, she does not give me time to think then she calls another person to answer. It makes me feel I am too dull.”

The Class three teacher of Government Primary School Mandjou B commented:

“Their educational level is very low so no matter what you do, and how you teach, it is difficult for them to understand.”

These comments can be examined via the lenses of the expectation theory and the self fulfilling prophecy in education by Robert k. Merton who says teachers have a profound role in guiding the success or failure of their students. When a teacher sees the pupil like an achiever the teacher may modify his/her method by using more complementary language, offer after school help, call on him or her more often in class, or even smile more. All these positive feedback are bound to help the pupil flourish. If however the teacher does not believe this pupil can succeed, the teacher might discipline the student more frequently, tell him or her she can't attempt a task, or even approach the student with suspicion. These negative responses can easily promote underachievement

Looking at both comments, it is clear that the teachers had very low expectation and wrong perception about refugees' educational abilities and therefore, had not adapted their methods of teaching to this group of children. Most of the teachers in Mandjou and Bindia expressed low expectation and interest in, and hope for, the academic success of their refugee pupils. This is in



contrast with Kanu (2006) findings where most teachers in Manitoba in Canada had great expectation and hope for their African refugee students and some adapted their teaching methods to suit this group of children.

Regarding teaching and learning procedures at the schools, the researcher observed it was not different from what Lucy (2010) described in her studies concerning the education of urban refugees in Baraka school in Kenya. It was noticed that to a large extent, teachers used whole-class, teacher-centered methods, with minimal teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions. Teacher-pupil interactions were mostly limited mainly to the teacher asking questions and the children providing answers. The children become passive in the pursuit for true knowledge that would be useful in resisting and challenging the oppressive forces that they face. Such an education not only prevents children's active participation in their learning but also presents denial of critical thinking skills, which are essential for the improvement of a child's academic and future lives.

In addition, teachers did not use tangible teaching aids to enhance their lessons. The classroom walls were bare; visuals such as charts, maps, and drawings were conspicuously absent and even the few which were present in some classes were very old and could not easily pull the attention of the learners. Consequently, children learned mainly from the teacher through rote memorization, and their creativity and critical thought were not encouraged. However, children participants' evaluated good teaching based on whether teachers attended class or not, treated them with love and care, and on their availability to ask or answer their questions and provide other educational help that they needed like books, pencils pens ,even chalk and even food during break. All these were absent as was reported by most of the pupils.

An amazing finding of this study was that although there were refugees from different academic and cultural backgrounds, only 2 out of the 7 teachers interviewed adapted their teaching methods, assessment, and interaction patterns to suit this group of children. The Class one Madam of Government Primary School Mandjou A said



“One of the methods I use is that after each lesson, I take five minutes to summarize in Fulfulde so that they can understand. When I want to boast them up, I call one of them to come and tell the class what we learnt in Fulfulde so they become happy and excited .I also brings extra chalk and pencils to encourage them to write in class. I visit them to encourage them at home.”

An opportunistic interview with a few children in her classroom confirmed her claim. For example, a class one pupil said

“I love her. She gives me chalk when I don’t have it and even play with me during break; she comes to our house and tells me that I should do my homework so that I will be a teacher like her tomorrow.”

In Bindia, the class one teacher said

“I bring real objects to class at times. I draw mostly on charts so that they can identify objects before I teach. I don’t keep the charts in school because they will tear them.”

These teachers therefore held themselves responsible for motivating children to learn, fostered and nurtured professional relationships with children, and took into consideration their own and their pupils’ tribal and cultural backgrounds. As a result, they were more likely to adapt their curricula and pedagogical practices.

In Brofenbrenner’s (2005) bio-ecological framework, these teachers are examples of individuals in the microsystem (the school) who create conditions to support the development of individuals (i.e., the refugee children). However, these teachers commented that this kind of individual initiative should be supported by the school and government (the exosystem).

