

Assessment of Practices and Challenges of Alternative Basic Education Implementation. The Case of Biruh Tesfa for All Project in Shashemene City Administration, Oromia Region

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Abstract

The Purpose of this study was to explore assessment of practices and challenges of Alternative Basic Education implementation. The case of Biruh Tesfa for All Project in Shashemene City administration. To achieve the purpose; Mixed methods of research design were employed; both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion. The ABE facilitators, ABE learners, City education office ABE coordinator, City cluster supervisor, population council project coordinator and hand cup international project coordinator were selected using availability sampling technique. The questionnaires were distributed to 64 respondents. All of the questionnaires 64 (100%) were correctly filled and returned. In addition, one City education office ABE coordinator, one City cluster supervisor, one population council project coordinator and one hand cup international project coordinator were interviewed. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (percentage, frequency and mean). Qualitative data were analysed using narrative and thematic description. The major findings revealed that the practice of Alternative Basic Education has benefited considerable number of girls' groups mainly rural-urban migrants, child domestic workers and girls with disabilities, ABE played pivotal role in meeting the educational needs of the local community and ensured access to basic education and improve the community to know the purpose of alternative basic education program. the major challenges lack of flexible ABE school calendar, lack of textbooks, lack of teachers' guide and lack of adequate facilitators training prior to implementation, Therefore, to alleviate these problems, NGOs, Government and civil society providing work on awareness creation through mass media, training and adequate budget should be allocated, all the stakeholders integrated give serious attention for the program and salary increment for facilitators were the possible ways to improve the practice of ABE program implementation were suggested.

Keywords: Alternative basic education, Facilitators, ABE implementation

DOI: 10.7176/JEP/12-10-01

Publication date: April 30th 2021

Background of the study

There is a universal agreement on the fact that education is the basic tool to enhance a country's development. Regarding the realization of UPE goals, UNESCO (2004) states the goal of achieving universal primary education (UPE) has been on the international agenda since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirmed, in 1948, that elementary education was to be made freely and compulsorily available for all children in all nations.

Hence, this objective was restated subsequent! On many occasions, by international treaties and in United Nations conference declaration. But, there was a big gap between declared principles by the United Nations and actual performance by governments to achieve universal primary education. In accordance with the above View, among many international treaties and United Nations conference declarations, looking into the two most recent United Nations international conference declarations focusing on education is important to get some insights in Education for All (EFA). These are: The Jomtien Declaration in 1990 and The Dakar Framework for Action in 2000.

However, UNESCO (2004) states that the achievement of universal participation In education will be fundamentally dependent up on the quality of education available. For instance, how well students are taught, and how much they learn, can have a crucial impact on how long they stay in school and how they attend.

In similar manner, the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, by the WCEFA took place in Dakar, Senegal. This was a conference where countries assessed the extent to which they had achieved the EFA goals. The assessment reports clearly showed that the Third World Countries in general and African Countries in particular were far from meeting the EFA goals set at the Jomtien Conference (Hailesilassie, 2002).

In line with the above Views, the Federal Government of Ethiopia puts considerable importance on education. Particularly, the expansion of quality primary education has received considerable attention in the various policies and strategies of the government. The Federal Government of Ethiopia has also set to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015 (Education Sector Development Program, 1998). However, relevance, equity, access and quality are the major problems in Ethiopian education. These problems and the means to reduce them were discussed in different parts of education sector development programs and research papers. On the other hand, the rapid quantitative expansion of educational opportunities is the keystone to accelerated socio-economic development. In addition, universal primary education would enhance the opportunities for social mobility of the poor and the under privileged (Derebissa, 1999).

Regarding, Ethiopian education structure, with the introduction of the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy in 1994, primary school extended up to grade 8 with two cycles; the first cycle is the lower primary school which includes grades (1-4) and second cycle is the upper primary school, which includes grades (5 -8). The lower primary school is self-contained classroom which teacher teaches all subjects for one class. On the other hand, the second cycle is departmental classroom where teachers teach one subject across all grades.

