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Expansion and Growth: Tracing the Development of Alternative Approaches to Basic Education Programs since Inception in Samburu County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study established the growth and expansion of the AABE programme since its inception in Samburu County. 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, the growth expansion of AABE 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 were as follows: AABE was only able to achieve a growth rate of (28.8%) over the last 21 years it had been in existence in Samburu. The respondents gave suggestions for enhancing AABE success and proposed that the AABE system be integrated with formal education (FE) by making FE more responsive to the needs of nomadic pastoralism. In that instance, AABE Centres to be increased and be mobile.

Key words: AABE programme, expansion, growth, inception, Samburu County.



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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. The Alternative Approaches to Basic Education programmes were promoted in Kenya by the government in partnership with other international and national organisations as one of the initiatives believed to be capable of fostering access to basic education and boosting literacy, subsequently taking the country towards the realisation of Universal Primary Education (UPE). Strengthening of Non-Formal Education (NFE) to target disadvantaged groups in Kenya (such as nomadic pastoralists, slum dwellers, and street children) has been implemented variously, such as through several stakeholder forums, development of a national NFE policy draft and the development of NFE curricula. However, in the pastoral nomadic communities, the propagation and adoption of AABE have been wanting. Statistics in the County Education offices indicate that the gross enrolment rate for Samburu in 2010 was (44%). This left (56%) of the children out of school. The implication of this scenario is that Kenya may not achieve the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015 since many children and youth will still remain out of school. It is with regard to these facts that the research was conceptualised to investigate the viability of Alternative Approaches to Basic Education in Samburu County.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the viability (success) and challenges to the Alternative Approaches to Basic Education programme in Samburu County. 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.

In addition, the government and development agencies have tried for a long time to promote access to basic education in disadvantaged environments through approaches such as AABE. However, as

indicated earlier, school enrolment and literacy levels are still low. In this respect, this study will be timely in trying to establish and rank the factors impairing the viability of AABE. Moreover, much of the documentation done on AABE has been mainly NGO programmatic evaluations of NFE programmes and workshop reports. Little research has been done, especially so in the context of nomadic pastoralists. 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

Literature on the Viability of AABE

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, viability means the capacity of living, or being distributed, over wide geographical limits; the capacity of living after birth/inception; the capability of normal growth and development; the capability to become practical and useful. In the present study, viability was taken to mean the success of AABE as measured by Participation in AABE, Growth of AABE, Sustainability of AABE and Quality of AABE. Participation issues included enrollment, class attendance, and consistency of classes taking place. Growth meant geographical coverage, enrollment as a percentage of out-of-school children, and average new centres per year. Sustainability is related to the continuity and survival of AABE Centres. Quality meant competencies of learners in their respective levels. The study viewed these indicators as being influenced by government policy on AABE, resource input, community perception, the approaches (delivery methods), distance of learning centres from the living places of the learners and the nomadic lifestyle of the pastoralists. This literature

review explored several existing studies, especially on factors affecting the viability of AABE. Most studies, however, have dwelt on the weaknesses of formal education to justify the need for AABE, but the present study tried to decipher information from the few that studied AABE.

Growth and Viability of AABE

Under the eiges of Save the Children, Uganda, which still viewed alternative basic education best suited for educating marginalised communities, research to review the progress of alternative basic education programmes among the Karamoja (ABEK) pastoralists (DEC, 2006) in terms of policy, community, social and implementation approaches as factors affecting learner participation in terms of enrollment and continuity in the programmes was carried out. The research targeted three districts with the district as the unit of analysis, using in-depth structured interview, structured interview and focus group discussion methods to collect data from ABEK learners, parents, community leaders, ABEK committee members, ABEK supervisors and facilitators as well as Ministry of Education officials. Data analysis was done qualitatively by establishing themes, data reduction, verification, and drawing conclusions, and quantitatively using Access and Excel programmes, which were presented as frequencies and percentages. The study found that community mobility, negative community perception, practices of forced early marriages, lack of ABEK centres, poor resource input, irrelevant curriculum, household poverty and persistent drought all affected enrolment and continuity in attendance of the children to ABEK programmes. UNESCO (2000) advocates for a broad-based policy implementation approach, whereby policies in other sectors, such as agriculture and health, should enhance the implementation of education policies because literacy cannot be achieved in isolation from other development objectives. This is especially important for nomadic pastoralist communities as far as ABE programmes are concerned (Carl-Hill & Peart, 2005).

