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Community and Stakeholder Perceptions: Understanding the Views of Parents, Learners, and the Community on Alternative Approaches to Basic Education in Samburu County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perception of the community, parents, and learners of AABE. AABE was introduced by the Kenya Government, religious entities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with the aim of promoting access to basic education and enhancing Universal Primary Education for all (UPE). However, school enrolment and literacy levels in Samburu have been low, at (44%) and (12%) respectively, raising the need to examine the success of AABE in meeting the envisaged purpose. The study tested one hypothesis, namely, perception, in Samburu County. The study applied a survey research design and collected data from both primary and secondary sources. Three structured questionnaires were used for 400 learners' household heads and 56 teachers in charge of the 56 AABE Centres and 10 AABE providers. Secondary data were obtained from the Ministry of Education offices, AABE Centres, libraries and the internet. A stratified random sampling technique was used to sample the 400 respondents. Data was presented using frequency tabulations, chi-square, multiple regressions and correlation analyses. The findings showed that perception about AABE was rated first as affecting the viability of AABE in Samburu County, with (92.5%) regarding it as inferior to formal education. Chi-square results showed a strong coefficient of 0.88 and a regression coefficient of -.64. It was the most highly correlated with a coefficient of +.8517. The respondents gave suggestions for enhancing AABE success and proposed that AABE system be done with or integrated with formal education (FE) by making FE more responsive to the needs of nomadic pastoralism.

Key words: AABE programme, community, learners, parents, perception.



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INTRODUCTION

With school enrolment and literacy rates in Samburu County still being very low at (44%) and (12%) respectively, in spite of the existence of AABE for over 21 years, there is great concern whether AABE programmes in Samburu County have been successful or not. This research was envisaged to provide a database for understanding the factors influencing the viability of Alternative Approaches to Basic Education in Samburu County and, by extension, in other nomadic pastoralist areas. Such an attempt has not hitherto been instituted in Samburu County. This study, therefore, fills the gap in knowledge on this vital topic.

The study, therefore, will fill this gap by endeavouring to give an empirically established understanding of the factors influencing the viability of AABE in nomadic pastoralist areas. It will make a useful theoretical contribution to the hypothesised relationships between the factors affecting the viability of AABE in the nomadic pastoralist Samburu area in particular and in Kenya in general. The results will be useful to AABE providers such as NGOs, the government, and religious entities, as well as to target communities and academicians. They envisage helping these stakeholders redefine their strategies in order to make their efforts effective, efficient, and impactful. In the long term, it is hoped that the study will enhance access to basic education in the nomadic pastoralists' communities and, thus, the realisation of UPE.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the key factors coming out in the literature that affects the viability of AABE is the perception held by stakeholders about it. Mwambili (2004) carried out a study in Kakamega and found out that AABE/NFE was affected a lot by perception. For instance, the general perception amongst (40%) of the local population interviewed in the district indicated that non-formal education was an alternative way of educating poor children and youth who dropped out of formal school or never had an opportunity to participate in the formal education system. He also found out that (20%) of the teachers interviewed from formal schools perceived NFE as an education programme meant for the rehabilitation

of deviant learners in society. Too, (65%) of people interviewed, especially parents, took NFE as an alternative and parallel education system. The majority of the NFE learners and parents also viewed these centres as owned by promoters of NFE and supported by the church. According to them, the Ministry of Education had no role whatsoever in the centres. The study revealed that many leaders in the community viewed NFE with contempt; for example, whenever committee members invited local councillors and education functionaries to committee meetings, their response was negative.

Learners also felt that they were stigmatised when they attended AABE. In Kakamega, most of them dropped out of NFE Centres because they claimed that they were branded negatively. For instance, learners in NFE centres were labelled as *gumbaru and chakras*, devil worshippers, and as being subjected to bullying and canning by teachers. This view was supported by Avenstrup (2007) in his study titled 'Towards Equitable Diversity in Education: Move Towards a Paradigm Shift' who, too, asserted that Non-formal education is regarded as the poor relative of, and second best to, formal education. From the formal system point of view, AABE is viewed as a programme used when the children have failed. The structural tension between formal and informal education is likely to hold back initiatives and ideas that are potentially fruitful and innovative.

According to Mwambili (2004), many people, including children in formal primary schools, perceive and equate NFE to poor quality education meant for poor children. During one of the debates by children in a Formal school titled "Formal is better than non-formal school", a learner opposed the motion, supporting his view with the argument that two out of the five (40%) of NFE learners who had crossed over to formal schools had to repeat class 5 because they could not pass the end-year exam implying that FE is better than AABE.