Beside maintaining quality of education, ESDP III focuses also on expanding access to education, attaining equity towards access to educational opportunity and improving efficiency of the education system as gateways towards the Non-formal education is provided with and parallel to the basic education and at all levels of formal education. Non-formal education is concreted in its content, focusing on enabling learners develop problem-solving attitudes and abilities (TGE, 1994). Regarding kinds of NFE, Hailesilassie (2002) states that NFE has two types of programs: community skill training and non-formal basic education for adults and children. He added that, NFBE is functioned in many regions of Ethiopia and conducted by governments and NGOs cater for out-of school children and adults. Tekeste (1996) in "Rethinking Education in Ethiopia" noted that non-formal education is an appropriate strategy to address development issues. Hence, along with formal education, placing focus on alternative delivery modes has great value for development.

Mammo (1990) confirms that it is not possible to provide basic education to all those who need it through the formal system alone in a short time. Thus, it is imperative that an alternative, innovative, relevant and flexible means of providing basic quality education to the large educationally unreached children should be sought and used. To realize this program, many NGOs in collaboration with Oromia Regional Government have made much effort to expand this program in underserved areas of region; however, still further expansion of the program requires equal understanding and strong multidimensional collaboration among all stakeholders and the government (Oromia Education Bureau, 2005).

Therefore, Biruh Tesfa for All (BTA) is a safe spaces girls' education project that mobilizes out-of-school girls into girls' groups with adult female mentors. The project is a partnership between the Population Council, Handicap International, Plan International, the Ethiopia Ministry of Education, and regional governments. BTA operates in low-income areas of three Ethiopian cities: Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Shashamene. Mentors are recruited from the community and possess a minimum 10th grade education. Participants in the girls' groups are mainly rural-urban migrants, child domestic workers and girls with disabilities. Groups meet five days per week – Monday through Friday – with four of those days devoted to alternative basic education (ABE). The fifth day is devoted to training on Life Skills. The project uses the existing ABE curriculum of the Ethiopia Ministry of Education (MOE) which includes four modules in Oromia, shashemene city administration: Afan Oromo, English, Mathematics and Science. Shashemene City Administration has eight Sub-Cities. Currently, two thousand and two hundred ABE learners attending the Biruh Tesfa for All (BTA) project in eight ABE centres in Sheshamane city Administration. (Shashemene City Education office, 2019).

Based on the above idea, it seems that alternative basic education curriculum implementation lacks proper attention and appropriate organization. The curriculum of ABE is not well coordinated with the formal school system, and this resulting in inefficient utilization of facilities and other inputs in ABE centre. Moreover, the issues of co-ordination, facilities and facilitators in alternative basic education centres have not been critically studied. Thus, the purpose of this study is then to identify the practices and constraints in implementing alternative basic education curriculum in selected centres in Shashemene City Administration. Accordingly, the following basic research questions were formulated to be answered in the course of the study.

1. How do the community value to the Biruh Tesfa for All project implementation of ABE program in the study area?
2. What are the major challenges encountered in the ABE program implementation in Shashemene City Administration?
3. What strategies should be designed to address possible solutions in implementing ABE program in Shashemene City Administration?

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

According to James and Sally (2001) descriptive survey is a method which was used to explore relationships between variables and allows generalizations across the population. Therefore, it was used in this study because it enables the researcher to obtain accurate information for large numbers of population using a small sample. A survey design was referred because it concerns itself with describing practices to determine the current status of that population with regard to one or more variables. The usefulness of this design was convenient in collecting extensive quantifiable data from a large sample of respondents within a short period of time

2.2 Research method

In this study, mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) with parallel convergent design was used to generate and analyse information obtained from diverse groups of respondents. The quantitative method helps the researcher to analyse the quantitative data obtained through the use of a questionnaire with close-ended question items whereas the qualitative method helps to analyse the data obtained through the use of semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussion (FGD).

