
Education and Training Initiatives at the Central Methodist Church Refugee House in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Abstract

Zimbabwean refugees and economic migrants at the Central Methodist Church Refugee House in central Johannesburg have successfully initiated effective learning and training programmes which resulted in the establishment of a School, early childhood, adult education and vocational training centres. Using the theoretical framework of the Community Based Approach (CBA) to emergency education the article explains how the weekly refugee and School Council meetings served as forums for important decisions that influenced the refugee education and training policies and curriculum guidelines. On the types and forms of refuge education, the author calls the refugee School's modified Cambridge curriculum 'Renewed education for repatriation' and identifies the vocational and adult education training programmes as 'Adjusted education for integration' which allowed for adult refugees to integrate into the host country's economic communities. The article concludes by exploring the challenges as well as identifying financial and social supporters of the refugee's education and training programmes.

Keywords: Community Based Approach, refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, education and training initiatives, Central Methodist Church (Refugee House).

Introduction

Zimbabweans have migrated to South Africa mainly because of their country's economic crisis which started slowly in the late 1990s. Political violence, misgovernance and the loss of property rights also led many Zimbabweans to flee their country (Besada & Moyo 2008). It is estimated that about half of Zimbabwe's adult population or about 3 million Zimbabweans have migrated to South Africa.

Some Zimbabwean economic migrants and political refugees have been given refuge and provided with shelter at the Central Methodist Church (CMC). The five-storey CMC was built in 1965 in the Central Business District of one of Africa's metropolitan cities, Johannesburg. Today, the monolithic house serves a humanitarian function and shelters mostly Zimbabwean refugees, a small number of migrants from other African countries and a few South Africans. This is a result of a culmination of events that started unnoticed between 2004 and 2005 when a few Zimbabweans trickled to the church to seek accommodation, basic provisions and financial assistance from the generous Bishop Vereeniging. Most of the incoming people had no alternative accommodation and were sleeping in the open at Park Station. The CMC housed these incoming immigrants whose number was less than 10 or thereabout, coming to 50 at the beginning and reaching over 300 at the end of 2005 (interview, Makata 2009).

Whilst some of these Zimbabweans would return monthly to their country, a large number stayed and sought employment in South Africa. It is between 2006 and 2007 that there was a marked increase of people coming to stay at the CMC Refugee centre. By year end 2007 more than 2 500 refugees were staying at the Refugee House, sleeping on the bare floors, corridors, steps and different halls in the five-storey building. The increase was triggered by the deteriorating political and economic conditions experienced in Zimbabwe during these years which resulted in large scale outward migration (Bloch 2007). At the peak of the Zimbabwe crises between 2008 and the first quarter of 2009 the church housed more than 4 000 to 4 500 political refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants, with some refugees sleeping on the pavements and streets outside the building (Seale 2009; Tromp 2009).

It is within this context that the need for education and training was felt. Thus the refugees at the church house started education and training programmes for the children and the adults living at the centre. The refugee community has established a primary and a secondary school (St Albert Street Refugee School) with a combined enrolment of about 500 learners, an adult education programme, an infancy day care centre, an Adult Basic Education Training (ABET) centre, pre-schools and vocational training centres that offer courses and certificates in sewing, basic computers studies and waiting. Close to 1 000 refugees have become computer literate, whilst about 500 refugees have been trained as tailors or as waiters and are gainfully employed.

I investigated the education and training initiatives in this urban refugee centre as framed by the principal features of what has been termed the 'community development approach' or 'community based approach' to education development (Muggah 2005: 151; Bird 2003: 67). Under this new approach to emergency education the refugee training and education activities are initiated, collectively decided, cooperatively planned and managed by the refugees (Pigozzi 1999). Besides the refugees themselves, refugee education committees also partake in education decisions and assist in identifying training needs in the emergency settlement population (Bird 2003). Basically this model is 'refugee-centred, a bottom up approach that regards refugees as actors and agents' in community development (Voutira and Dona 2007; 166).

Adult and Vocational Training Centres at Central Methodist Church Refugee House

Vocational (skills) training is an important aspect of refugee education which is essential for the purpose of economic integration and reintegration in host and in the country of origin. Vocational

training provides trade and craft skills that lead to gainful employment, self-employment or livelihood supplementation both in refugee situations and after repatriation (Dickerson 1974). The vocational training courses offered at the CMC Centre competently trained and enabled many refugees to secure jobs in South Africa as they met the local job market demands. Vocational courses must relate to labour market conditions and match the needs of the host as well as the country of origin and wherever possible such skills training initiatives should also enrol local students (UNHCR 1995). Vocational training in some instances can also be combined with adult education (Betheke 1996). Adult education according to Preston (1991) teaches literacy and numeracy amongst adults and children who would have not attended formal schools. Vocational and adult education training is therefore important in refugee communities as they provide (self) employment opportunities and teaches basic education skills.