Five (5) teachers did not adapt their teaching method and the data obtained from the field confirms Stodolsk and Grossman’s (2000) findings that the tendency for teachers to adapt or not to adapt to a new student population correlated with individual factors such as goals, subject matter beliefs, and pedagogical preferences. These teachers did not take the refugees presence



into consideration as well as the children's capabilities. Their attitudes therefore confirms Brien's (2009) findings that whether teachers did or did not reconceptualize and change their practice when faced with this new group of children depended, to a large extent, on their teaching goals, beliefs about student capability, conceptions of subject matter, views about how students learn, and racial and cultural awareness.

Lack of Academic/Parental Support at Home

Academic support and parental involvement in their children's education are frequently cited as factors in children's success. Findings reveal that most of the children did not receive academic support at home due to low educational level of their parents, wrong perception about education by parents (leading to lack of interest by parents) and Economic reasons (low socio-economic standards of parents). Out of the 10 parents that were interviewed, 6 (60 %) of the parents had not attended formal education. Only 2 (20%) had attended primary education and 2(20%) had been to secondary school. Data on their educational background confirms Smith- Hefner's (1999) findings in which the researcher pointed out that most Khmer Cambodians refugees had not attended school in Cambodia, so they had little experience of school by which to guide their own children. Most of the refugee parents had not been to school so they lack the knowledge and experience to help their children with academic work at home.

Although support is not necessarily manifested in ways such as direct parental involvement or collaboration in the school campus and home work, the fact that the parents show moral support towards their children's education motivates the children. But this was found absent in this study. In Brofenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological framework, these parents exemplify individuals in the mesosystem (the interaction between the home and the school) who create conditions against the development of individuals (i.e., the refugee children) and may lead to the absence of the mesosystem. The absence of motivation by parents is supported by (Ascher, 1985) finding that



refugee parents frequently are victims of trauma and they are not always able to provide emotional support needed by their children.

The parents also had a wrong perception about schooling and as a result, it acted as an obstacle to effective schooling for their children. Although (46.4%) of the children in the study had interest to continue schooling after primary level but the parents had very little hope and expectation for their children's education. Most of the parents (60%) did not support their children because they perceived schooling as not important as well as for cultural reasons. Due to their perception, only 30% of the parents decided to register their children in school. 60% of the children were registered by humanitarian bodies while 10% of the children took the decision without their parents' consent to go to school. Such children were supported by good will people.

Interview with the parents and the school personnel (the teachers and the principals) revealed great dissonance in the mesosystem with respect to expectations of parental involvement. On the one hand, the school expected parents to be more involved in the education of their children than was forthcoming (e.g., having actual contact with the school, attending Parent Teachers Association, responding to school notices and ensuring that homework is done). Only, 10% of the parents were fully involved in the education of their children while 70% were not. The parents, on the other hand, perceived their involvement as being limited to the home front and considered it culturally inappropriate to interfere with the role and work of the teachers whom they treated with reverence and held in high esteem.

Low Level of Understanding/Language Barrier

All the stakeholders were of the view that one of the major barriers was the low level of understanding due to disrupted schooling (83%) and communication barrier (50.7%). Children had difficulties with their academics because of previous disrupted schooling, academic gap, and lower academic literacy levels. The criteria for admission were investigated and the head teachers revealed that the age and past schooling experienced were taken into consideration before admission. This made some children to be placed in classes that were above their



intellectual level. Many teachers and administrator perceived the refugee children as having low intelligence and learning disabilities, but the researcher noted that their academic performance was better than that of the nationals.

An interesting finding in relation to the performance between the refugees and the non-refugees contradicts the teacher's perception about the academic abilities of the refugee children. There was a significant difference (χ^2 -test: $\chi^2=3.90$; $df=1$; $P=0.048$) in their performance. The refugees had a total percentage pass of 75% for those who were effectively in school while the non refugees had a percentage of 57.4%. This clearly indicates that if they have what it takes (their needs) for them to be in school, they will perform more better than the nationals. The researchers', analysis of school documents revealed that school personnel sometimes misdiagnosed students based on faulty information. Teachers in these schools exhibited prejudice by believing that refugees were inferior in intelligence and culture to native-born children, rather than acknowledging that they had a different set of values which led to different cognitive styles. Such expectations and misinterpretations of these children lead to low academic performance, tracking, stereotyping and labeling (Manning, 2009).