This sentiment seems to support ROK, 1999-2000(Koech Report), that NFE offers very low-quality education. If this is true, then it confirms Karabel's (1972) opinion that NFE lowers the

expectations and aspirations of disadvantaged youth. The findings of a study done by Geleta (2010) in Ethiopia revealed that both awareness-raising and capacity enhancement activities helped the participants to understand more about the objectives of the program, which in turn contributes to the effectiveness of the ABE program. Hence, for the success of the ABE program in creating an opportunity for primary education, it is advisable to promote the change in attitude and motivation of stakeholders toward ABE, which will make them appreciate the ABE as an alternative way of creating access to education for needy children.

Thompson (2001), in the study of successful AABE experiences in Africa, found out that the main challenge facing the success of AABE is that of Parity of Esteem, which refers to equality in status between routes of study, particularly ones where such equality could demonstrably be argued not to exist. NFE and formal education systems can or may not be held in equal regard by learners, parents, implementers and the government. The study views that there is no Parity of Esteem between NFE and formal education in the sense that the former is perceived to be inferior to the latter. The inferiority is in terms of quality, achievement, opportunities for progression and functionality of the programme as perceived by learners, beneficiaries, employers and higher education institutions.

The perception that Parity of Esteem between FE and NFE does not exist was also supported by Ekundayo (2001), who argued that the descriptor 'non-formal', which means forms of education provided outside the mainstream formal system, has rendered the concept negative, given the tendency of equating lack of formality to poor quality provision. The concept has, at times, evoked feelings of revulsion and derision among powers that are in the formal education domain. He further posits that it would seem the term is at best unattractive and at worst opprobrious. To those schooled in the formal school tradition and who are charged with reproducing and perpetuating the dominant mode of education, i.e. formal education, NFE would seem unwelcome and even a threat to the status quo.

Further, the definition of NFE also gives it a disadvantaged status/position. Govinda (2010) says that NFE is skill and knowledge generation taking place outside the formal schooling system, a heterogeneous conglomeration of un-standardised and seemingly un-related activities aimed at a wide range of goals: the definition depicts NFE as a system without plan, organisation and coherence of activities.

Traditionally, NFE has been viewed only as a kind of *second-chance* education for those who have missed out on formal schooling. This secondary status has also contributed to its depiction as a second-rate alternative to formal education programmes. Dodds (2002) agrees with the notion that perception affects the success of AABE. He lamented that this attitude towards AABE is even held by policymakers and said that "sadly it seems to me that this low esteem and level of attention is still reflected in the discussions and resolutions that went into the Dakar Conference and have emerged from it in terms of the almost exclusive emphasis on providing for the 55 million places short-fall and the little more than lip-service about the need to do something serious about the adult education short-fall of nearly 900 million". He argued that the pessimistic scenario is that these somewhat idealistic realisations will not come about, and we will be left with much the same half-hearted use of the tools at our disposal with continuing limited effects. The end result will be the total failure to bring about education for all or for the majority of Africa's adults within the next century and a continued growth of adult illiteracy. The economic results of such neglect are too awful.

He summed the perception with a quote from a paper also prepared as part of the lead-up to Dakar by Catherine Odora-Hoppers (Odora-Hoppers, 1998), which stated that "the area of adult learning continues to face problems of recognition. In government departments, the political will to provide the mandate required for adults and communities to receive competency enhancement appears low. Instead of matching pronouncements with action, resources are often earmarked specifically only for that aspect of basic education carried out in the classrooms of formal schools. In the hard world of

practice, moreover, schooling is a priority, but adult learning is voluntary.' It is argued that AABE/NFE is even alienating learners further, perpetuating the negatives of formal education. They tend to be haphazard stop-gap measures and are also non-inclusive by targeting selected groups. They are seen to deviate in focus from the formal education system, thus affecting their viability. Those attending AABE/NFE centres are stigmatised as failures and lacking direction.

In the area of education, one notable application of the theory was the use by England in the pursuit of the principle of equality. For example, in 1880, England implemented an education system based on a 'tripartite' structure, distinguishing grammar, technical and secondary modern. Within these schools, there was to be 'parity of esteem'- that is, equality in status among the three systems. However, since grammar schools were selective, and secondary moderns took the rest, there was never 'parity of esteem'. To remedy the disparity in esteem, non-selective or 'comprehensive' schools were introduced; this gradually became the government policy in the 1960s. The main arguments for comprehensives are that they reduce the likelihood of discrimination or disadvantage on the basis of class and that they improve the prospects of children of middling ability. The main argument against them is that the selective system may be more consistent with the idea of equality of opportunity. Working-class children who went to grammar schools did better than those who now go to comprehensive schools.