ABET Centre

The ABET Centre is perched on the fourth floor of the building and has been one of the most successful adult education programmes initiated by the refugees themselves that resulted in one outstanding refugee student passing the programme and enrolling for a full-time undergraduate degree study. The programme was started in the last quarter of 2006 by four Zimbabwean adult refugees in collaboration with one South African educator. One of the four Zimbabwean refugees had been a teacher in Zimbabwe. The programme started as a study group initiative with lessons being held in the Bishop's office. The initiators found that there was need to provide literacy and numeracy skills to the illiterate members of the refugee community. Secondly the need to establish such a centre came because of the marked increase in the number of child refugees who were not going to school because of lack of finance and documentation to register in local schools. The Centre by then enjoyed massive financial support from donors and Non Governmental Organisations. Lonehill Methodist Church provided food for the learners and paid facilitators stipends. Media Works did provide study materials, learners' workbooks, computers and trained the facilitators at a cost of R8 000, 00 per facilitator (interview, Leon 2009). Besides Zimbabwean refugees, tuition is also provided to Zambians, Congolese, Mozambicans and the South Africans as well. However the programme faces imminent closure, the key donors have withdrawn their funds, because currently the centre is being used as a sleeping area by school going learners. One of the former facilitators of the programme is alleged to have stolen 4 computers and fled with them to Zimbabwe. Most of the computers and furniture at this centre has been vandalised. As there are no financiers who buy food, learners hardly attend the ABET lessons.

Computer Centre

The refugees have ridden the crest of the technological wave resulting in a total of 778 people from the community being computer literate and all the learners from Grade 3 up to Form 5 at St Albert Street Refugee School. What started as an overambitious attempt by one of the enthusiastic refugee on the 5th of August 2007 turned out to be the best bet ever taken by a lone volunteer refugee? With not even a single computer the founder of the Computer centre started computer theory lessons in the 'Chapel' with 10 students and he would hire a computer laptop from a nearby private college for use overnight or at times he would take the students to an internet cafe for hands-on practical computer training. As fortune has it the centre received a donation of 5 computers from the Anglo American Company in October 2007. Thus the computer programme was offered the spacious 'Boardroom', on the second floor.

This centre offers basic short computer courses and today boasts of 15 computers and 5 laptops which were donated by World Vision, World Mission Possible, Lonehill Church and United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) members in America. The computer training programme runs for 8 weeks with trainees writing exams and being issued with certificates from Gifford College a registered South African private college. The centre has throughout maintained a 100% pass rate in

their examination results and has clinched several prizes from Gifford College for the students' excellent performance. The majority of the trainees have been Zimbabweans though Mozambicans, Congolese, Burundians, Malawians, Cameroonians, Swazis and South Africans have also been trained (interview, Willard 2009).

Sewing Project

Mr Vhiri trained as a high school teacher specialising in Cutting and Designing in Zimbabwe. Mr Vhiri, together with a colleague and in consultation with the Church Bishop, decided to start a garment making training centre. Such an intention was announced in the refugee meeting and 21 refugee trainees immediately registered. These trainees and those who were to register later were trained in the various aspects of garment making over a period of 3 months. In partnership with Loveck College, the trainees are offered a certificate in which they complete two courses in Practical and Theoretical aspects of Cutting and Designing. The centre has three industrial sewing machines which have been used to train the refugees. The centre has a very small room to train tailors and like other refugee initiated training programmes lacks adequate space as well as financial resources to buy fabric and other clothing accessories. Nevertheless, the project has trained 66 refugees, that is 36 men and 30 women, 13 of these trainees have been employed as full time workers at Singer Clothing factory, 9 were employed by Mama Africa Clothing, 6 are at Siyabuya, 6 were recruited in Mpumalanga and some have been employed in local small sewing business ventures. Some trainees returned to Zimbabwe where they started their own sewing businesses.

Hotel and Catering Training Centre

The Hotel and Catering training centre was started at the same time as the Sewing Project when the community recognised the need for skills so as to get employed in the host country. It was Mr Arafat Nzou the current head of St Albert Street School, who announced in the refugee meetings that they needed to train refugees in hotel and catering. Initially five people volunteered to be trainers. Their professional certificates were verified and in consultation with the Bishop started to train refugees in the church sanctuary, the centre was later relocated to St Albert Street Refugee School. The Hotel and Catering Training Centre trains members of the community to be waiters, waitresses, barmen and chefs for six to eight weeks with half of that time being spent on practicals in reputable hotels and fast food outlets in and around Johannesburg. To date, the programme has trained over 400 people with most of the trainees being highly sought out at Chicken Inn, Nandos, Spurs, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Indaba, Emperors Palace, Beachwood Hotel and in several hotels within and around Johannesburg. The trainees who complete their courses are examined and given certificates by Gifford College an accredited South African tertiary training college. However, the biggest challenge facing this training centre is the need for money to buy the waiters' apparels and also transport fares for trainees to commute to and from hotels during the practical sessions (Refugee meeting minutes, 04 September 2009).

St Albert Street Refugee School

The St Albert Street Refugee School is about a kilometre away from Central Methodist Refugee Centre and was historically used as a school for black working-class children during the apartheid era. It was closed in 1958 by the then government for serving black children in a white designated area. Exactly half a century later the school was (re)opened on the 7th of July 2008 by four volunteer teachers and 17 students under instruction from Bishop Vereeniging. By the end of the first opening week the refugee school had enrolled 35 students. The volunteer teachers and the church Bishop decided to start the school after they found out that there was an increase in the number of children at the refugee centre who were not attending school as they did not have the necessary documentation. The increase in the number of loitering refugee children had also been caused by the worsening political and economic situation in Zimbabwe as well as a wave of violence

experienced by foreigners in South Africa during the May 2008 xenophobic attacks in which 59 foreigners were killed. The xenophobic attacks were as brutal as the October 2005, Sudanese refugee protests, in Cairo which left 28 people dead (Grabska 2006).