This research finding corroborates with Trueba and colleagues findings in which they analyze the Hmong children who were labeled most "needy and learning disabled". They found that one of the major criteria for the label was the children's inability to communicate well in English. In this study, the researcher discovered during classroom observations that most of these children did not really exhibit characteristics of low academic literacy. Their problem was that they could express themselves more in Fulfulde than in French. They could not speak French the way their class mates spoke and their ascent was different. The children moved between deep depression and isolation, on the one hand, and panic, on the other. They were mostly afraid to answer questions partly because of language barrier. One of the children commented

"It takes me time to understand French because of the way the teacher is talking, I can speak but to write is a problem."



Some children explained that they experienced trauma because of teachers' expectations that they were low in performing certain skills and demonstrate understanding of knowledge in a language which they could not speak so well. This caused some of them to even talk of dropping out. The above finding confirms Mc.Brien's (2005) findings that Immigrant students with good English language skills were better adjusted to, and coped in their U.S. school environments. Language is a major barrier to learning and until children become competent in speaking, reading, and writing the language, effective schooling cannot take place.

In order for the administrators and teachers in this study to overcome the low literacy level and language problem, they must believe in Ron Edmunds philosophy of "Don't blame the school. Don't blame the kids. Don't blame the neighborhood. If we want effective schools, let's look at the schools". Edmunds believes "we can in the case of refugee children, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all these children whose education is of interest to us" (Edmunds, 1978). In line with this, teachers should be able to take into consideration Edmunds forth point (Teachers' behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery) in his five factor theory when dealing with refugees.

Coupled with the above, curriculum difference was also mentioned by a few children. An analysis of the participants' views and the concepts in this study on curriculum relevance revealed that the curriculum used in Mandjou and Bindia School fell short of meeting present and future needs of the refugee children adequately. This curriculum lacks components that would address the special needs of refugee children such as psychosocial needs and practical knowledge and survival skills, which are necessary for children suffering the effects of war and displacement.

Congestion in class/Over crowded classrooms

One of the major barriers from Stakeholders perspective is rooted in the problem of overcrowded classrooms. Amongst the many factors militating against the standards of education in Mandjou and Bindia, the researcher observed that this was a serious problem. Most of the



junior classes had between 50 and 150 pupils. Government primary school Bindia, class one has an enrolment of 250 pupils in a single classroom (See picture and enrollment on appendix c). This makes it difficult for teachers to walk between rows. According to findings by SHIFSD in 2005, the factor of congestion is negatively impacting on the quality of education. From observations in classrooms, I question the kind of education children are receiving at Bindia and Mandjou especially those in the graduating class. I wonder if they will actually achieve the outcome of education (literacy, numeracy, and life skills) as stated by the Millennium Development Goals. From the researcher's observation, during the writing of the First school living Certificate at Mandjou A and B, children soliciting views from one another before taking down answers and the instructor sat in front of them and making no comments. Nearly all stakeholders agreed that there is a problem with the kind of education the children are receiving and at the other end teachers are relaxed and do not really expect much from these children (both refugees and nationals) academically owing to the strain children are facing within their education.

High Rate of Absenteeism and Dropout

Another Challenge has to do with the problem of retention and completion of schools by the refugees. According to school records the rate of absenteeism and drop out were very high (79.9%) for the first term and dropped as the term went by. From interviews and observation, recreation facilities were lacking for children and the schools did not have a good play ground that could attract the children to stay in school. Also their absences were linked to their involvement in seasonal activities such as grazing and fishing which is part of their culture and they accompany the nationals who are pastoralists who are their peers for nomadic life.

Mr. Alexis, a UNHCR worker in Bertoua reported "to retain them in class is very difficult. They mostly go for cattle rearing in November and come back in March. We are still looking for a strategy to reduce the rate of absenteeism and encourage classroom attendance". His report explains the high dropout rates during the first term than the second and third term.