Young (2003) asserted that parity of esteem is not a reality in any country. An example was given of the Apartheid, which created the most pernicious inequalities in education provision in the world. The apartheid system of education and training was not the result of 'benign neglect' but a response to a purposeful and deliberate attempt to keep millions of people 'in their place' (Blom, 2006). Young (1996) points out that parity of esteem 'in theory, guarantees equal opportunities and progression regardless of the learning pathway chosen'. In South Africa, this has a very special meaning, being linked to social justice issues and the quality of education and training.

Mehl (2004) says that this stems from the way in which 'society recognises rewards and measures learning achievement. It is a society which provides ultimate validation of qualifications and accords respect to the bearer. Society awards status and also opportunity and privilege'. The apartheid education and training system skewed these 'customary societal norms' along the lines of race, class and gender.

The above discussions centred on stakeholders' perceptions of AABE. This study would like to ascertain whether perception was a determinant of the viability of AABE in Samburu County.

Further, other factors emerge in the studies reviewed. Mwambili (2004) undertook a study of AABE in Kakamega and realised that the enrolment in 2003 was lower than that in 2002. The enrolment dropped by (5.1%) from 1,576 to 1,495, with the highest rate being noticed among boys. It was revealed that (20.1%) of boys dropped out of the program, and this affected its success. Further, according to Mwambili (2004), the other major factor affecting AABE in Kakamega is that the promoters had not established at what level its coursework got completed, so it had no time frame or measurement/indicator for progression. The Centres, too, operated without any specific curriculum for the learners. Different promoters used different curricula, including formal primary, adult education and early childhood development. The Kakamega NFE scenario was based on "I" and not 'we'. Most providers did not know one another. The timing of the programme was based on "module" and not "years". This allowed learners to join, leave and re-enter as dictated by various circumstances.

The gap this study can deduce here is that of unclear policy direction about AABE by the government. This may affect the progression of learners.

Looking at the Ministry of Education documents, one would realise that there is a mix-up of which department of the Ministry of Education is supposed to be in charge of AABE. There is a desk/officers 'in charge' of NFE at the basic education section, and there is also a Directorate of Adult and Continuing Education, still at the Ministry of Education, which

claims the mandate of overseeing NFE. The Ministry of Education is also supposed to register all NFE centres offering education to out-of-school children and youth. However, this has not taken place. Almost all are not registered, and neither is MOEST aware of their number. Canadian International Development Agency [1998] reported that: "Most NFE centres are private or community initiatives that have been established in response to a felt need ... some are registered as homes, community centres, rehabilitation centres under the Ministry of Culture and Social Services and not as schools under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology."

There is also confusion about what exactly AABE learners are to be taught. Every provider comes up with something. Some donors have funded the development of contextualised curricula for specific groups. For example, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, through the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), funded the development of an Out-of-school curriculum and textbooks for the Shepherd Schools in Samburu. Certification of AABE is also not streamlined. For example, AABE learners sit for various types of examinations, including the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), Proficiency Test Certificate (PT) examination, Government Trade Test, and End Term Examination (Thompson, 2001). The Directorate for Adult and Continuing Education has been aiding learners in registering for KCPE with the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) as private candidates.

The legal framework for educational provision in Kenya is contained in the Education Act (1968, revised 1980). According to the act, a school must have a plot number, permanent structure and so on. AABE can, therefore, not be registered under the current provisions. AABE programmes are meant to help less fortunate members of society to access basic education. These are mainly girls, disabled and remote members. Further, Mwambili (2004) noted that NFE was bedevilled by such challenges as inadequate facilities, lack of trained teachers, and rigid registration requirements. In Kakamega, (90%) of the NFE centres depended on church premises for classrooms. Unqualified, poorly motivated and 'unwilling' volunteer teachers preponderate the non-

formal education field of practice. Resources in NFE, like in many other sub-sectors, are scarce.

The study noted that there had been very little effort to include representatives of local primary schools, education officers and local authorities in the centre management committee. The research found that (90%) of the interviewed NFE committee members had never been trained in institutional and financial management skills because also the promoters of NFE put little effort into building the capacity of committee members so that they could play their roles and duties effectively. According to Mwambili, the majority (69%) of the NFE teachers in Kakamega had no orientation about how to teach NFE learners. Many programmes depended on volunteers. Their turnover was (90%) as they complained about remuneration, which was quite meagre.