2.3 Data sources

The data for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary. The primary data for this study was collected from ABE facilitators, ABE learners, City education office ABE coordinator, City cluster supervisor, population council project coordinator and hand cup international project coordinator using questionnaire, FGD and interview. Whereas, secondary data was obtained from document. These documents include: minutes, centres, policy and strategy documents related to ABE.

2.4 Sample and Sampling techniques

In this study, the researcher was selecting eight ABE centres using availability sampling technique and availability sampling technique was used to address the eight sub-city (namely, Abosto , Arada, Dida boke, Burke gudina, Bulchana, Alelu, Kuyera and Awasho) of Shashemene city Administration. The ABE centres were situated within primary schools found in each Sub-city.

With regards to sample the population under the study, 64 ABE facilitators were selected by using availability sampling technique. However, 24 monitors of ABE learners, one City education office ABE coordinator, one City cluster supervisor, one population council project coordinator and one hand cup international project coordinator were respondents of this study. The sums of these respondents give rise to 92 subjects.

2.5. Data collection instruments

In this study, questionnaire; unstructured interview and focus group discussion were employed. The questionnaires were prepared in English language then translated to Afan Oromo to minimize the language barrier and used to collect data from groups of respondents ABE facilitators, ABE learners, City education office ABE coordinator, City cluster supervisor, population council project coordinator and hand cup international project coordinator. According to Best, (2004), questionnaire was widely used in educational research to obtain information about certain conditions and practices, and inquire into opinions and attitudes of individuals or groups. On the other hands, unstructured interview was employed to collect factual and detail information from City education office ABE coordinator, City cluster supervisor, population council project coordinator and hand cup international project coordinator. Since the main purpose of interview was to get additional information from responsible bodies, the key content of the questionnaires were included in the interview questions in order to supplement questionnaires responses. In addition, Focus group discussions (FGD) were used to triangulate information obtained by using other data collection instruments and watching to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place respectively.

2.6. Methods of data analysis

In this study the response that was obtained from questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion were organized, summarized and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. To analyse the quantitative data for example, the data gathered through close ended questions was first presented in the tables and statistically analysed. On the other hand, the collected data was coded and analysed using SPSS-20. Quantitative data were analysed using percentage, frequency and mean. Qualitative data were analysed systematically using narrative and quotation approach to substantiate quantitative analysis.

4. Result

4.1. Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents

The major demographic characteristics of respondent's sex, age, education level, years of experiences and facilitator employment.

Table 4.1 Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents

R.No.	Variables		ABE facilitators	
			No	%
1	Sex	Male	-	-
		Female	64	100
2	Age	Below 20	5	7.81
		21-30	53	81.81
		31-40	6	9.38
		Above 40	-	-
		Total	64	100
3	Education level	10 th complete	6	9.38
		Certificate	-	-
		Diploma	53	81.81
		1 st degree	5	7.81
		Total	64	100
4	Work experience	1-5	60	93.75
		6-10	4	6.25
		11-20	-	-
		Total	64	100
5	Facilitator Employment	Permanent	3	4.69
		Part time	4	6.25
		Contract for a year	57	89.06
		Total	64	100

Source: Field survey October, 2019

As it can be seen in table 4.1 above, All of the respondents, 64 (100%) of respondents who involved in the program of ABE curriculum implementation were found to be females. Here, one can understand that, under the study areas, females were adequately represented with regard to principles of alternative basic education in curriculum implementation that put emphasis on giving priority to female facilitators.

Regarding age characteristics of the respondents, 5 (7.81%) of them were below 20 years. Whereas most of respondents, 53 (81.81%) were found between 21-30 years. With regard to the respondents whose age is between 31 and 40 were 6(9.38%). From this result, we can understand that all the respondents were found to be matured with respect to age level. Concerning respondents' educational background, the data indicated that 6 (9.38%) of respondents completed grad 10. In addition, 53 (81.81%) of respondents were diploma gradulators and only 5 (7.81%) of respondents who have degree qualification. This implies that the qualifications of the ABE facilitators fit with the ABE guideline which says they should at least be grade 10 complete.