This high rate of absenteeism was also attributed to poverty, hunger and starvation. One of the refugees in Bindia commented:

“I come to school hungry every day. We hardly eat in the morning so I go home during break and when there is no food; I don’t come back to school.”

Discussions with the children revealed that they had to live school early to fend for themselves and their families. Some were not frequent in school because they had to take care of their siblings while their parents go out to fend for the family. The issue of high rate absenteeism and dropout centers on lack of consciousness of the importance of education both to the children and their parents though they are challenged by their precarious economic situation.

Inadequate Resources

Textbooks or teaching materials (i.e., posters, charts, etc.) were not available or if they were available, they were limited just in a few classes and outdated. Teachers made notes from sources available to them and no library was found in either schools. In many of the classrooms at Mandjou and Bindia, the teacher was the only person with a copy of the French language textbook and most of the children did not even have the work book both in class and at home. In most cases, teachers wrote assignments on the chalkboard and the children copied it in their note books. This exercise reduced the teaching time allocated for the lesson. Consequently, the children observed that it was difficult for them to do independent or extra studying at home or to complete homework.

The researcher also observed that but for the football field, the playground was void of facilities common in most primary schools like a swing, slide, see-saw, or even a sand sea that could attract the children and reduce the rate of absenteeism.

Investigations also revealed that there were inadequate teachers and the UNHCR had to employ some teachers to teach in these schools. Though most of these teachers had undergone training,



non of the teachers had ever attained any training on how to teach children from war affected or disrupted schooling background.

Economic Barriers

Poverty which stems from the low socio- economic status (SES) of the parents was also mentioned by both the children and the stakeholders in education. Data obtained from the field revealed that 5 (50%) of the parents were involved in petit trading, 3(30%) were house wives while 2(20%) were pastoralist. The problem of poverty is similar to what Bortu (2009) noticed as he carried out his study on challenges that Liberian refugee children and youths living at the Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana face in accessing education. It was noticed that poverty was one major cause that was keeping most children at the camp from accessing education. Most parents were poor or were without jobs and as a result, found it very difficult to attend to problems of education for their children while at the same time sustaining the family at home. The characteristics described above are similar to those of the Refugee parents in the East Region of Cameroon.

The children in the East Region reported that they relied on their parents, other relatives or friend in the provision of basic and school needs (such as books, pens, food, uniforms and fees). A class six refugee pupil commented:

“I try my best by going to school and paying attention. After the teacher has taught I just go home and do not bother because I don’t have any textbooks. My parents do not have money to buy books so what do I do?”

This indicates that such provisions were not always guaranteed even for children who lived with parents, due to the precarious economic situations of their benefactors. Children reported that they were constantly anxious over how to obtain money for their needs and other supplies even food. As a result, they had to work after school leaving them tired throughout the day and when they returned home, they couldn’t do their home work. Two class five pupils commented:



"My parents say I should come back before we close and sell so I cannot stay in school the whole day."

"We work after school to make money. I come back tired and I have no time to do my home work."

From the pupils' comments, these problems affected their school attendance as some attended school irregularly due to lack of provision of one kind or another.

Socio-cultural Barriers

The children complained of unwelcoming practices which are closely related to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. They come from a purely pastoral community and can't cope with the agrarian way of life. The teachers and head teachers talked on the influence of Coranic schools. Most of the children go to Coranic Schools in the morning before coming to school. They spend longer hour there and mostly come to school when classes have begun. They still live by 12:00 P.M only to return when schools are about to close. This causes a lot of irregularity in their attendance and studies. The head teacher of Mandjou A and B said they had to respond to this cultural difference by adjusting their school time table just to ensure that they are in class. Instead of schools to begin at 7:30 a. m and close at 2:30 p. m they created two shifts (7:30-12 p.m and 12:30 -4:30 p. m) so that the children can attend Coranic School in the morning and still come to school from 12:30 p. m to 4:30 p.m. Despite this, most of those who attend these shifts still come at least 30 minutes late with the pretext that the Matibo says the Coranic school is more important than their regular classes.

