

# Pedagogical Agency and Learning Outcomes

*A Comparative Analysis of Refugee-Led Informal Education Centres in Dadaab, Kenya*

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## ABSTRACT

In protracted refugee contexts, formal education systems are often overstretched, leaving many children out of school. Informal, community-led initiatives have emerged as critical alternatives, yet their pedagogical efficacy remains under-researched within African studies. This study compares the influence of pedagogical agency within refugee-led informal education centres on learning outcomes for out-of-school children in the Dadaab complex. It specifically examines how educator autonomy and community-centred curricula affect literacy and numeracy attainment. A comparative mixed-methods case study was conducted across three distinct refugee-led centres. Data collection included standardised literacy/numeracy assessments for 180 children, semi-structured interviews with 24 educators and centre coordinators, and observational analysis of pedagogical practices. Centres employing a high degree of pedagogical agency, integrating local narratives and flexible pacing, demonstrated a 22% greater improvement in composite learning scores compared to those with more rigid, donor-prescribed curricula. Educator interviews revealed agency was strongly linked to contextual relevance and learner engagement. Pedagogical agency is a significant factor in enhancing learning outcomes within informal refugee education, suggesting that models privileging community ownership over standardised humanitarian approaches are more effective in this context. Policymakers and NGOs should support refugee-led education through flexible funding mechanisms and curriculum frameworks that legitimise and resource educator autonomy. Donor requirements should be adapted to accommodate locally relevant pedagogical practices. refugee education, pedagogical agency, learning outcomes, informal education, community-led, Dadaab, Kenya This paper provides novel empirical evidence on the direct relationship between educator autonomy and improved learning metrics in refugee-led centres, challenging the predominance of standardised, externally driven educational interventions in humanitarian settings.

**Keywords:** *Comparative Education, Informal Education, Refugee Education, Dadaab, Pedagogical Agency, Learning Outcomes, Protracted Displacement*

### Article Highlights

- Comparative analysis of three distinct refugee-led informal education centres in Dadaab.
- Mixed-methods study with 180 child assessments and 24 educator interviews.
- High pedagogical agency linked to 22% greater learning score improvement.
- Contextual relevance and educator autonomy drive learner engagement.

### Policy Implication

Flexible funding and curriculum frameworks that resource educator autonomy are more effective than standardised humanitarian approaches.

*This study provides novel empirical evidence challenging externally driven educational interventions.*



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