St Albert Street Refugee School is an 'Integration Centre' run by the CMC and the refugees that enrolls displaced, less privileged and traumatised children from low income families (Principal's Speech on the 1st Anniversary of St Albert Street Refugee School, 25 July 2009). The integration concept of the school is quite evident from the fact that the school also enrolls children from Mozambique, Malawi, Uganda, Swaziland, Lesotho, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa.

When I left the research site on November 15 2009 the school had a total of 21 teachers, 534 learners of which 421 were accompanied students and 113 unaccompanied students (see Table 1). The term 'unaccompanied students' denotes learners who came from their country of origin without parents or guardians and do stay at the CMC Refugee House which provides them with food, shelter and clothing, most of these are Zimbabwean children. The term 'accompanied students' means learners who came from their countries with parents or guardians, most of these guardians are Zimbabwe economic migrants or refugees, other African countries migrants and some few South Africans who do not stay at the Refugee House. The Refugee School was initially opened to cater for the unaccompanied students but this thrust has changed over time as the school's accompanied student population far outnumbers that of the unaccompanied students.

Table 1: Student enrolment, categories and teaching staff establishment at St Albert Street Refugee School

Date	School Total Enrolment	Accompanied Students	Unaccompanied Students	Teaching Staff
14 July 2008	35	8	27	4
12 Sept 2008	140	57	83	9
21 October 2008	180	84	96	11
7 December 2008	220	120	100	11
5 January 2009	561	487	74	21
20 February 2009	456	341	115	21
13 July 2009	523	399	124	18
11 Sept 2009	531	394	137	18
14 October 2009	528	394	134	22
15 November 2009	534	421	113	21

The St Albert School curriculum

The school provides tuition from Grade 0 (R) to Form 5. In addition it also feeds the unaccompanied children, provides counselling (done by Doctors Without Borders (MSF), Church Ministers, one Psychologist a Mr Dangen and Child Care Workers), sporting activities and the staff members act in loco-parentis. The school follows the Cambridge Curriculum, and this decision was reached by the refugee community when the school was started. The decision to adopt the Cambridge curriculum and examinations involved looking at the pros and cons of the South African viz a viz the familiar Cambridge curriculum. The Cambridge curriculum followed by the refugee school is of their former country of origin, Zimbabwe. Firstly the Cambridge curriculum was identified as internationally

recognised and is easily 'transferable for learners to Zimbabwe' (Bishop Vereeniging, School Council meeting, 13 April 2009). This implies that the learners could use their school leaving certificates when they return to their country of origin and these certificates would be recognised by the Zimbabwean Ministry of Education. The decision to follow this British originating curriculum was necessitated by the fact that the refugee learners could not register for the South African Matric as they did not have identity documents and were required to have done the Gauteng Department's Certificate of Education. The Cambridge examination centre in South Africa run by the British Council did not require the 'Ordinary' level refugee candidates to have identification cards, birth certificates, asylum seeker or refugee status papers. It is on these grounds that the refugees collectively decided to adopt their former country's curriculum and its respective examination board.

The Refugee school's Cambridge curriculum had been slightly modified to incorporate Life Orientation (L O), Computers Studies, Music and Drama, Arts and Physical Education which are done by learners from Grade 3 to Form 4 (see Table 2). These subjects were not externally examinable except for Computer Studies in which learners were issued with a certificate endorsed by Gifford College. L O was adopted from the South African's Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) and the teachers used South African textbooks in teaching this learning area. L O greatly assists the refugee learners in making choices on career and study opportunities and is an eye opener to South Africa's social life aspects. On extra-curriculum activities the learners do ball games on Thursday afternoon at Randburg Stadium. Other sporting and entertainment activities provided by the school for the learners included music, watching movies and television, ball room dancing and indoor games. The School was also in the process of establishing a library after receiving many books from donors.

Table 2: The Refugee School Curriculum.

Subjects	SCHOOL LEVELS				
	PRIMARY SCHOOL		SECONDARY SCHOOL		
	Grade 1-3	Grade 4-7	Form 1-2	Form 3-4	Form 5
English Language	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Maths	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science		✓	✓	✓	
Life Orientation	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Computers		✓	✓	✓	
Art	✓ *	✓			
Music & Drama	✓ *	✓			
Physical Education	✓ *	✓	✓	✓	
Geography			✓	✓	✓
History			✓	✓	✓
English Literature				✓	✓
B K/Divinity				✓	✓
Accounts				✓	✓
Business Management					✓

✓ * subject(s) only done from Grade 3

Adult Education

The adult education programme was immediately started after the main refugee school had been opened. This programme follows the Cambridge curriculum which the community argues is 'internationally recognised' (Refugee Meetings minutes, 13 November 2009; 23 October 2009). The adult education programme is an after-work free programme that accommodates adult refugees and immigrants who go to work and still want to acquire a school leaving certificate. The adult education school uses the same premises as the St Albert Street Refugee School and the lessons start at 5:00pm and finish at 7:00pm. By mid November 2009, the adult education programme had an enrolment of 20 adults with 18 students doing 'Ordinary' level whilst two students were doing their 'Advanced' level studies. In South Africa the 'Advanced' level is the equivalent of Matric and is accepted as a university entry qualification. The curriculum for the adults is similar to that adopted by the Refugee Secondary School though the learners do not do L O, Computers or Physical Education and only attend lessons for four days a week. The four teachers of the Adult programme

are all Advanced level certificate holders volunteer educators from the refugee community whom the school administrators intends to assist by paying fees for their undergraduate degrees in South African universities.