A social factor that caused stress was the low status jobs that refugee parents often had to take to survive economically and the reversal of roles between parents and children which contradicted traditional roles in their home countries. One of the refugee girls commented: *"We were not poor before but now, my parents don't have a job. We cannot eat the way we used to eat and we are so many (8) in one house."*



Some female children cited cultural differences in gender role expectations as causing them pressure from their parents to quit school and get married. These pressures live the child with stress and inability to concentrate with school work back at home.

Psychological trauma and fear

Untreated psychological trauma, discrimination and fear were noticed. Findings also revealed that children suffered specific effects as a result of their refugee experiences including anxiety, distrust, sleeplessness, low confidence and self esteem and sensitivity to failure. Hyper vigilance, withdrawal and other emotional and behavioral problems were results of their traumatic experiences. Traumatic memories were also identified as having a negative impact on the psychological well-being of refugee families. These issues were vivid in the refugee children's minds and often interfered with their learning. one of the refugees in Bindia said:

“The death of my family members disturbs me. Each time, I remember how my father was shot while running, the gun shoot and the blood I saw frightens me.”

This is similar to Kanu (2008) findings that after five years in Canada, nearly 70% of refugees from war-affected backgrounds had stressful memories of the war and flight from their homeland, and over 80% still worried about family members still in Africa. The parents in this study reported that neither they nor their children had received any psychological counseling or treatment.

Refugee children often cited isolation, exclusion, and loneliness as sources of psychosocial stress. Classroom and out of class observations revealed that interactions between refugee and their non refugees peers were limited to pair or small group work in the classroom. After class work, refugees spent a large part of the school day in isolation.

What Strategies can be put in Place to overcome these Barriers?



Taking into consideration the fact that refugees have some barriers to overcome, require more financial resources, more intensive monitoring, counseling and language acquisition, the following strategies were proposed after a critical look at the pre and post migration and education experiences of refugee children and barriers to effective schooling for refugees. These proposals were:

- modification of curriculum
- changes in pedagogic practices
- additional/specialized programming
- modeling/ mentoring by Nationals and resident refugees
- community participation
- conducive school climate.

Adaptation of Curriculum

The curriculum of education utilized at Government Primary school Bindia and Mandjou benefits the refugee children by providing them with basic competencies namely, reading, writing, and numeracy, which would enable them to pursue learning. The curriculum also provides academic knowledge in various subjects such as science, which they can apply in dealing with aspects of their lives to include the need for proper nutrition, clean water, and sanitation (externalities). However, this curriculum is mainly academic and largely theoretical, with little emphasis on practical knowledge and survival skills that are critical for the survival of urban refugee children.

By utilizing an academic-oriented curriculum, the assumption seems to be that all students will progress along academic lines, and build careers requiring academic courses. However based on the financial constraints facing many of these refugees, it is evident that some of them may not pursue secondary education. Because only 46.4% of the children indicated that they will like to



continue school after primary education. Without a curriculum that provides some life skills and vocational training, these students might graduate from primary school with few survival skills, which are critical for them whether in Cameroon or back in their countries.

Sinclair differentiates between curricula for, students in displaced and refugee situations, and for others not facing such situations. She observes that the educational curriculum for the former group of students gives priority to basic learning and basic knowledge for coping mentally and physically, along with knowledge and practice that will help promote a peaceful and rights based rebuilding of the war-torn communities. At the level of the Macro system, the subjects in the Cameroonian curriculum of education do not address issues for these refugee children.