Regarding years of experiences, the majority of respondents, 60 (93.75%) were found to be in the years of experiences that range from 1-5 years. While 4 (6.25%) of respondents had service years which range from 6-10 years. From the data we can understand that the experiences of the respondents were found to be adequate in order to provide enough information regarding ABE curriculum implementation.

The final item relates to employment for facilitators, 57 (89.06%) of respondents reported that the term of employment for facilitators was contract for a year. As per interview discussions, Shashemene City Education office ABE coordinator revealed that, "the terms of employment in the form of contract leads facilitators to job-dissatisfaction. This also influences the provision of quality education (November, 2019).

4.2. Issue related to the community value to the Biruh Tesfa for All project implementation of ABE program .

Table 2:- ABE facilitator's response based on the community value the Biruh Tesfa for All project implementation of ABE program.

No.	Variables	Respondents				Total	
		Yes		No		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%		
1	Is ABE meeting the educational needs of the local community?	44	68.75	22	31.25	64	100
2	Is ABE schools fulfilled learning needs of parents and their children?	53	82.81	11	17.18	64	100
3	Is ABE schools ensured access to basic education for girls with disabilities?	50	78.13	14	21.87	64	100
4	Are all facilitators strongly committed to implementation?	35	54.8	29	45.2	64	100
5	Does the community know the purpose of ABE program?	46	72.6	18	27.4	64	100
6	Is ABE schools benefited the community in improving the access of enrolment?	48	75	16	25	64	100

Source: Field Survey October, 2019

Regarding item no.1 of table (2), the respondents asked about is ABE meeting the educational needs of the local community? The majority of the facilitators respondents 44 (68.75%) of participants indicated that the ABE meeting the educational needs of the local community and about 53(82.81%) responded that ABE schools fulfilled learning needs of parents and their children. Regarding item no.3 of table (2), the majority of the facilitators' respondents 50 (78.13%) affirmed that ABE schools ensured access to basic education for girls' groups mainly rural-urban migrants, child domestic workers and girls with disabilities. Both parents and students showed their appreciation in getting ABE School around their Sub-City. Girls with disabilities also expressed that playing with friends and learning is the most enjoying part of the school program. As it can be seen in Table 2, item 4 relates to facilitators commitment to implementation. 35 (54.8%) of respondents revealed that facilitator have a strong commitment in implementation to make the curriculum work effectively. The result shows that in different situations the curriculum implementation was a part of facilitators' responsibility and dealt with facilitators' role.

Item 5 concerns for knowledge of the community on the purpose of ABE program. As it depicted in Table 2, this item was expressed by 46 (72.6%) of respondents that the community know the purpose of alternative basic education program. This finding is genuine since curriculum implementation of alternative basic education has been identified as a major function of the surrounding community. Thus, they should be given clear awareness on the purpose of the program in order to perform this task. Regarding item no.6 of table (2), the majority of respondents 48 (75%) affirmed that ABE schools benefited the community in improving the access of enrolment. One of the main reasons parents mention to send their children, especially girls to schools is that facilitator's awareness creation during house to house registration.

4.3. Issue related to the major challenges encountered in the ABE program implementation in Shashemene City Administration.

Table 3:- ABE facilitator's response based on the major challenges encountered in the ABE program implementation.