The findings further showed that the supervision of AABE was quite deficient, as many providers also lacked expertise in educational issues. Most providers were churches and NGOs. (90%) of the respondents also said teachers were hired without their participation and consent. Therefore, they lacked goodwill.

The centres lacked essential facilities like toilets, so learners had to visit the nearby bushes or homes for toiletry. PACT Ethiopia (2008) reported that there were many challenges facing the implementation of AABE; understaffing and ill-trained staff, lack of standards and guidelines and proper management by the Government officials due to the remoteness of the location of the learning centres were rampant. It was also reported that there was a lack of mainstreaming of AABE, which resulted in a lack of adequate resources, management, and programmatic input for the programme. The vast distance, weak administrative systems and lack of transport make it difficult to monitor the actual number of centres. Ayieko (2007) mentioned that in terms of teaching and learning aids, most centres, for instance, in Eldoret, do not have sufficient textbooks or even a curriculum to follow. While formal primary schools have food supplies from the government, AABE centres do not, making AABE look inferior in the eyes of learners. They rely on donations from

churches and other well-wishers. These donations are not constant.

METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken in Samburu County. The county covers an area of 20,826 sq Km (3.6% of the total area of Kenya). The county was divided into three districts/constituencies, namely, Samburu East, Samburu North and Samburu West. It bordered the counties of Turkana to the North West, Baringo to the South West, Marsabit to the East, and Laikipia and Isiolo to the South and East, respectively. A larger part (75%) is arid and semi-arid. The county lies on the north interface, between the lowlands and the highlands. The main part of the county is lowland with few high potential pockets, namely, Lorroki Plateau, Nyiro and Ndoto Mountains and Matthew’s Ranges. Lorroki Plateau supports some crop farming, and the people living on it have started settling semi-permanently. Because of its climatic conditions, the county predominantly supported nomadic pastoralism. The primary data were collected using three sets of structured questionnaires. The study used both primary and secondary data. The researcher visited all the AABE centres, sponsors, and government offices between February and June 2011 to understand more about the study area and to collect secondary data. A second visit to all AABE centres was made in October 2012 to map out the areas and identify logistic dynamics. The primary and additional secondary data were collected from December 2011 and completed in January 2012. Primary data was collected concurrently in all the

AABE centres. The data were collected using three structured questionnaires targeting household heads, teachers and sponsors. Secondary data were obtained by perusing various literary documents from libraries, the internet, and Ministry of Education offices in Nairobi at the county level and at the AABE centres. This was on policy issues, enrolment, curriculum, supervision, assessment, staffing, funding, providers and their involvement in running the centres. An observation guide is used to assess some aspects relating to the nature of the centres to be studied. The reason was to ensure that important issues were captured. Ethical considerations were considered to protect the rights of the research participants. This study employed descriptive and inferential statistics in data analysis.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The study further sought to assess the respondents’ perception towards AABE in relation to Formal Education. To capture their views, several questions were asked, viz. How do you view education generally? Is it important? How do you view the status of AABE in relation to FE? What are the perceived reasons for the existence of AABE? How are centres referred to? How are learners referred?

(i) Importance of Education

The study first probed the respondents' views or perceptions about the importance of education. They were asked if education is important (for you and your children). The table below captures the responses:

Table 1: Importance of Education

	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
YES	121	94.5	263	96.7	384	96.0
NO	7	5.5	9	3.3	16	4.0
TOTAL	128	100	272	100	400	100

The majority (96.1%) of the respondents asserted that education was important. Only a few (3.9%) said it was not important. Gender-wise, 94.5% (n=121) of the female and 96.0% (n=263) of the male respondents reported that education was important. There was no significant variation between the views of men and women in regard to the importance of

education. The high percentage of those who said that education was important implied that the nomadic pastoralists in Samburu County valued education highly.

On further clarification, the respondents were also asked whether it was good to send a child to school. The responses are also captured in the table below:

(ii) Is it Good to Send a Child to School?

Table 2 displays the respondents' views on whether it is good to send a child to school.

Table 2: Whether it is Good to Send a Child to School

	Total	
	f	%
YES	390	97.5
NO	10	2.5
TOTAL	400	100

The table depicts that (97.5%) of the respondents reported that it was good to send a child to school. Only a few (2.5%) said it was not important. This finding is consistent with the position that as long as an approach to the provision of basic education is relevant to community needs, people are receptive (Owiny, 2006; Dibaba, 2010.)