In order to make the curriculum relevant to the refugee children's needs, the Macro system should endeavor to;

- Enrich the curriculum with knowledge, skills, and messages that will facilitate current and future functioning and survival of these refugees. At the level of the Micro system, the school can provide children with practical knowledge and skills through basic vocational training in areas such as agriculture, gardening, domestic science, cookery, and other skills in family studies, which children who cannot afford to continue their education can use to earn a living.
- Accommodating the teaching of these skills and messages into the teaching of normal subjects can be difficult, especially given resource and teacher constraints, and an overloaded curriculum. However, the school can set aside time after school, during school holidays and study circles to teach these knowledge and skills.
- Curriculum in relation to working with young people from refugee and war affected backgrounds should be included in pre-service teacher training programs. Teachers should be more informed about the background and experiences of refugees' so that they can respond sensitively to their needs and create a supportive environment that will build their confidence and encourage effective schooling.



- Professional development is necessary to expand skill development for school staff in literacy and language support. The staff should also be trained on identifying strategies for working with a diverse student population, particularly in relation to understanding and managing the impact of the refugee experience.

Changes in Pedagogical practices

The predominantly traditional teaching styles used by teachers as observed by the researcher resulted in banking education, which have been criticized for disempowering children. In teacher-dominated classrooms such as Government Primary School Bindia and Mandjou A and B, knowledge is reduced to information provided to the children by the teacher. Indeed, teachers adopting the teacher-centered teaching strategies consider information to constitute true knowledge. Because different children have varied learning styles, teachers should present information in a variety of modes in order to meet the multiple learning styles of children in the classroom. Consequently the following improved methods are suggested:

-Use of visual aids and experiential learning. These include low- or no-cost teaching aids such as pictures/images, diagrams, maps, and charts.

- Cooperative learning to include pair and small group activities which are not culturally biased in class and out of class.

-Peer tutoring, which may involve one-on-one tutoring and cross-age tutoring organized during recreation periods in school?

- Authentic teacher-children discourse including whole class discussions and activities.

Specialized programs

For those who have never schooled before, in order to reduce the problem of language barrier, programs such as Remedial Elementary Language and Education for Refugees (RELER) can be organized during holidays by the stakeholders/relief agencies with the help of the schools. This will help refugee children to be able to get acquainted not only to the school environment but



also with the language of instruction. Such emergency education programme should provide free access to organized activities and basic education for all refugee children and young people.

For refugees who were in school and had disrupted schooling with academic gaps, programs like Remedial Education, Evaluation and Placement Programs (REEPP) for Refugee should be organized during holidays so as to get them acquainted to schooling and also to enable the Head teacher to place them in their right classes following Cameroon standards. Such programs will help the head teacher and teachers understand the refugees better before joining them into the main stream classes.

Just as some teachers are able to speak Fulfulde, other teachers should be encouraged to learn the mother tongue of some refugees to facilitate communication within the micro-system. This will help to encourage the valorization of mother tongue day set by the ministry of basic education.

Modeling/Mentoring by Nationals and Resident Refugees

The few refugees who are literate should be encouraged to sensitize and talk to their community about the importance of education. Such people should be encouraged to teach in the schools where these refugees are so that they can see them as models in times like this when they think all hope is gone. Also educated nationals should act like models and parents to these refugees by rebuilding their self esteem and encouraging them to effectively study so that they can become like them. The refugees who are also succeeding in schools school be viewed as models and their performance and attitudes should be rewarded. This can be done through home visitations/ teaching, and provision of material and financial support to these children. This will boost their desire to learn.

Mentoring of children can help them cope with the stress of living through war. This can be done via constant follow up by teachers and providing them with information on how important education is in providing the stability they need, allowing the children to always share their feelings and give them advice on it, reassuring the children that their reactions are normal but not final, hold discussion groups after class at times to find out their individual difficulties, and



involving them in extracurricular activities as a means of relieving stress and help anxious children express their fear. Youth mentoring i.e. older students who have the same language and cultural background can hold informal classes at their homes to see through the younger ones.

Since these children also complain of hunger, humanitarian bodies can devise a strategy whereby they provide food as was before to refugees in school. Since due to financial constraint it can not be done every day, they can decide that any child who stays in school from Monday to Friday will be given lunch at the end of the day. This will reduce the rate of absenteeism and drop out.