No.	Variables	N	mean	SD
1	Lack of flexible ABE school calendar.	64	4.72	.798
2	Lack of textbooks	64	4.43	1.066
3	Lack of teachers' guide	64	3.90	1.309
4	Lack of adequate knowledge through training prior to Implementation	64	4.23	1.179
5	Lack of adequate communication between education office coordinators and facilitators related to curriculum implementation	64	4.03	1.282
6	Lack of adequate supports given to facilitators	64	4.17	1.213
7	Lack of facilitators got opportunity to provide feedback related to implementation.	64	4.14	1.258
8	Low salary for facilitators	64	4.26	1.120
Average Grand Mean			4.23	

Field survey: October, 2019

SDA= 1-1.49, DA= 1.50-2.49, UD=2.50-3.49, A= 3.50-4.49, SA= 4.50-5.0

Regarding items 1-8 of Table 3, most of the respondents (ABE facilitators) confirmed that lack of flexible ABE school calendar, lack of textbooks, lack of teachers' guide, Lack of adequate knowledge through training prior to implementation, lack of adequate communication between education office coordinators and facilitators related to curriculum implementation, lack of adequate supports given to facilitators, lack of facilitators got opportunity to provide feedback related to implementation and Low salary for facilitators were the major challenges. The average grand mean of respondents was **4.23** which indicated that problem for the above listed items were agreed.

Likewise, during focus group discussion most of participants confirmed that government in Ethiopia has political will but not committed to implement ABE program. Moreover, there is no consistent discussion and leadership commitment towards mass ABE in the Shashemene City Administration. To support the above idea interview held with the CRC supervisor: *"He stated that ABE facilitators have undergone short term (10 days) pre-service training. Since they do not get any refreshment training, they have weak capacity in the use of teaching aids, preparing teaching sessions, or lesson planning. The supervisor added that lack of incentives (salary increment) is deterrent for ABE facilitator's motivation and performance (October, 2019)."*

4.4. Suggested possible solutions to the above listed problems:-

As solution to the above stated major Challenges of the alternative basic education program, City education office ABE coordinator, City cluster supervisor, population council project coordinator and hand cup international project coordinator suggested the following points.

To teach the community continuously about the advantages of ABE and to explain in detail possible benefits that could be gained in the future and the Government, NGOs and civil societies should work on awareness creation through mass media and printed material hierarchically and consistently.

To accomplish the ABE plan prepared by Biruh Tesfa for All successfully and to benefit girls' groups mainly rural-urban migrants, child domestic workers and girls with disabilities and to raise the commitment of ABE facilitators in the City, training and adequate budget should be allocated for the practice of ABE implementation program.

To improve the guide lines, learner's books and to keep the quality of the books moreover to work together in all stakeholders to improve alternative basic education program, all the stakeholders integrated give serious attention for the program, establishing quality and relevant ABE system.

The payment for facilitators was very low. As a result present economic constraints necessitating decline in facilitators' living condition." From the interview discussion, we can understand that salary increment for facilitators could be a necessary precondition for responsible implementation of ABE curriculum.

5.1 Discussion

The findings showed that Biruh Tesfa for All improve the participation of female in alternative basic education program in Shashemene City Administration. This implies that the participation of women's in the program is at better condition (level). This confirms that the case in focusing ESDP V ABE and non-formal education program resources on increasing female participation and completion rates seem to be improved at Shashemene City Administration.

Regarding age of respondents the majority of the respondents were between the age group of 21-30 years. From this result, we can understand that all the respondents were found to be matured with respect to age level.

1. The community value to the Biruh Tesfa for All project implementation of ABE program.

According to the answers which were given by the participants, ABE played pivotal role in meeting the educational needs of the local community, ABE schools ensured access to basic education for girls' groups mainly rural-urban migrants, child domestic workers and girls with disabilities, both parents and students showed their appreciation in getting ABE School around their Sub-City, girls with disabilities also expressed that playing with friends and learning is the most enjoying part of the school program, improve facilitator to have a strong commitment in implementation to make the curriculum work effectively, improve the community to know the purpose of alternative basic education program, ABE schools benefited the community in improving the access of enrolment. One of the main reasons parents mention to send their children, especially girls to schools is that facilitator's awareness creation during house to house registration.