Early Childhood Development

It must be recognised that early childhood learning is an important aspect of the refugee curriculum which relieves psychosocial tensions, assists child development and prepares the child for school learning (Bird 2003; Pigozzi 1999). Betheke (1996) is of the opinion that insufficient attention has been paid to Early Childhood Development education in emergency situations. There are some people, according to Sinclair (2001), who think that pre-schools activities are a luxury. Both Sinclair (2001) and Mwaba (2007) agree that the introduction of early childhood education also contributes to girls enrolment and retention in high schools as girls attend schools instead of being expected to look after the younger siblings.

Flock Pre-school

Before the Zimbabwean crisis the CMC did have a fully functional pre-school that had been established in 1989 by the South African Central Methodist inner-city church congregants. The Flock Pre-school was the first inner-city all races pre-school and is the longest surviving education centre at the Refugee House. It is situated at the basement of the church building and in comparison with other education and training centres at the Refugee centre, it has abundant space. It has an enrolment of 35 children between the ages of 2 to 5. A third of the children's parents are either refugees or economic migrants from Zimbabwe. The centre is run and managed by South Africans and has a well run learning programme and a weekly menu in which they serve nutritious meals to the learners. The pre-scholars parents do pay R200, 00 every month but the biggest challenge has been that some Zimbabwean refugees do not afford the pre-school fees. Chipso (interview, 2009) bemoaned the falling standards of the pre-school which led most of the South African parents to withdraw their children citing the refugee centre as an unsafe place for children to learn. The other challenge which happens to be a health risk occurred during my observations at the pre-school when raw sewage from the blocked male toilets overflowed into the preschool learning hall.

Day Care Centre

The CMC Day Care Centre caters for children who are left by resident refugee mothers as they go out to look for work or go to work mostly as shop assistants, housemaids or security guards. The centre is run by three female volunteer Child Carers. More than 20 children are left by their mothers everyday in the morning and are collected at the end of the day at the centre, which was started on 17 July 2007. The idea behind the Day Care Centre was one refugee, Mr Arafat Nzou, who consulted with working mothers in the refugee community, the bishop and through the refugee meetings decided to start the programme. The programme gets financial support mostly from individual donors as well as the church Bishop to buy food and other basic necessities for the children (interview, Rute 2009). The centre at times faces the problem of lack of food for the kids. Some refugee mothers cannot afford the R150 a month fee payment. The Day Care Centre's 15 square metres room is too small for children whose number at times reaches 30.

Methodology

This article comes out of my Master of Education research report submitted on 15 February 2010 to the Faculty of Humanities, Witwatersrand University. In carrying out my research I used the ethnographic method. I employed three strategies for gathering data that is non-participant observation, interviewing and document collection, over a period of five months from mid June up to mid November 2009. I used the ethnographic research method to elicit information about the historical antecedents leading to the development of a refugee community in an urban environment

and how this community initiated their education and training programmes. The ethnographic research method enabled me to observe the patterns of action and interaction between members of the refugee community (Best & Kahn 1998).

I did attend and observe 20 of the refugees meetings which were held weekly on Friday from 7 pm in the Main Chapel hall at CMC. I also observed five of the School Council meeting sessions which usually started at 2pm in the afternoon and lasted for two to three hours. I also spent about two hours a day for seven continuous days observing each and every vocational training programme and the two early childhood centres within the refugee community. During these non-participant observations, field notes were compiled. In my five months stint at the Refugee centre and at St Albert Street School I managed to collect minutes of refugee and school council meetings, programmes of events, curriculum guides and school pamphlets. Some incidents at the Refugee centre and at the school appeared in South African newspapers such as 'The Star' and 'Sowetan'. I used two sets of standardised open-ended interview schedules to solicit for information from key knowledgeable members of the refugee community identified through the purposeful sampling strategy (McMillan and Schumacher 2006). Thus the Bishop, the refugees' Chairman, Secretary; two senior elder members, heads of different educational and training centres in the refugee community were the selected information rich informants.

To ensure ethical issues of confidentiality, names of the interviewees will not be disclosed, instead, fictitious names have been used throughout this paper. I used the 'template analysis style' (Schumacher and McMillan, 2006, p. 368) to synthesise massive raw data obtained from observations, interviews and documents. To ensure validity and reliability of data gathered during the fieldwork I triangulated, cross-checked and critically analysed the documents by subjecting them to rigorous scrutiny to check consistency, truthfulness and authenticity (Fetterman 1997; Bell 2005).