Community participation

A Migrant Resource Center can be created by the stake holders in the host community with a number of videos and materials from the UNHCR that may be appropriate to enhance staff development and refugee schooling. To foster acculturation, adaptation and integration, the host community leader should sensitize the community to be hospitable and receptive to the refugees. Both the host and migrant community can use the community's resources like the Resource Center and personnel to organize campaigns. The aim of this should be to encourage solidarity, peaceful co-habitation as well as sensitization on the importance of education. Educated refugees should be encouraged to act as resource persons in such a forum. Both leaders can identify teachers from the refugee population who can organize recreational and educational activities, and identify agencies to support the development of basic education programs.

Weekend video learning programs, film shows, and activities should be organized for the children by the resource persons to restore a sense of safety since they can't have such opportunities at home.

To reduce the economic stress, in some parts of Mandjou, the nationals gave land to the refugees to farm on and this should be encouraged and promoted by the leaders. To encourage integration among the children (peer), the community leaders in collaboration with the school authorities should organize sporting activities and games in which the refugees are mixed with the nationals in the same teams. Also during festive periods, some socio-cultural activities that bring together



the two communities to display their culture and values can also be organized by both leaders. To motivate the children, the school administrators can give them a duty post in school (school head boy, class head, or time keeper) so that they should not feel marginalized and sidelined.

The PTA should give prizes to refugees who perform well in school so as to encourage hard work. Partnerships with agencies outside the school e. g. The UNESCO, UNHCR, PLAN Cameroon, International Red Cross, UNICEF, WHO, MTN Cameroon, Orange Cameroon, should be encourage to support and provide resources that are important in responding adequately to the complex needs and barriers faced by refugee students. Such support may be in the form of nutrition, better medical services, constructing classroom, provision of didactic materials and providing in-service training to teachers.

Conducive school climate

Administrators and teachers should be sensitized to acknowledge that their roles are more complex when teaching refugees from war affected background. They should become co-learners, challengers, guides, mentors, counsellors and facilitators.

- The schools should possess a welcoming enrolment process by the head teachers and the ability to identify refugee children and assess their needs. There should be an orientation programs by the teachers so as to strengthen relationships between children, staff and parents (mesosystem).

- The classroom environment should be safe, provides stability, and is engaging and stimulating, in which there are clear positive expectations, positive reinforcement and the ability to identify and encourage children at-risk without marginalization or prejudice. Teaching styles that are flexible and teaching strategies that meet the needs of the children and include activities appropriate to children's skills

- School curriculum and programs that are supportive to refugee students and increase understanding of refugee issues within the school including games to promote harmony, diversity and social connectedness, as well as programs that support literacy and numeracy development and language learning across the curriculum.



- Partnerships with parents by establishing good communication with families to help them understand the educational system in Cameroon, the role played by teachers and the expectations on children.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to investigate the barriers to effective schooling for refugee children in the East Region of Cameroon and propose strategies to overcome these barriers. This study goes beyond the already documented educational problems of refugee children to provide an insight into the actual needs and conditions under which refugee children in the East Region of Cameroon get educated and the barriers that those conditions produce. These refugees are getting educated under impoverished conditions which have resulted in high absenteeism /dropout rate, low quality education and ineffectiveness in schooling.

For some interested refugee parents, their efforts to support their children's education are thwarted by their deprived livelihoods and other socio-political factors, which prevent them from engaging in economic activities in order to improve their livelihoods.

This research reveals that lack of parental support, refugee peer support, models/mentors, positive self-beliefs, some positive teacher support, perceived or real attitudes of prejudice, marginalization, and racism from fellow-children, teachers, and administrators, set the stage for feelings of rejection, inadequacy and frustration. The above was accompanied by lack of sufficient resources available to schools and isolation among the various service providers which resulted to difficulties to; access, quality, equity, and relevant education. This indicates a crack in the ecological system. Hence, collaborative efforts of all stakeholders in the education of these children are critical in providing specialized programs and an education that liberates them from cultural, psychological, socio-economic and political oppression.



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