

ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Provision in the Rural Disadvantaged Community of Mayaro: Investigating Children's Readiness for Primary School

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This longitudinal mixed methods research study evaluated the quality of ECCE provision in the rural disadvantaged community of Mayaro in relation to its ability to prepare 3-4-year-old children for primary school. The study quantitatively examines two key elements of quality in ECCE: the current structural and process quality of the different categories of ECCE provision in Mayaro, and its impact on child outcome quality – that is, the development, school readiness and First Year primary school performance of 197 children. It also provides a qualitative insight into the experiences of three low-income families with their children's early childhood provision using a qualitative ethnographic research design.

The research uncovers and documents key contextual elements of quality as they relate to the physical/human resources, and the educational practices/policies of ECCE providers, as well as the socio-economic situation (SES) of the home and community that contribute to the quality of children's outcomes. The goal of the study is to highlight the current state of ECCE provision in Mayaro, and to identify the components and best practices that are essential to ensuring students' improved readiness for, and performance in primary school. The transformative nature of this research also demanded the exploration of a framework for improving the mostly inadequate-to-poor ECCE services that currently exist.

Recommendations include localized efforts as well as large-scale policy reform related (but not limited) to: upgrading the structural and process quality of inadequate ECCE service providers, systematic monitoring and evaluation of ECCE provision, implementing standardized measures for monitoring child outcomes, strengthening home-school partnerships, and empowering the disadvantaged families (particularly mothers) who access these services, with the imperative of improving primary school readiness and performance.

Keywords: Alicia Gayah-Batchasingh; Early Childhood Care and Education; ECCE quality; evaluation; school readiness; Trinidad and Tobago; mixed methods; transformative.