A study on socio-economic factors that impacted basic education competencies in non-formal education programmes in Bangladesh (Das et al., 2007) provided by NGOs aimed at assessing the existing level of basic education competencies of the

learners and identifying socio-economic factors that influenced the basic education of the learners. It was premised on the position that there was a need for greater participation of the private sector and community and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to supplement government efforts in the provision of basic education. The study focused on the influence of parents' education (separately for father and mother), gender of the child, yearly food security status of the household, cultivatable land size, access to radio and television and school category (rural or urban) on the child's basic competence in literacy. It was carried out in one rural and one urban district that were randomly selected with 100 NFPE learners from the 4th grade, 50 boys and 50 girls (respondents) from 50 different learning centres systematically sampled from the two districts such that the lowest administrative units of the districts were represented.

The household was the unit of analysis. Data was generated in the form of a written test, whose questions tested life skill level, reading, writing and numeracy skills, with participants who were unable to understand certain aspects of the tests being assisted by the researcher. The data was analysed manually and by use of the SSPS program and presented in tabular form and as percentages. The study found that (73.8%) of the learners satisfied all four criteria of basic education, while (25.6%) possessed partial basic competence. There was no significant difference between the performances of children from rural and urban schools. The learners of comparatively better-off households were more likely to have basic competency than those from poor households. Parents' schooling helped raise competence level for urban NFPE school learners but not for the rural learners; yearly food security status was found to significantly affect the competence of girls and boys from urban areas; those with cultivatable land of sizes equal to or more than 50 points (to an acre) had higher chances of having competencies than those with less or none; monthly income of households greatly affected the competencies of boys and girls from urban NFPE schools; access to radio and TV improved the competences of the rural and urban NFPE learners. The adoption of innovative approaches to basic education and modern technology is seen to enhance the effectiveness of ABE programmes in terms of

learner performance. Apart from the issue of household wealth, learner self-esteem, as determined by the family background, could be another factor determining competence level in literacy (Ansley & Williams, 2007).

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 research work used both primary and secondary data. Ethical considerations were put into consideration and applied to protect the rights of the research participants. This study employed descriptive and inferential statistics in data analysis.

Target Population

The target population for this study was drawn from the 56 AABE Centres in Samburu County. The AABE Centres were taken as the unit of analysis. There were 56 AABE Centres with an enrolment of 2012 learners. Nine Centres were in pastoralist areas, nine in forest areas, two in agricultural areas, and one each in urban, slum and agro-pastoralist areas, respectively. There were a total of 76 teachers in the 56 AABE Centres. The following table 1 shows the population and sample.

Table 1: Population and sample

	Total	Sample
AABE Centres	56	56
AABE Learners	2012	400
AABE Teachers	76	56
AABE Sponsors	10	10

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The study looked at the growth of AABE in terms of percentage coverage.

(i) Percentage Coverage

The respondents were asked the ideal maximum distance to AABE centres for their children to participate; on average, they gave 2.5km as the ideal distance. Therefore, using this distance of 2.5km radius, the area coverage for AABE centres was computed as follows: - 2.5km distance on all four sides gives an area of 25 km² for each AABE centre. Therefore, all the AABE centres cover an average of 896 km² (that is 56x25=1400 km²). Samburu County has a total area of 21,126.5 ^{There is a} Less 3250km² gazetted forest area, 165km² Game Reserves, and 2126km² uninhabitable Suguta Valley, thus leaving a

total of 15585km² inhabited area. Therefore, the area AABE Centres are covering in relation to the total Samburu County area is computed as follows:

$$\frac{1400}{15585} \times 100 = 9\%$$

This meant that the area covered by AABE was (9%) of the total Samburu County area, leaving out (91%). Primary schools, on the other hand, were 204 x 25km²=5100km². which was (32.72%) of the area. The number of 204 included pre-schools, which acted as feeder schools. Some of the primary schools were boarding, so they enrolled more children, and that was why their enrolment covered close to (50%) of the school-going age children as opposed to AABE, which had none of the Centres as boarding. Most of the primary schools also were in the Maralal

Urban area. Thus, one could enrol more than 1000 pupils, while there was no AABE Centre in this area.