The CBA and refugee education and training initiated programmes at the Central Methodist Church Refugee centre

Under the model of the CBA to education, refugees themselves or refugee education committees initiate, decide and manage education activities and help to identify training needs in the emergency settlement population and this ensures and promotes genuine dialogue, sustainability, continuity, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness (Betheke 1996; UNHCR 1995; Bird, 2003). According to Sinclair (2001) and the UNHCR (1995) the other advantages of the CBA is that it gives the refugees control over one important element of their social function - education (and training) as well as bringing together refugees in a common endeavour. If refugee communities participate in their education programmes this will promote self-reliance and reduce dependency on external support (Bird 2003; Muggah 2005). Self-initiated refugee education approaches stand a high chance of being successful and help to improve the refugee capacity to meet their own needs and solve their own problems (Mwaba 2007). The fact that the community also participates in what to learn promotes dialogue within the community which is the basic ingredient for democracy and empowerment. Refugee communities have to be involved in the planning of their curriculum and educational activities as there is no guarantee that education specialists will be readily available in an emergency situation (Pigozzi 1999). It is because of these numerous advantages that the CBA to education is currently the most preferred approach to refugee education development that guarantees success and acceptance within emergency communities. In fact this approach is central to the new UNHCR policy and is one of the key features in refugee studies (Jacobsen 2006; Voutira and Dona 2007).

The CBA to refugee education development was formally recognised by the UNHCR in mid-1996 after it had been successfully undertaken by Rwandan refugees at Ngara Refugee camp in Tanzania (Bird, 2003). Other successful community based rapid response to education is recorded by Sinclair

(2001) at Mayukwayukwa refugee camp, in Zambia between 1999 and 2000 within Congolese and Angolan refugees, amongst Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, in the mid-1990s (Williams 2001; Muggah 2005). It is the CBA to refugee education and training that made the St Albert Street Refugee School and the CMC's training centres to be vibrant and successful learning and training hubs just as was the case amongst the above cited refugee education examples which were initiated and continued to be run predominantly by the refugees themselves. The CBA to education development has revolutionarised emergency education. It is the new buzz and watchword in refugee education.

At the CMC Refugee centre the two major groups or committees which served as forums for initiating learning and training programmes, refugee education policies and curriculum guidelines were the Refugee meetings and the School Council. It was through the Refugee and School Council meetings that educational decisions were formulated, alternative choices were weighed and examined and the most defensible and consensus resolutions reached (Orpwood 1985). I must also note that in the refugee meetings important decisions were reached that affected generally the lives of the refugees.

Refugee Meetings

The refugee meetings are held in the church's main sanctuary every Friday from 7pm and last for 2 to 3 hours. The meetings are chaired by the Church Bishop Vereeniging with the Refugees' Secretary recording the minutes. All members are free to make contributions and air their views during the communal deliberations. According to rules formulated by the refugee community, every refugee is compelled to attend the refugee meetings (Refugee meeting minutes, 23 October 2009). The main sanctuary is full to the brim during these refugee meetings. The first refugee meeting was recorded in 2005 and led to the election of the first Refugee Committee which had a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Advisory members.

The refugee meetings also served as a platform for important economic and social decisions taken by the community. Employment opportunities were announced in the Refugee meetings by prospective employers who were seeking artisans, labourers, housemaids and gardeners. An important social decision made in the Refugee assemblies was that women should have their own sleeping rooms thus the Robertsroom and Minor Hall was allocated only for women. Men could sleep anywhere they wanted in the five-storey building. Married couples were allocated the Vestry room. The important rules of the building had been formulated by the refugee community and the Refugee Committee in the refugee meetings. The rules prohibited smoking, fighting, stealing or extra-marital sexual activities in the building.

The other important rule of the building which is the driving cog of this article was that 'everyone must be involved in education – either by teaching or to be taught' (Refugee meetings minutes, 23 October 2009; 10 July 2009). Thus the first ever important education related decision made by the Refugee Committee during a refugee meeting was to endorse that the ABET Centre be established. The collective decision to establish the Day Care Centre was grounded on the premises that resident refugee women needed to leave their children somewhere as they go for work or to look out for employment.

In between August and September 2007 the refugee community reached major decisions that had a vocational fervour. The need for computer, tailoring and hotel and catering courses was reached by the refugees themselves in collaboration with the Church Bishop Vereeniging. The main reason for starting these training projects was the immediate and crucial need to provide skills to the refugee community which would make it easy for the refugees to look for employment. The training centres run by Zimbabwean refugees therefore intended to satisfy the job market needs of the South African

economy by churning out skilled employees. It was also agreed in several refugee meetings that trainees be issued with certificates from South African accredited private tertiary colleges.

Another unanimous curriculum decision taken by the refugees that informed and affected the nature of knowledge taught in the school, the teaching and learning styles was to adopt the Cambridge curriculum. Both the St Albert Street School and the Adult education programme felt that the Cambridge curriculum be followed as it is internationally recognised and acceptable in Zimbabwe, the South African's RNCS was resented and regarded as inferior by the refugees. The Zimbabwean refugees looked down upon the RNCS and instead held in high esteem the Cambridge curriculum.

It must be noted that the decision to start the St Albert Street School was because of the fact that there were many children in the building with no documentation and that these children had failed to register in local South African schools. In the last quarter of 2007 the CMC Refugee House also had a number of teachers who had not gone through the process of evaluating their certificates with the South African Qualifications Authority and had not registered to practice with the South African Council of Educators. These teachers were still job hunting and could for the mean time be involved in teaching the children at the refugee centre.

