The Alternative Basic Education (ABE) in Light of Somalia Experience

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Abstract

This study aims to explore concept and goal of the accelerated education programmes (AEP)or (ABE), rationale,basic principles,target beneficiaries ,implementation and roles of Stakeholders and monitoring and evaluation of ABE program. The author followed in this paper descriptive method. The results of the study showed that the ABE programme has been very successful in meeting its achievements in Somalia. Local partners including communities, lNGOs, and the Ministry of education have played an important role throughout the ABE progarmme.

Keywords: Alternative Basic Education, Somalia, Experience.

Introduction

The outbreak of civil war in 1988 and the following collapse of the central state in 1991 severely disturbed all public social services in Somalia. The education system in Somalia was totally demolished, destroying the infrastructure and the disruption of educational services. Many students and teachers fled from the schools to their home-clan areas and became an Internal Displacement People (IDPs) or refugee camps abroad. Meanwhile, school buildings were being destroyed and School premises were turned into accommodation for the internally displaced people fleeing from the war (Abdi, 1998), educational material and equipment were being looted and teachers and administrators were not being paid. It is estimated that more than 80% of the educated elite left the country in the period since the conflict began (Lindley, 2008). This extended period of insecurity and instability has robbed a generation of young Somali men and women the chance to attend formal education. Somalia now suffers from one of the lowest literacy rates in the world (Cummings and van Tonningen, 2003).

There are approximately 263 million children and youth out of school globally today(UNESCO-UIS (2016) Conflict, poverty, and other forms of marginalisation often prevent children from entering into school in the first place, or force them to drop out of school earlier than they should. The most vulnerable and marginalised – often displaced children and young people, excombatants, girls and children with disabilities – are most likely to find it difficult to access and complete their education.

For over 28 years, the INGOs and UN Agencies has supported out of school children and youth to regain access to schooling by supporting Alternative Basic Education (ABE) programming. Such programming

has been and continues to be implemented across Somali regions in which INGOs and UN Agencies is responding to humanitarian and early recovery situations.

1. Concept and Goal of Accelerated Education Programmes

(ABE) Lacking a precise meaning, the term "alternative education" describes different approaches to teaching and learning other than state-provided mainstream education, usually in the form of public or private schools with a special, often innovative curriculum and a flexible programme of study which is based to a large extent on the individual student's interests and needs (Raywid, 1988; Koetzsch, 1997; Aron, 2003; Carnie 2003).

An accelerated education programmes (AEP)are flexible age-appropriate programmes that promote access to education in an accelerated time-frame for disadvantaged groups, over-age out-of-school children and youth who missed out or had their education interrupted due to poverty, violence, conflict, and crisis. The goal of AEPs are to provide these learners with equivalent certified competencies as in the formal system, in an accelerated timeframe, with learners transitioning to mainstream education at some intermediary point, or completing an entire primary cycle within the programme (This definition is taken from the (Accelerated Education definition by the Inter Agency Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG), October 2017INEE EiE Term Bank (http://toolkit.ineesite.org/term-bank/en/terms/).

Alternative Basic Education is one variety of Non-Formal Education (NFE). According to UNESCO (1997), NFE is defined as "any organized and sustained educational activity with a specific purpose and provided outside the formal education system". Similarly, Alternative Basic

Education (ABE) program in Somalia is an educational program that addresses the needs of out of school children through condensed and integrated curricula, flexible time table, cost-effective use of resources and high community participation aimed at improving access, quality of education and attrition.

Education For All (EFA) is a global movement led by UNESCO (United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015"The EFA movement". (UNESCORetrieved 11, Sep 2010.). Alternative Basic Education (ABEs) programs/ projects are among those committed to the EFA goal. The key focuses are on access, retention, equity, quality, relevance and internal and external efficiency within the education system in Somalia.

ABE programs/ projects are designed to enable the Ministry of Education and other education actors to establish proper mechanism in the implementation of Alternative Basic Education (ABE) and its linkage with formal education system. The purpose is to ensure and make them complementary to each other in order to achieve the Education for All (EFA) and MDGs.

There areseveral terms used to name the provision of alternative education. Alternative Basic Education (ABE) is also known as non-formal basic education (NFBE) and in the UNICEF surveys it is referred to as Primary Alternative Education. The regular ABE program is an accelerated curriculum, completing primary education in 4 years instead of 8 years. **It should be noted and clear to everyone;** that the ABE basically uses the formal curriculum but condensed and integrated to fit the given time.

2.Rationale for Alternative Basic Education (Abe) Program

This program is envisaged to solve low levels of access and participation in Somalia for children who cannot access formal education in the form it is currently provided. Specifically the following reasons justify its importance: (Somalia Humanitarian Situation Report UNICEF REPORTING PERIOD: 1-31 MARCH 2018).