(ii) No. of AABE Compared to Primary Schools

AABE Centres were 56, and primary schools were 204. So, AABE Centres were almost 4 times fewer than primary schools. In other words, the number of AABE Centres was (72.55%) less than that of primary schools in Samburu County.

(iii) AABE Enrolment Compared to Total Population Not in Formal Schools

As indicated earlier, AABE was only able to enrol (26.4%) of the total out-of-school children in the respondents' households.

(iv) Percentage Sponsors Planning to Expand

There were 10 sponsors for the AABE Centres. They were asked about their plans for future expansion in terms of reaching out to more areas. The following were the responses:

Table 2: Plans of Sponsors to Increase AABE Centres

Plans		
	f	%
No plans	4	50
There are future plans	2	25
Let us wait and see/it depends	2	25
TOTAL	8	100

According to the table, (50%) of the sponsors had no plans to increase the number of Centres, (25%) said there were future plans to open more centres and (25%) finally said 'let us wait and see', mentioning that all depend on whether they would also get continuous funding from their donors.

(v) Number of Centres Opened in a Year

The study further sought to establish the number of AABE Centres opened each year. The first AABE Centre was initiated in 1992, 21 years back. Taking the number of current Centres, which was 56, plus

the phased out/closed Centres, which were 32, the total came to 88. So the number opened per year on average came to 4.2. The respondents were asked to state the average number of Centres that should have been opened in a year. Most of them indicated 8, meaning the actual number was slightly above average- that is (52.5%), which was not so bad. In summary, all the AABE Growth factors discussed above are presented below. The factors were AABE County area coverage, sponsors with future AABE expansion plans, and the number of centres that opened in a year.

Table 3: Growth of AABE

Growth of AABE		
	YES	NO
AABE County area coverage	9	91
Sponsors with future AABE expansion plans	25	50
Number of Centres opened in a year-Ideal 8	52.5	47.2
Total	86.5	188.2
Average (÷3)	28.8	62.7

NB: With regard to the number of sponsors who had future AABE expansion plans, those who were not sure were omitted in this analysis. The table shows that AABE was only able to achieve a growth rate of (28.8%) over the last 21 years it had been in existence in Samburu. This seemed too low for it to be termed as successful.

Suggestions Given for Enhancing Viability of AABE Samburu County

The respondents gave several suggestions on how the success of AABE could be enhanced. The first suggestion for each respondent was captured as they were told to mention in order of priority. These suggestions are captured in the table below. In relation to enhancing positive perception about

AABE, the respondents in general and in the majority (27.6%) said that it is for the government to be serious and committed the way it is doing with formal education. The households' heads held this view in the majority (28.8%) and also said it required the commitment of all stakeholders. The same view was held by the teachers, although the teachers in the

higher majority (21.4%) said that what they needed most was resources such as funding and teachers' salaries. All the respondents also said that the creation of awareness among the beneficiaries would promote AABE because as people participate, the perception of AABE would be more positive.

Table 4: Perception-Related Solutions to AABE Challenges

	H/Heads		Teachers		General	
Policy to be clear	0	0	9	16.1	9	2.0
Government to be serious	115	28.8	11	19.6	126	27.6
Commitment by all	87	21.8	11	19.6	98	21.5
Create awareness	81	20.2	8	14.3	89	19.5
Provide Resources	57	14.2	12	21.4	69	15.1
Do away with negative tags like out-of-school	60	15.0	5	9.0	65	14.3
TOTAL	400	100	56	100	456	100

The following were the respondents' prioritised suggestions on how to improve government policy on AABE.

Table 5: Policy-Related Solutions to AABE Challenges

	H/Heads		Teachers		General	
Government to be committed	95	23.8	13	23.2	108	23.7
AABE to be recognised like FE	35	8.8	15	26.8	50	11.0
Do away with AABE and make FE-appropriate	124	31.0	2	3.6	126	27.6
Make the AABE syllabus and textbooks uniform	52	13.0	7	12.5	59	12.9
Give AABE funding	51	12.7	12	21.4	63	13.8
Register AABE Centres	17	4.2	5	8.9	22	4.8
Progression and assessment to be streamlined	26	6.5	2	3.6	28	6.2
TOTAL	400	100	56	100	456	100

Table 5 reflects that the majority of the household heads said that the best solution for imprinting government policy on AABE was to do away with AABE and make formal education responsive to the needs of nomadic pastoralists. They said that AABE was in Samburu County for over 20 years, and they had not seen the government getting involved to enhance it, yet it promoted formal education a lot. They said the best solution was to take refuge in formal education, but their conditions conflicted. Formal education could be improved by adapting all the positive features of AABE. They lamented that FE was not flexible because a child, once enrolled, cannot miss school without getting into a crisis.