The School Council Meetings

The most significant achievements made by the refugee community was the establishment of the St Albert Street School Council which had 12 volunteer parents representative, the Refugee School Principal, three senior teachers and a support staff member, Bishop Vereeniging as the Chair, 2 church leaders' representatives and 3 student representatives. Members of the refugee community are free to join and participate in the School Council's educational deliberations. The idea of a School Council was mooted three months after the school had been opened and School Council meetings are held once or twice a month.

The School Council made very important decisions on curriculum, teaching and learning and school governing principles. For example the School Council Meeting (21 October 2009) had decided to adopt English as the medium of instruction though some members were of the opinion that different mother tongue languages of the children must be used if the school was to be a typical 'integrating school'. On the issue of St Albert Street School being an integration centre, such a term was crafted in the School Council meetings. The school therefore catered for displaced children from different countries and its enrolment policy was inclusive, accommodating Zimbabwean refugees, immigrants from other African countries as well as South Africans. In one of his reports to the School Council, (School Council meeting minutes, 16 December 2008) the School Principal made an important suggestion when he recommended that teacher pupils' interaction should be enhanced in classrooms - thus making the School Council meetings to be plenary sessions for making important curriculum decisions.

The supreme school body also decided on extra curricular issues. Through School Council meetings' collective decisions the sports day was changed to Thursday afternoon in a move aimed to accommodate accompanied learners (School Council meeting minutes, 29 August 2009). The School Council meeting also agreed that entertainment such as movies, music, drama, dancing and indoor games be provided (School Council meeting minutes, 8 December 2008). It is the School Council that also made the resolution that fees be pegged at R125, 00 per month for accompanied learners. Before this figure was agreed upon several higher figures had been proposed and that had caused heated arguments within the council but at the end of the day and as usual consensus prevailed (School Council meeting, 21 October 2009).

The issue of student discipline cropped up in School Council deliberations thus in one of its recommendations, it was agreed that delinquent children were to be sent to reformatories (School Council meeting minutes, 5 January 2009). At times the School Council meeting dealt with the issues that had to do with the challenges facing the refugee learners. Thus the School Council had devised a mechanism for refugee learners to elude police arrests and had agreed that students must always put on the school uniform so as to protect themselves from police abuses (School Council meeting minutes, 07 December 2009). Tabled also before the School Council meeting's sitting on the 7th of April 2009 was the issue of students' documentation which was resolved by the British Council's acceptance of the School identity cards' or the Refugee registration cards as legal documents for writing exams.

To deal with the problem of acute shortage of learning space the School Council had first made the decision to relocate Grade 3 up to Grade 7 to the CMC (School Council meeting minutes, 12 February 2009). When the problem persisted suggestions for 'hot sitting' had been made though the Council finally agreed on partitioning of classrooms. Of the 27 Council members on this day 26 voted in favour of partitioning. By agreeing to partition the classes the Principal told the School Council members that learners would write a mock test and classes would be screened based on learner performance thus the Form 2 and Form 3 classes were divided into A and B cohorts.

The decision to adopt the Cambridge curriculum must be credited both to the series of Refugee meetings as well as School Council meetings which also approved such a foresighted and farfetched vision for the refugee learners. It was in the School Council meeting of 13 April 2009 that it was suggested that the Cambridge curriculum be the preferred curriculum of choice for 'it was transferable for learners to Zimbabwe' (Bishop Vereeniging). The fact that the School Council reached such logical conclusions pertaining to core education matters points to the fact that this board made paramount curriculum decisions and in the process developing and shaping their own curriculum.

The Forms and Types of refugee education at CMC Refugee Centre.

The St Albert Street Refugee School and the Adult education programmes' adoption of the Cambridge curriculum are similar to a form of refugee education called 'education for repatriation' (Bird 2003). Education for repatriation is consistent with core elements of the curriculum of the country of origin and prepares children for return to their home country (Preston 1991). A unique example of the concept of 'education for repatriation' recorded by Preston (1991) is that of Mozambican refugees in Malawi and Zimbabwe who followed the Mozambican curriculum. The Cambridge curriculum adopted by the refugees is similar to the curriculum used in Zimbabwe. Though the Zimbabwean government had localised its examinations since 1995, through the Zimbabwe School Examination Council, most private schools and colleges still followed the British Cambridge curriculum which as well examined them. Learning the curriculum of the country of origin has a positive psychosocial impact as it 'lessen the shock of exile to the children', utilises refugee teachers, allows refugee communities to contribute towards their schools and enables refugees to continue their studies on return to their home country (UNHCR 1995: 19). However the weakness of this concept, according to Preston (1991), is that it maintains refugees on the social and economic periphery and in inferior positions within the host state.