(iii) Importance of Sending Children to School

The respondents were asked to state in order of priority the importance of enrolling children in school. The first reasons given by the respondents are summarised in the table 3 below:

Table 3: Importance of sending a child to school

	Total	
	f	%
Employment	96	24.1
To support the family	94	23.6
Livestock numbers reducing	22	5.5
Everybody is sending	15	3.8
To help him/herself	89	22.4
To be educated and Literacy	82	20.6
TOTAL	398	100

The reasons respondents gave about the importance of enrolling children in school were Employment (24.1%), to support the family (23.6%), Livestock numbers reducing (5.5%), everybody is sending (3.8%), to help him/herself-22.4%, and to be educated (20.6%). Generally, the respondents have a genuine view of the importance of sending children to school. (Huntington, 2008). After establishing the respondents' general perception of education, the

study further explored their perception of AABE. The analysis is presented in the following sections.

(iv) Perception of AABE in relation to FE

The respondents were asked how they viewed AABE in relation to FE- that is, whether they viewed AABE as equal or inferior to FE. The table below presents the respondents' perceptions.

Table 4: Perception of AABE in Relation to FE

Perception		
	f	%
Equal (YES)	30	7.5
Inferior (NO)	370	92.5
TOTAL	400	100

Table 4 indicates that the majority (92.5%) of the household heads held the view that AABE was inferior to FE. Only (7.5%) viewed it as equal in status to FE. By implication, this perception could determine the participation of learners, parents, and sponsors in AABE. The study dug into the reasons behind the assertion. The following table presents the findings.

(v) Reasons for AABE being viewed as Inferior

The researcher picked on the main perception respondents had, which was that AABE was inferior to FE, and examined the reason why the respondents held the view. The reasons are listed below:

Table 5: Reasons for AABE Being Viewed as Inferior

Reasons	f	%
AABE is for rejects	106	26.5
AABE receives no attention from the government	272	68.0
There is no seriousness in teaching/learning	258	64.5
No progression/success unless learners cross to FE	202	50.5
No trained teachers	104	26.0
No facilities	180	45.0
Little time and few days for learning	135	33.5
Learners hardly improve	234	58.5
There are other unnecessary activities to waste time	146	36.5
Learners are not full-time	282	70.5
centres are short-lived	92	23.0

The analysis indicated that the respondents had varied reasons as to why they perceived that AABE was inferior to FE. The majority (70.5%) mentioned that AABE was not full-time, AABE received little attention from the government (68%), No serious learning took place (64.5%), learners hardly improved (58.5%), no progression (50.5%) and no facilities (45%). Others said that there were other activities that wasted time for learners (36.5%), little time and few days for learning (33.5%), AABE was for rejects (26.5%), No trained teachers (26%), and AABE centres were short-lived (23%). Mwambili (2004) indicated some of these as reasons for such

programmes as AABE to be viewed with contempt by the community. These reasons affected the respondents and, by implication, the Samburu County residents' perceptions about the value of AABE and, therefore, affected participation and, by extension, its viability.

(vi) Other Activities in AABE centres

The study identified other activities that took place in the AABE centres that made the respondents and learners view it differently from FE. The activities are tabulated below:

Table 6: Other Activities in AABE centers

Activities	f	%
Festivals- Traditional singing and dances	110	27.4
HIV and AIDS awareness	112	28.1
Church songs/choir	265	66.2
Sanitation hygiene awareness	10	2.5
Environmental conservation awareness	10	2.4
Games for afternoon classes	122	30.4

Evangelism	10	31.2
Child abuse awareness	10	1.0

The majority (66.2%) of the respondents mentioned that learners preoccupied themselves with church songs during AABE Classes. This meant that most of the time, they used the learning time to practice choir songs for Sunday services. Also, a relatively high number (31.4%) reported that AABE Centres were also used for evangelisation. This finding was supported by the fact that (57%) of the Centres are supported by the Catholic Church. Too (30.4%) of the respondents said that games activities were also undertaken in the Centres, as well as Aids Awareness campaigns (28.1%), traditional dances (27.4%), and other few skills development awareness programs like child rights, environmental conservation and sanitation. The lack of a curriculum focused on basic education for AABE led to this deviation (Moussa, Benett, Bittaye, Dembele, Gueye, Kane, N'Jie, 2007.) The respondents viewed these activities as time wasters, especially when the learners just used

the AABE Centres as meeting points for traditional dances by girls and warriors.

(vii) Perceived Reasons for Existence of AABE

As per the respondents, the following reasons were given as reasons they believed were behind the existence of their respective AABE Centres. According to the table below, 24.5% of the respondents believed that AABE Centres existed to offer literacy skills to out-of-school children and youth. Almost a similar percentage (22.2%) said it existed to offer alternative avenues for accessing basic education. Further, 19.7% mentioned that it was just a way for donors to raise and use funds from other donors, while others said that it was AABE's sponsors' channels to evangelise (10.8%), teach life skills for out-of-school children and youth (12.4%) and some (10.4%) did not know the reasons why AABE existed.