- Over 3 million children, out of 4.9 million in country, are estimated to be out of school

- School distance is limiting access to education. Schools are far-wide apart, some cases not reachable by young children, as well as dispersed settlements.

- Due to the scarce resource available for education, it is difficult to establish formal schools in every part of the country, which is under the process of economic and social recovery.

- The Ministry of education is working to address regional and other forms of disparities in the provision of education. Thus, this is a complementary program to increase access as planned

- It is meant to decrease attrition and maximize retention as it is a flexible, cost effective and easily managed by the community.

- It contributes to the relevance of education to the lives of the children as it relies on local resources and issues as inputs to the instructional process.

Due to the enormity of the problems associated with formal primary schools there is a need for expansion and adoption of an ABE program as a complementary form of education to permit learners *to catch up, keep*

up and get ahead in education. Thus, ABE is one of the methods that would be used to reach the maximum number of out of school children in Somalia.

3.Basic Principles of Alternative Basic Education (ABE) Program

Thebasic principles of the ABE program are the following:-

a. Participation: community, parents and students shall be involved in a meaningful manner. All stakeholders participate in site selection, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the ABE program."Participation facilitates the identification of education issues particular to the local context and ways to address them. In this way, community participation in assessment, planning, implementation, management and monitoring helps to ensure that education responses are appropriate and effective" (Inter-Agency for Education in Emergencies, 2010).

b. Flexibility:"Flexible learning programs have a curriculum that is purposeful, relevant, enjoyable and individualized. This means the content of learning is meaningful for students. Project–based learning and personalized learning plans are common"(http://theconversation.com/flexible-learning-helps-students-with-disadvantages-finish-school-31299).The program is designed to include all out of school children by adjusting the time table, the curriculum and methods of teaching to the peculiar needs/problems of students and parents. The views of parents and learners are inputs in determining the nature of the program.

c. Non- discrimination: "Community members participate actively, transparently and without discrimination in analysis, planning, design,

implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education responses"(Minimum & Handbook, n.d.).

Emphasis is paid to equal opportunities for all citizens and particularly to the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society.

d. Empowerment: Education should focus people as directors of the development process. Thus, education shall focus to enhance the capability of rights holders to understand their obligations and claim their rights – the process of active citizenship. Special attention should be paid to the education of the girl child. "Every child has a right to equal educational opportunities. Women constitute more than 60% of the world's population which ought to place them as pacesetters in education. Sadly, in some countries, girl-child education is neglected due to cultural beliefs. Women are seen as only relevant in the kitchen and for procreationpurpose"(https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/community/ discussions/ 2016/ 11/role-of- education- in- women-empowerment).

F .Accessibility: "Learning environments are secure and safe, and promote the protection and the psychosocial well-being of learners, teachers and other education personnel" (Minimum & Handbook, n.d.).

The focus shall be given to enhancing educational opportunity through reducing the distance from home to school, minimizing gender bias, improving the quality of education, and framing flexible time table of schooling.

g. Linkage to formal schools – There is a need to ensure transfer of learners from ABE schools to Formal Basic Education. This gives an opportunity for learners to progress from one level to another and from one mode to another with ease and open up opportunities for learners to

progress to higher classes. "This alternative basic education model has been officially recognised by the MoEs in Somalia"(UNICEF, 2013).

4.Target Beneficiaries of Alternative Basic Education (ABE)

Alternative Basic Education Alternative or Accelerated Basic Education (ABE) has been widely used in Somalia for many years. Initially, it was developed by international NGOs as a 'second-chance' model of education for children aged 8-14 years who, because of displacement, had missed out on the opportunity to join a formal primary school. In all three regions of Somalia this model is now used to extend quality education to children from vulnerable households whose resilience has been eroded by conflict and disaster- related as well as economic shocks"(UNICEF, 2013).

5. Alternative Basic Education (ABE) Program Implementation

5.1 ABECentre Establishment and Facilities

Schools can play an important role in bringing about behavioral changes and promoting better health. Improved hygiene practices are essential if transmission routes of water- and sanitation-related diseases are to be cut. Diseases such as diarrhea, parasitic worm infections and skin and eye diseases need to be tackled by making improvements to water and sanitation facilities. These improvements in facilities must go hand in hand with hygiene behavior change and practice, if the transmission of disease is to be prevented. (UNICEF, 2013)

5.2. Teacher Recruitment, Training, and Certification in the ABE

"Recruiting and supporting teachers to deliver a programming In establishing and expanding AE provision globally, the importance of ensuring an adequate supply of teachers, and other personnel and

ensuring that they are well supported and trained has been tantamount to the effectiveness of ABE's programs. In line with INEE Minimum Standards (Domains 3 and 4), itisendeavored to ensure that (1) the recruitment and selection process for teachers is done in a transparent way and as much as possible, harmonize with the current practices of government and/or other educational partners; and (2) that teachers and other educational personnel receive periodic, contextualised and needs-focused training to deliver the AE curriculum and provide an educational experience that is protective and of quality"(Shah, 2015)