The Refugee School curriculum had been slightly adjusted resulting in what I have called 'Renewed education for repatriation'. The school curriculum had been modified and incorporated the non examinable subjects of L O, Computer Courses, Art, Music and Drama and Physical Education. L O is a learning area in the new South African RNCS and would definitely assist the refugee learners to make life adjustments and to know about South Africa's career and study opportunities, it's religious and cultural life. By adopting the international Cambridge curriculum, the South African's L O and

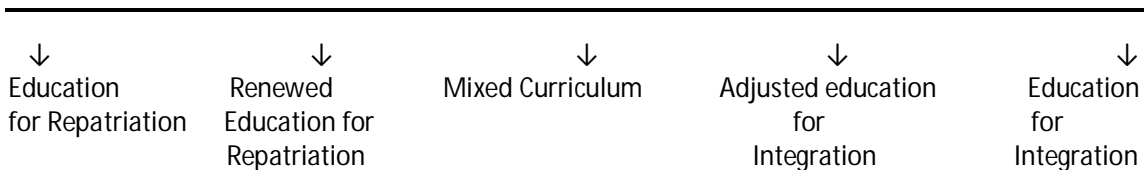
teaching computer courses the refugee curriculum had been shaped and influenced by global trends, regional and local educational curriculum developments (Chisholm 2005).

The ABET Centres' programme and its curriculum is a typical example of a type of refugee education called 'education for integration' (Bird 2003). Such a curriculum utilises the core elements of the host country's curriculum and prepares learners to integrate (Sinclair, 2001). A classical example of education for integration is recorded by Bird (2003) at Ngara Refugee Camp amongst the Burundians. The greatest advantage of education for integration is that it allows refugees to easily integrate into the local and economic communities (Preston, 1991), a fact quite evident in the study from the large number of refugees employed in South Africa because of the vocational training courses at the CMC. The key elements informing the ABET learning programme are outcomes based education, integration and learner centeredness and these are the core design features of the South African's RNCS. The other vocational training centres at CMC Refugee House curriculum type are much closer to 'education for integration'. However their teaching and learning approach was much more teacher centred. I would therefore call the form of refugee training curriculum practised by the refugees 'Adjusted education for integration' which adopted the host country's certification and utilised its textbooks but still retained a different approach to teaching and learning.

In-between education for integration and education for repatriation lies what has been called a 'mixed curriculum' (UNHCR 1995: 10) that 'faces both ways' (Sinclair 2001: 26) and 'incorporates core elements of the curricula of the country of origin and country of asylum' (Betheke 1996: 11). The greatest strength of this concept is that it prepares refugees for eventual return or settlement in the host country and provides linguistic skills for children whose families can repatriate or integrate (Sinclair, 2001; Williams, 2001). Such a mixed curriculum system was evident amongst Bhutanese refugees in Nepal (Williams 2001).

Following extensive literature review on refugee education forms, research findings and my own critical reflection, I have developed a refugee curriculum continuum which has five different forms of refugee education (see Figure 1). Whilst in emergency education they have been traditionally three forms of emergency-refugee education namely: 'education for repatriation, education for integration and mixed curriculum'. I have identified two more forms of emergency education which I have called 'Renewed education for repatriation' and 'Adjusted education for integration'. The former type of refugee education was practised at St Albert Street Refugee School whilst the latter type was evident in the refugees' vocational training programmes. These two forms of refugee education lead to slight or moderate changes in curriculum for if the changes are extensive they result in a mixed curriculum. The forms of refugee education can occur sequentially as presented in Figure 1 or they can occur in any order. These five curriculum forms can be related or not related to the different stages of education response in refugees' emergencies in host countries identified by the UNHCR (1995: 21-25).

Figure 1: The Five Forms of Refugee Education (Curriculum) continuum



Challenges and problems facing the Refugee School and the vocational training centres

The South African government is found wanting when it comes to, The 1951 Convention relating to Status of Refugees, Article 22.1 which states that: 'the contracting states shall accord refugees the same treatment as accorded to the nationals with respect to elementary education' (in UNHCR 1995: 3). As a receiving country and a signatory to the convention, South Africa, is obliged by the instrument to provide free elementary education to refugees. In my research it emerged that there is not even a single account of government intervention to support refugee education and training initiatives at the Refugee House. However, the South African government never barred donors from providing educational and social support to the refugee community.

The CMC refugee education system was regularly in endless financial crises. The School was still unregistered and therefore would not access funding from the South African education department. Inadequate financial resources implied limited supplies in teaching and learning materials, textbooks, stationery and furniture at the Refugee School. Though some donors donated textbooks most of these were not relevant to the Cambridge curriculum. There is need for furniture or make shift writing pads for the primary school learners who use two large open church halls which have fixed benches.

If ever there is one thing that compromised the quality of education and training at CMC, it was poor physical conditions and limited space at the refugee school and training centres. The deteriorating physical conditions at the CMC Refugee centre were at par or even worse than those reported by Betancourt et al (2008) amongst Sierra Leoneans refugee learners, and in Rwandan and Burundian refugees classes at Goma and Ngora refugee camps (Bird 2003; Sinclair 2001). Overcrowding at the school had led to streaming and the subdividing of rooms but this solution had not helped. The subdivided Form 2s and Form 3 classrooms were cramped with learners, dirty and poorly aerated. The Grade 3 to 7 primary school classes used two church halls, which were poorly ventilated and were unpartitioned thus teaching in one class would interfere with other classes. Worse still the halls served as sleeping areas by night and classrooms by day. The sewing, ABET and the Day Care centres also had a similar challenge. The problem of the acute shortage of space was not only limited to learning space but also to sleeping space for the learners, who slept regrettably like packed sardines on the 4th floor of the church building.