Table 7: Respondents' Reasons for AABE centers Existence

Timing	F	%
	Basic education- primary	88
Literacy reasons	97	24.5
Donor reasons- use funds	78	19.7
To evangelise	43	10.8
Teach life skills	49	12.4
Don't Know	41	10.4
TOTAL	396	100

To compare the responses, the teachers were also asked to state the reasons why AABE centres existed, and 67% said it was for basic education purposes, while 43% said it was for donors' specific reasons. According to the views given by respondents and teachers, there was no shared view of the reasons behind AABE's existence. It seemed there was a lack of orientation and sensitisation by both teachers on the community and sponsors on the teachers and also community on AABE. This could

affect the participation of learners because the reasons were not clear. According to Abdi (2010) and Owiny (2006), understanding the relevance of AABE programmes by the community is a major motivator to participation.

(viii) Names used for AABE centres

Table 8 summarises the names used for AABE centres.

Table 8: Names Used For AABE Centres

Name	F	%
Out-of-school program	12	21.4
Lchekuti (shepherds) education program	24	42.9
Pastoralist education program	2	3.6
Non Formal Education	12	21.4
Mobile Education	4	7.1
Youth Catechism Classes	2	3.6
Total	56	100

The majority (44.9%) of the AABE centres are referred to as Lchekuti (which means Shepherd) education programs. Another bigger percentage (21.4%) of the centres were referred to as Non-Formal education and equally as Out of School Programs (21.4%). Few others were referred to as mobile education (7.1%), Pastoralist education programs (3.6%) and Youth Catechism classes (93.6%). The lack of consensus in the names used for AABE centres makes it appear inferior to FE (Mwambili, 2004). The study further interrogated the view teachers have about the AABE approach. The findings are shown below.

(ix) View on the Mode of Delivery

Table 9 below presents the responses by the teachers on what they refer to as the AABE approach, which shows that the majority (33.95%) reported that the approach is called alternative education. Others referred to it as multi-grade (23.2%), while almost equal numbers (21.45) referred to it as Nomadic education. A few others view the AABE approach as compensatory (8.9%), flexible education (7.1%) and finally, the rest (5\4%) said they did not know. This lack of agreement on the AABE approach affects its success.

Table 9: View of the Approach

Approach	F	%
Multi-grade	13	23.2
Alternative Education	19	33.95
Flexible Education	4	7.1
Nomadic Education	12	21.45
Compensatory Education	5	8.9
Don't Know	3	5.4
Total	56	100

(x) What AABE Learners are Referred To

The study further investigated from the teachers what the AABE learners are referred to by other people. The findings are tabulated below:

Table 10: Names Used for AABE centers

Approach	F	%
Left-out Learners	8	14.3
Mobile Learners	7	12.5
Lchekuti (shepherds) learners	22	39.3
Out-of-school learners	19	33.9
Total	56	100

The analysis depicts that the majority (39.3%) of the AABE centres referred to their learners as Lchekuti (Shepherd) Learners, (33.9%) referred to as out-of-school youth, (14.3%) as left-out learners and finally (12.5%) as mobile learners. The respondents said that the learners could prefer to be called students like their counterparts in Formal Schools. They said that some names were derogatory because the learners were viewed as failures and trying to waste

their time in trying to chase after the wind- to acquire half-baked education (Mwambili, 2004).

(xi) AABE Achievements as compared to FE

In summary, the study sought to probe the respondents' perception of the rate of achievements in AABE as compared to FE. The table below presents the picture.

Table 11: AABE Achievements as Compared to FE

Achievements	H/Heads		Teachers		Average	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
YES	24	6.0	11	19.6	35	7.7
NO	374	94.0	45	80.4	419	92.3
Total	398	100	56	100	454	100

The analysis shows that (94%) of the household heads said that AABE had not achieved when compared with FE. The teachers reported it to be (80.4%) less successful in achievements. Their view was slightly lower than that of parents because they benefit somehow from AABE centres. In general, (92.3%) of the respondents reported that AABE was not successful in achievements as compared to FE. Only (7.7%) said that it was successful. The perception of respondents on AABE status in relation to FE was very low, and this could be one of the factors affecting the success of AABE.