2. The major challenges encountered in the ABE program implementation in Shashemene City Administration.

Regarding the challenges that encountered the current practice of ABE program implementation the majority of the respondents agreed that there is lack of flexible ABE school calendar, lack of textbooks, lack of teachers' guide, Lack of adequate knowledge through training prior to implementation, lack of adequate communication between education office coordinators and facilitators related to curriculum implementation, lack of adequate supports given to facilitators, lack of facilitators got opportunity to provide feedback related to implementation and Low salary for facilitators.

3. Suggested possible solutions to the above listed problems.

With respect to possible ways provided to improve the current practice of ABE program implementation the majority of the respondents agreed as NGOs, Government and civil society providing work on awareness creation through mass media, training and adequate budget should be allocated, all the stakeholders integrated give serious attention for the program and salary increment for facilitators could be a necessary precondition for responsible implementation of ABE curriculum.

5.2. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the major findings, the following conclusions were drawn. The major objective of the study was to explore practices and challenges of Alternative Basic Education implementation. The case of Biruh Tesfa for All Project in Shashemene City administration. The practice of Alternative Basic Education has benefited considerable number of girls' groups mainly rural-urban migrants, child domestic workers and girls with disabilities live in in Shashemene City administration. ABE played pivotal role in meeting the educational needs of the local community and ensured access to basic education and improve the community to know the purpose of alternative basic education program. However, lack of flexible ABE school calendar, lack of textbooks, lack of teachers' guide and lack of adequate facilitators training prior to implementation affect the practice of ABE program implementation.

Therefore, there were different challenges that exist during the current practice of ABE program implementation. NGOs, Government and civil society providing work on awareness creation through mass media, training and adequate budget should be allocated, all the stakeholders integrated give serious attention for the program and salary increment for facilitators were the possible ways to improve the practice of ABE program implementation.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the preceding findings and conclusions the following recommendations were forwarded:

During the process of facilitators recruitment for Biruh Tesfa for All project, encouraging and giving priority to female facilitators could increase girls' participation at ABE centres. So, Shashemene City education office shall be advised to encourage the recruitment and selection of more female facilitators who could serve as a role model to increase girls' participation at the ABE centres.

The study shows that flexible calendar that is the inherent part of ABE program is nonexistence. Therefore, the study recommends that Shashemene City education office and Biruh Tesfa for All project shall seek ways to adapt the flexible school calendar that respond to mobility pattern, and life style of urban communities.

Clear means of communication between stakeholders at all levels is essential to minimize the misunderstanding between the curriculum planners and other stakeholders of ABE program. Thus, Shashemene City education office shall be advised to provide clear guidelines to all stakeholders for more successful activities at the ABE centres.

In the study it was found out that lack of adequate training and payment for facilitators in the schools was one of the major problems in curriculum implementation of ABE. The already existing facilitators also leave the profession to search for a better job. Hence, to solve this problem the Shashemene City education office in collaboration with the supporting Biruh Tesfa for All project are recommended to provide facilitators with more adequate training and motivate the already existing facilitators by providing various incentives to minimize turnover.

Acknowledgment

The authors are grateful for the valuable guidance from two anonymous reviewers. The author is also thankful to Shashemene City all Alternative basic education practitioners' who have supported and/or inspired this work through the various support. Finally, this research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. And we need to ensure that we are responsible for any conflict of interest that may arise. Also we have not received any fee for patents for the manuscript. Concerning non-financial computing interest the authors encourage the manuscript has significant value for intellectual and/or academic purposes.

Outer's contribution

Birhanu Jima: Corresponding authors from Department of Adult Education and Community Development, college of Education and Behavioral Studies. He published three journals. He worked a lot so as to prepare and manuscript. He worked a lot from data collection up to analysis, conclusion and recommendation

Ayele Kumsa: is an assistant professor in department of Department of Adult Education and Community Development, college of Education and Behavioral Studies. He worked for four years as a lecturer and AECD department Head. He contributed a lot for this manuscript. He guide the way to re arranged manuscript. He edited the manuscript before submission. Furthermore, he played a great role in finding recent reputable journal publishers

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. It is used only for academic competition.

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