The teachers, on the other hand, said that recognition of AABE was the solution. They also provided

related solutions, such as the government's commitment to improving AABE by providing funds. It was as though the teachers were more or less protecting their 'jobs' and, therefore, advocated more for AABE to remain but be improved. The same was the view of the sponsors, who by the majority (85%) said that it was the government that should promote AABE by streamlining it in its policies. The majority of the parents also said that commitment by the government was a prerequisite to improving education in nomadic pastoralist' areas. In general, the majority (27.6%) of the respondents reported that the main solution would be to make formal education appropriate. Respondents were also asked to give their suggestions on the possible strategies for improving AABE approaches in

Samburu County. The following tables tabulated | their responses.

Table 6: AABE Delivery Modes-Related Solutions to AABE Challenges

	H/Heads		Teachers		General	
AABE to be Mobile	126	31.5	2	3.6	128	28.1
Adapt Multi-shift system	56	14.0	33	58.9	89	19.5
Integrate AABE learners with formal school	104	26.0	0	0	104	22.8
Introduce Radio learning	56	14.0	7	12.5	63	13.8
Increase quality AABE time	58	14.5	0	0	58	12.7
Government to provide audio-visual T/L aids	0	0	14	25.0	14	3.1
	400	100	56	100	456	100

Table 6 reflects that household heads prioritised the promotion of the mobile schools approach, as indicated by (31.5%) of them. They also provided the second solution, which is integrating AABE learners with formal school education. They meant that the formal school system should adapt to the pastoral way of life by having the same teachers and resources to keep moving with them. They also said that the government should find ways of making AABE exactly like formal education but be considerate of the way of life of the Samburu people. The teachers, on the other hand, said the adoption of a multi-shift system would enhance appropriate approaches to AABE. Classes can be held throughout the days in a shift system: when other children learn, others go herding and vice-versa. The teachers, too, suggested the provision of audio and audio-visual teaching and learning aids like cassette players and television sets. In general, the respondents preferred mobile schools, multi-shift systems and integration of AABE with FE. The

sponsors recommended that more resources be available in AABE centres, such as books so that teachers could have enough materials to teach appropriately. They blamed the teachers for not using appropriate approaches.

On nomadic pastoralists' way of life, the household heads said that the solution would be for the government to increase the number of Centres (32%), assist them with dams (23%) and help them get other sources of income in order for them to have their children go to school (285). Teachers, on the other hand, suggested that it was for the parents to be forced or advised to release children to attend school (32.1%). They also said that the provision of AABE centres and diversification of livelihood would enhance learning. The same was advanced by the sponsors, who said that the government needed to come and help in the provision of more AABE centres and also provide improved conditions for pastoralists in order for them to settle. The following table reports these suggestions.

Table 7: Nomadic Pastoralism-Related Solutions to AABE Challenges

	H/Heads		Teachers		General	
Parents to herd and allow children to learn	12	2.6	18	32.1	30	6.6
Provide water-dams etc, to reduce migrations	92	23.0	11	19.6	103	22.6
Provide more AABE Centres	128	32.0	15	26.8	143	31.4
Diversify Livelihoods to encourage some settling	112	28.0	12	21.5	124	27.2
Provide Relief food	56	14.0	0	0	56	12.2
TOTAL	400	100	56	100	456	100

The respondents, too, gave several suggestions for solving the problem of distance. The household heads said that AABE Centres should be mobile (47.2%) and be increased (42%). The teachers preferred more afternoon classes so that children could walk from far-off areas without fear of wild

animals. In general, mobile centres and an increase in the number of centres were prioritised. The same was suggested by the sponsors. The following table reflects the suggestions.