This finding agrees with several studies that have found that AABE target communities have negative perceptions towards AABE. Mwambili (2004), for instance, in his study in Kakamega, found out that AABE was affected a lot by perception. Participation in AABE is highly dependent on the perception of the community (Abdi, 2010; BEA-E, 2008; Malcom, 2009; Geleta, 2010). The chi-square test was also applied in an attempt to test the relationship between the respondents' perceptions of the status of AABE in relation to Formal education. To capture this, the respondents were asked to state whether they viewed AABE as equal or inferior to AABE. The analysis was captured in the table below:

Table 12: Association between Perceived Status of AABE in Relation to Formal Education/Schooling

VIABILITY	PERCEIVED STATUS ABOUT AABE IN RELATION TO FE		
	Equal	Inferior	Row Total
Viable	15 (50)	60 (16.2)	75 (18.8)
Not Viable	15 (50)	310 (75.7)	325 (81.2)
Column Total	30 (100.0)	370 (100.0)	400 (100.0)

Contingency coefficient 0.88
 $X^2 = 36.87432$
 Significance = 0.00000
 df = 1

Table 12 revealed that out of the total sample (400), only (18.8%) perceived AABE as viable. An overwhelming majority (81.2%) said that AABE was not viable in Samburu County. In addition, out of the 30 respondents who said that AABE and FE are equal in status, half (50%) reported that it is not

viable. This could be explained by the fact that they felt there were other factors that came to the fore that affected the viability of AABE apart from their own perception only.

The majority of those who reported that AABE was inferior to formal education also mentioned that AABE was not viable in Samburu County. This finding suggested that perception affected regard and value for AABE and, therefore, participation (Mwambili, 2004.) When participation was also low, this, in turn, affected the success of AABE. It can thus be argued that perception was critical in either enhancing or reducing the success of AABE (Dodds, 2002). The relationship between perception and viability of AABE was statistically significant at a 100% confidence level. Hence, the study concluded that perception had a significant influence on the viability of AABE (Thompson, 2001.) The policy implication here was that improving the areas that make AABE appealing to the nomadic pastoralists would go a long way in boosting its success in Samburu County.

Further, the association between the two variables (perception and viability) was found to be very strong as measured by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.88). This suggested that the perception respondents had about AABE in relation to Formal education and the viability of AABE were both significantly related and strongly associated. Further, multiple regression analysis revealed that perception about AABE was the best predictor of the viability of AABE. The partial regression coefficient depicted that one unit increase in negative perception about AABE reduced the viability of AABE by -0.64 units. This implied that perception had a critical effect on the viability of AABE. The study approached the examination of perception from the point of view of whether it was equal or inferior to formal education. It showed, therefore, that the perception of respondents about AABE status in relation to FE was very low, and this could be one of the main factors that affected the success of AABE (Mwambili, 2004).

Further, the association between the two variables (perception and viability) was found to be very

strong as measured by the value of the contingency coefficient (-0.64 .) This suggested that the perception respondents had about AABE in relation to Formal education and the viability of AABE were both significantly related and strongly associated: Dodds (2004) strongly brought this association to the fore. These reasons affected the respondents and, by implication, the Samburu County residents' perceptions about the value of AABE and, therefore, affected participation and, by extension, its viability.

This view of AABE was confirmed by the theory of parity of esteem, which meant the equality in status between routes of study, particularly ones where such equality could demonstrably be argued not to exist, like in the case of AABE and FE. This study, therefore, established that there was no Parity of Esteem between AABE and formal education in the sense that the former was perceived to be inferior to the latter. This inferiority, as per the theory, was in terms of quality, achievement, opportunities for progression and functionality of the programme as perceived by learners, beneficiaries, employers and higher education institutions. The respondents' reasons for believing that AABE was inferior to FE were varied. One majority (70.5%) mentioned that AABE was not full-time. Secondly, (68%), asserted that AABE received little attention from the government. Thirdly, (64.5%) reported that there was no serious learning that took place in AABE Centres. Others mentioned that learners hardly improved (58.5%), there was no progression (50.5%), and facilities were unavailable (45%). Similarly, others said that there were other activities that wasted time for learners (36.5%), there was little time and few days for learning (33.5%), AABE was for rejects (26.5%), No trained teachers (26%), and AABE Centres were short-lived (23%).

The perception that AABE was viewed as inferior to FE was also supported by Ekundayo (2001), who argued that descriptors such as non-formal, alternative, out-of-school, complementary, supplementary, compensatory, mobile, and so on had rendered the perception of AABE to be negative and thus affecting its success. Such terms point to an education 'system' that would seem, at best, unattractive and opprobrious. Further, the definition

of NFE also gave it a disadvantaged status/position. Govinda (2010) asserted that the definition of AABE as an education system that was un-standardised and of seemingly unrelated activities aimed at a wide range of goals depicts it as a system without plan, organisation and coherence of activities. Traditionally, NFE was viewed only as a kind of *second chance* education for those who were termed as drop-outs, miss-outs, push-outs and left-outs. This secondary status also contributed to its depiction as a second-rate alternative to formal education programmes.