5.3. Curriculum of Alternative Basic Education (ABE)

"Somalia**,**the ABE model is now used to extend quality education to children from vulnerable households whose resilience has been eroded by conflict and disaster- related as well as economic shocks. Currently there are three different variations on these programs in Somaliland South Central and Puntland. In Somaliland and South Central, the 8-yearly formal primary curriculum is condensed into a 5,5year ABE program, respectivelywhile in Puntland 4 years of formal lower primary education is condensed into a 3-year ABE program. This alternative basic education model has been officially recognised by the MoEs in **Somalia .**(UNICEF, 2013)

6. Roles of Stakeholders in Alternative Basic Education (ABE) Provision

6.1. Ministry of Education

The roles of the Ministry shall include:

"Education authorities prioritize continuity and recovery of quality education, including free and includes access to schooling. The national

authority's duty is to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education, according to international human rights instruments. National education laws and policies should ensure continuity of education for all. Safety of new and rebuilt schools. Analysis of the context. Information sharing and information systems.Disaster preparedness frameworks.Non discrimination"(Inter-Agency for Education in Emergencies, 2010)

6.2. International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOS)

"INGO involvement is crucial, given the objective of a government capable of delivering its own quality, equitable education services (SC, 2006). Ascertaining the role of INGOs is important, and to avoid repetition and duplication of efforts, interventions should 'complement one another, with 16 NGOs, donors, communities and government, perhaps taking on different aspects, but all working towards the same overall goal' (INEE, 2009, p33). Therefore, where governments have some capacity and willingness, INGO programs should be a) coordinated with the context and other education stakeholders, b) run in partnership with the state and c) undertaken with the view of long term, sustainable development that strengthens accountability without devolving responsibility (OECD, 2008; INEE, 2009). INGOs must consider the political context, and the potential for existing government systems to mitigate or exacerbate fragility (INEE, 2009).

6.3. Local Non-Governmental Organizations

"Local Partnerships Engaging local partners was considered crucial to INGO engagement,if you are not able to get the local actors engaged and on board, I don't see a lot of interventions going anywhere" (UNESCO Chair, Interview, 16/07/09).

1.4. Community Education Committees

"Roles and responsibilities of community education committee members should be clearly defined and may include: - meeting regularly to address issues of concern, keeping records of meetings and decisions,mobilizing community financial and in-kind contributions, determining appropriate approaches sensitive to age and culture to ensure that educational programs respect the needs and rights of learners. Examples include flexible school calendars and age-appropriate curricula that reflect the community context, communicating with the community and local and national education authorities to promote good relationships between community members and decision-makers outside the community, ensuring that those responsible for ensuring access and quality of education are accountable, monitoring education provision to help ensure quality of teaching and learning, collecting and monitoring disaggregated information on who is and who is not participating in learning opportunities, promoting security from attack and strengthening the security of staff and students going to and from school, ensuring that disaster risk reduction is included in education provision and ensuring appropriate psychosocial support"(INEE, 2010).

7.Monitoring and Evaluation of ABE Program

"The Alternative Basic Education program is systematically monitored through a framework in which project relevance, timeliness, budget execution, quality of monitoring and evaluation are reviewed and monitored on a regular basis. Project performance and progress towards results are jointly monitored and evaluated, involving district education officers and key achievements documented. A participatory end of project evaluation has also been planned to measure and determine the

results achieved. Children as well as adults will be consulted. Workshops will be held to share out information gathered in these reports to the participants. Information will be utilized to inform potential scaling up activities with other development partners and as a lesson learned for other stakeholders" (https://educationinnovations.org/program/ alternative - provision-basic-education).

Conclusion

The ABE program has been very successful in meeting its achievements. Local partners, including communities, lNGOs, and the Ministry of education have played an important role throughout the ABE progarmme. ABE provides a culturally appropriate curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the learners. The 'flexible' design of the programme was appropriate because it allowed children to learn when it was convenient for them.

Recommendations

- Enhance the scope of involvement of the Community Education Committee (CECs) in supervision of schools.

- Ministry of Education (MoE) should be more involved at proposal development stage.

- Support holistic development of ABE beneficiaries and community at large.

- Build capacity of teachersand and create a more enabling environment.

- Enhance capacity for regular monitoring.

- Improve curricular to include community relevant vocational skills and functional literacy program for parents and community members.

- Improvement of the physical learning environment.

- Increase access opportunities, transitioning and completion.

- Enhance documentation and establish a supporting data base

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