Table 8: Distance-Related Solutions to AABE Challenges

	H/Heads		Teachers		General	
Increase the number of AABE Centres	168	42.0	16	28.6	184	40.4
Provide security for children to participate	26	6.5	6	10.7	32	7.0
Make afternoon classes more	17	4.3	34	60.7	51	11.2
AABE Centres to be mobile	189	47.2	0	0	189	41.4
TOTAL	400	100	56	100	456	100

On resources, majority of the household heads preferred the following in order of priority- meals for AABE Centres (24.8%), provision of portable AABE classrooms (21%), provision of exercise books and pens (19.5%), and addition of teachers (18.2%).

Teachers, on the other hand, suggested as follows- training and paying teachers' salaries (32.1%), provision of meals (16.1%), exercise books (16.1%), lighting (12.5%), and textbooks (12.5%). Table 9 below depicts this.

Table 9: Resources-Related Solutions to AABE Challenges

	H/Heads		Teachers		General	
Provide Lighting	32	8.0	7	12.5	39	8.6
Provide textbooks	34	8.5	7	12.5	41	9.0
Provide Exercise books and pens	78	19.5	9	16.1	87	19.1
Provide Meals like formal schools	99	24.8	9	16.1	108	23.7
Increase teachers	73	18.2	2	3.6	75	16.5
Train and provide teachers' salaries	0	0	18	32.1	18	3.9
AABE classrooms	84	21.0	4	7.1	88	19.2
TOTAL	400	100	56	100	456	100

The respondents were also asked to give general suggestions that could enhance the success of

AABE. The following table presents these suggestions.

Table 10: Other General Solutions to AABE Challenges

	H/Heads		Teachers		General	
Develop infrastructure- roads in the bush	61	15.3	6	10.7	67	14.7
Increase the number of health centres	66	16.5	1	1.8	67	14.7
Provide relief food	89	22.2	4	7.1	93	20.4
Parents to Allow children to attend AABE	23	5.8	16	28.6	39	8.6
Promote parental literacy	71	17.8	10	17.9	81	17.8
Establish Committees for AABE Centres	0	0	5	8.9	5	11.0
Eradicate negative cultural practices	0	0	6	10.8	6	1.3
Government to provide security	82	20.5	4	7.1	86	18.9
Give loans for business	8	2.0	0	0	8	1.8
Take teachers on educational tours	0	0	4	7.1	4	0.9
TOTAL	400	100	56	100	456	100

The table indicates that (22.2%), which was the majority of household heads, gave provision of relief food as a general solution to promoting the success of AABE in Samburu. This was followed by the government's provision of security (20.5%), an increase in the number of medical facilities in the area (16.5%), and the development of infrastructure

like roads (15.3%). The majority of the teachers (28.6%) said that the solution was for parents to release children to attend AABE classes. Both groups mentioned the promotion of parental literacy as a solution, too. The sponsors also concurred with these groups by saying that security, promotion of

parental literacy, and participation of parents were needed in the promotion of AABE.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: In sum, the prioritised suggestions by the respondents for the enhancement of AABE success in Samburu County were for the government to be committed, for AABE to be done away with and for formal education be improved to suit pastoralists, all stakeholders to be committed, AABE to be mobile, adopting of multi-shift system, provision of infrastructure and other social services like roads, water and medical facilities, diversification of livelihoods, creation of education awareness, and provision of facilities.

Recommendations: There is a need for the creation of awareness among the people so that at least a few more children can be enrolled in formal schools because, as of now, the quality of AABE is quite low. The quality of AABE centres also needs to be improved by having all stakeholders pull together to assist the teachers through the provision of books, technical expertise, and moral support. There is also a need for gender awareness campaigns and lobbying for girls to be given equal opportunities when it comes to schooling. The study found that there are fewer girls in formal schools and AABE centres. Households prefer sending boys to school rather than girls. In the process, the education of the girl-child is

compromised. More so, households should be educated on the rights of children, especially in relation to education. Furthermore, there is a need for stronger, effective and aggressive community sensitisation programmes to encourage the pastoralists to engage in viable modern forms of occupation such as crop farming. The study, too, found out that the nomadic pastoralist lifestyle of mobility and herding is a critical factor affecting the viability of AABE. For this reason, schools are needed in pastoralist areas. The above can be achieved by having mobile and more boarding schools. Lastly, there is a need to approach the development in nomadic pastoralist areas from a multi-faceted approach. This means addressing the problems of inadequacy of water, medical facilities, infrastructure, livelihoods, and conflicts. 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. Lastly, 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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