Dodds (2002) lamented this attitude towards AABE even by policymakers and said that there seemed to be a lack of emphasis on AABE by policymakers due to negative perceptions about it, which have reflected in half-hearted policy direction and implementation. It was also argued that AABE/NFE was even alienating learners further, perpetuating the negatives of formal education. They tended to be haphazard stop-gap measures and were also non-inclusive by targeting selected groups. They were seen to deviate in focus from the formal education system, thus affecting their viability. Those attending AABE/NFE centres were stigmatised as failures and lacking direction.

This study, therefore, established that perception was viewed as the most critical factor that affected the viability of AABE as influenced by the disparity of esteem between FE and NFE. Dyer (2010) indicated that such disparity resulted in NFE programmes being perceived as inferior to FE programmes. The providers of AABE, including the government, had not taken AABE seriously, and that was why it still lacked an adequate policy framework and implementation of the drafts. It lacked coordination and streamlining. Beneficiaries, too, viewed it suspiciously and only enrolled in AABE sluggishly due to a lack of an alternative.

In summary, the F test for the model depicted that the regression equation was significant at a 100% confidence level. Hence, the hypothesis that there was a significant relationship between the perception and viability of the AABE programme in Samburu County was accepted. Correlation analysis also showed that perception was rated first with a

correlation coefficient of +.8517, which is strongly associated positively with the viability of AABE in Samburu County. This meant that the higher the positive perception, the higher the viability or success of AABE. This implied that when the perception of AABE was improved, its success would be boosted. This was with respect to all stakeholders, namely learners, parents, and sponsors, including the government.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions: Perception about AABE was found to be the key factor affecting the viability of AABE in Samburu County. People had low regard for AABE. The study computed the positive and negative perceptions about AABE in relation to FE using several indicators. The majority (96%) of the respondents valued education in general for their children, and (97.5%) said that it was good to enrol children in school. This was against the view held by many that nomadic pastoralists did not value formal education. However, (92.5%) held the view that AABE was far inferior in all respects to formal education. They gave varied reasons as to why they perceived AABE as inferior to FE. The majority (70.5%) mentioned that AABE was not full-time; AABE received little attention from the government (68%), that no serious learning took place (64.5%), learners hardly improved (58.5%); there was no progression (50.5%) and that there were no facilities (45%). Others said that there were other activities that wasted time for learners (36.5%); there was little time and few days for learning (33.5%); AABE was for rejects (26.5%); there were no trained teachers (26%), and that AABE Centres were short-lived (23%). They even doubted the core reasons why AABE was introduced. They reported that AABE learners were stigmatised with many names like left-outs and out-of-school. They put AABE's achievements in relation to FE at (7.7%). The test of the relationship between the respondents' perceptions on the status of AABE in relation to Formal education done using chi-square analysis revealed that the association was very strong as measured by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.88) and also proved by the statistically significant (100%) confidence level. Hence, we conclude that perception has a significant influence on the viability of AABE.

The policy implication here was that improving the areas that make AABE appealing to the nomadic pastoralists would go a long way in boosting its success in Samburu County. From the study findings, one key factor emerged: the viability of AABE in Samburu County. It was the perception about AABE. It was evident from the study that the Samburu nomadic pastoralists, including parents and learners and also the sponsors of AABE, viewed it as an inferior and second-rate education. The government was also viewed as harbouring the same perception about AABE, and that was why its commitment was conspicuously absent. The pastoralists felt that all the development interventions geared towards them were not implemented with any appreciable level of commitment. They felt that the main reason for this was that they were viewed with low regard because of their perceived resistance to change, albeit misconceived. There abounds in literary materials

the blame on nomadic pastoralists for clinging to archaic forms of livelihood systems that are retrogressive and resistant to development. However, the pastoralists themselves lament that they are not the ones who resist change; it is their environment that favours only that form of socio-economic lifestyle they engage in.

Recommendations: To strengthen the existing work, it is recommended that more studies be done on the viability of AABE, especially covering other factors not included in this study. More studies on the viability of AABE are needed to document experiences in a wide range of nomadic pastoral areas. Predictor variables to AABE success are subject to change from time to time; hence, there is a need to continuously update our understanding of the changing trends of viability and the factors influencing it, especially covering new developments.

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