It is difficult as well to attract and retain quality teachers (Bird 2003). Refugee schools face high turnover of teachers who complain of poor incentives and usually seek higher paying jobs in private schools outside the camps or at times end up doing manual labour jobs to earn cash (Williams 2001). High staff turnover can disrupt learning as was the case in one Bhutanese refugee class that had five different teachers for one class in a single year (Brown 2001). St Albert Street Secondary school had a higher staff turnover with most Maths and Science teachers leaving for highly paying jobs in private and government schools. Most teachers lasted for only one term before moving for other jobs or to other schools. The teachers were not adequately remunerated and received a R3 000, 00 monthly stipend (School Council meetings minutes, 13 April 2009). At times there was even no money to pay the teachers, thus in the months of March and April 2009, teachers were not paid.

In the refugee education context, the term 'access' generally means the removal of restrictions on the education of refugees and asylum seekers (Sinclair 2001). Some governments can accommodate a certain number of refugee learners in local schools (Mwaba 2007). Another factor that can limit access to education and training is lack of documentation or restrictive asylum granting practices

(UNHCR 1995; Jacobsen 2002). Several refugee meetings (20 February 2009; 4 September 2009) and School Council meetings (8 December 2008; 16 December 2008; 05 January 2009; 23 October 2009) showed that most of the unaccompanied learners did not have legal identity documents. The South African government had imposed stringent requirements for one to acquire refugee or asylum status. The situation according to Landau (2006) had even become worse for the ever increasing Zimbabwean asylum seekers whose applications were not positively reviewed by the local Home Affairs office. Acquiring an asylum or refugee papers at Crown Mine Refugee Reception Office was an insurmountable task, a situation that Landau (2006) attributes to the bureaucratic hurdles at the Johannesburg facility. Documentation problems and host countries' restrictions can therefore limit access to education and training for refugees.

The St Albert Street School faced some reputation damaging, sexual abuse problems of girls by male teachers, these allegations severely tarnished the image of the school and became headlines in some South African newspapers (The Star 2009; Thakali 2009; SAPA 2009). Allegations of sexual abuses paralleled those reported by Kirk (2007) in refugees camps in West Africa where teachers took advantage of their position and became perpetrators of sexual offences.

Another challenge in emergency education has to do with learners' discipline (Talbot and Davies 2008). Some learners at St Albert School were accused of being involved in robbing and mugging activities in the Central Business District. Worse still some learners worked in partnership with elder members of the refugee community in criminal activities and drug and alcohol abuse. In one shocking incident, three refugee learners were found armed with a 9mm pistol with live bullets (School Council meeting minutes, 8 December 2008). Some 'unaccompanied children' had a tendency of dropping out of the Refugee school and rejoining later when they felt like so.

Financial and Social support

Davies and Talbot (2008) acknowledge the commitment and positive engagement of international organisations, donor governments, private and multilateral donors in funding and addressing educational needs in emergency education. Thus the Refugee School received generous financial and social support from NGO's, embassies, the donor community, churches and individual well wishers. About R200 000, 00 used to kick start the school was a donation from the Australian and Dutch embassies. The Dutch embassy and UMCOR which is the relief arm of the CMC at times provided the school teachers' salaries. The Solidarity Peace Trust was responsible for feeding the learners. World Mission Possible also provided finance and were as well renovating the whole school. World Vision had also provided stationery, food, toiletries and sanitary pads to refugee learners. The UNHCR donated 100 foam rubber mattresses which the students slept on. OSISA provided and paid for a consultant to facilitate the registration of the school. One voluntary teacher, Mrs Beanie taught Ordinary level Science, provided breakfast for the teaching staff and donated 60 chairs to the school. Different church denominations worth mentioning for their outstanding support to the refugee community and the school are, the Salvation Army Corps, Christ embassy, Lonehill and Randburg Methodist churches, the Lutheran church and the Latter Day Saints fellowship. The National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) sponsored by UNICEF provided Child Care Workers who counselled and looked after the welfare of the unaccompanied refugee learners. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and one Psychologist also provided counselling services to the learners.

Conclusion

About 3 million Zimbabweans have migrated to South Africa because of the country's deteriorating economic, political and social situation. Some Zimbabwean economic migrants and political refugees sheltered at the Central Methodist Church Refugee House have initiated successful and

effective education and training programmes, regardless of the numerous challenges facing the community. Using the theoretical framework of the CBA to emergency education I have described how the weekly refugee and School Council meetings provided decision making forums that led to the development of the St Albert Street Refugee School, an adult education programme, an infancy day care centre and an ABET centre, a pre-school and vocational training centres for sewing, computer studies and waitering courses. The success story of the CMC's education and training initiatives follows in the footsteps of other renowned refugee centred community based response to learning and training.

On the types of emergency-education the article went beyond the common traditional forms of refugee education. Thus the paper identified the CMC's vocational training centres as having adopted the 'Adjusted education for integration' which prepared adult refugees to integrate into South Africa's economic communities whilst the Refugee School's adoption of a modified Cambridge curriculum resulted in 'Renewed education for repatriation'. These are convenient and highly recommended forms of education and training curriculum modification within emergency-refugee education circles.

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