

Effect of Undugu Basic Education Programme on Retention Rates in Public Schools in Nairobi County

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to examine the effect of Undugu Basic Education Programme on retention rates in public schools in Nairobi County. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. This is in the light of the fact that retention of pupils in quality education and training forms the basis upon which economic, social, technological, ethical and political sustainable development of any nation is founded. Globally, governments use education as a means for fighting diseases, ignorance and poverty. The research instruments employed for data collection were questionnaires for teachers and head teachers, interview guide for the director and focus group discussion guide for UBEP pupils. By means of a descriptive research design, data was collected from director, head teacher, teachers and students in UBEP programme. A census of 20 teachers, 4 head teachers and 1 director were considered. The pupils who participated in the study were 100 of which 25 each came from Mathare, Ngomong, Kibera, and Pumwani. The study findings showed that 95.8% of the respondents agreed that retention in UBEP schools increases the opportunity of vulnerable children to acquire concepts, skills, and attitudes to form the foundation for future learning scores. The result further shows that 76% of the pupils in Ngomongo do repeat class while 24% proceed to the next class. Also, Pumwani pupils and Kibera pupils do not repeat classes instead, they all proceed to the next class. The study concluded that Undugu Basic Education Programme influences retention rates in public schools in Nairobi County.

Key words: Undugu Basic Education Programme, Retention Rates and Vulnerable out of school children.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, governments use education as a means for fighting diseases, ignorance and poverty. However, DeStefano and Schuh-Moore (2015) found that the government alone cannot provide education for its entire citizenry for most countries. DeStefano and Schuh-Moore agreed with Colclough (2016) that the government providing the bulk of basic education is justified since if left to the free market, the private sector might under invest in it. The effect is that individuals and societies will be affected directly, and the country will suffer economically as there will be a dearth of adequately trained workforce. These thus call for the need for alternative basic education avenues to supplement the education provided by the various governments. It was at an international conference in Williamsburg USA in 1967, that ideas were set out for what was to become a widely read analysis of the growing "World Educational Crisis" (Fordham, 2017). The conference concluded that formal

educational systems had adapted too slowly to the socio-economic changes around them and that they were held back by their conservatism and the inertia of societies themselves.

Non-Formal Education has been recognized as an alternative means of offering education to groups that have not benefited from formal education. Fordham (2017) notes that in the 1970s, four characteristics came to be associated with alternative education. These include, first, Alternative Basic Education is relevant to the needs of disadvantaged groups; secondly, it is concerned with specific categories of people; thirdly, it has a focus on clearly defined purposes; and lastly, it is flexible in organisation and methods. The term alternative education is broadly and loosely defined to include all education outside the school system with no parameters of time and space (Shakeel, 2018). It includes all learning and training that takes place outside recognized educational institutions. Even then, it follows a sequential structure of learning experience and is generally part of some organisation or programme (Lewin, 2018).

Education is a fundamental human right embodied in human rights instruments, UN convention on the Rights of the child (1989), International Human Rights law (law of peace) and Guiding principles on International displacements just to mention a few. It is important to note that EFA shows that every child has a right to an education. This does not discriminate against vulnerable children living in informal settlements. It is within the drive for "Education for All" (Commenced in 1990) that many developing countries begun seriously to embrace educational alternatives as a way of complementing formal school provision.

Latin American countries have excelled in developing alternatives within the formal school system (Torres, 1992, UNICEF, 1992). They developed two programmes namely Colombia's Escuela Nueva (EN) or (The New School) and Chile's Programa de las 900 Escuelas (Programme of the 900 Schools). The New School Programme has its roots in the Unitary School System of the early 1960s: a programme that was supported by UNESCO in several Latin American and African countries. The initiation and expansion of the programmes in the three countries were urged by the vision of the two programmes targeting the hitherto neglected groups: the rural population in Columbia and in the case of Chile-the urban poor through flexible alternative approaches integrated in the overall education plan. The Escuela Nueva (EN)

programmes adopt what they term as an integrated approach. This entails concentrating on all the elements of education: i.e. (learners, teachers, community), to curriculum and pedagogical issues to other support mechanisms (Psacharopoulos et al 2003, Torres, 2012).

This failure to address education gaps is a major problem whose repercussions reverberate across generations. Those who fail to get education lose a competitive edge in other areas of life like employment, health, and social and political participation with the consequent danger of stoking insecurity and social unrest. As (UNESCO, 2010) notes, restricted opportunity in education is arguably the most powerful mechanism for transmitting poverty across generations (UNESCO, 2010). Even though the out of school street children phenomenon is a global problem, it is more prominent in Africa, Latin America and Asia. For instance, in Brazil (Destefano, 2017) notes an increase in the number of out of school street children, which is blamed on Brazilian social policies.

In Africa the situation is not any different. Since 1999, enrolment rates in sub-Saharan Africa have been increasing five times as fast as in the 1990s, with countries like Benin, Ethiopia, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania registering rapid advances (UNESCO, 2010). Current trends will leave some 61 million children out of school in 2015, and there are indications that the rate of progress towards universal primary education is slowing. Regional progress has also been uneven. Most of the countries that are off track in achieving universal primary education by 2015 are low-income countries that, having started from a low base, are either increasing enrolments impressively but too slowly, such as in Burkina Faso and the Niger; or stagnating, such as Eritrea and Liberia. Akyeampong (2010) reports that in Morocco, approximately 1,870 vulnerable children work and live in the streets of Casablanca alone. The Bayti program, supported by several non-governmental organizations and various embassies, tries to unite the vulnerable children on the streets with their relatives, or reintegrate them to formal school or skills training institutions. In South Africa, a study conducted by Chimombo, 2011 revealed that there are about 10,000 vulnerable out of school children on the streets of Johannesburg.

In the Kenya Vision 2030 (GoK, 2007), Kenya recognises that the education and training of all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the Vision. The Vision by which the country hopes to become a middle-income country by the year 2030 recognises that education equips citizens with understanding and knowledge that enables them to make informed choices about their lives and society. Therefore, the education sector is challenged to provide skills necessary to steer Kenyans to the economic, political and social goals of Vision 2030. Through education and the Vision 2030, Kenya endeavors to provide globally competitive quality education, training and research to her citizens for development and enhanced individual well-being. Other goals include the integration of

out of school vulnerable children into learning and training institutions, achieving an 80% adult literacy rate, increasing the school enrolment rate to 95%, and increasing transition rates to technical institutions and universities from 3% to 8% by 2015 (GoK, 2007). To cement this endeavor on solid ground, the new Constitution of Kenya guarantees free and compulsory basic education to every child (Article 53 (1) (b)).

Education Curriculum (NFBE) to be used by the NFECs and ABE schools in Kenya. Since the launching of the curriculum, there has been little effort by the Ministry of Education or the KIE in investigating how the implementation has taken place. According to Johnson (2000), constructing capacity to support innovation is an attempt to understand and elaborate on the factors that are able to support, or hinder, the implementation of new ideas and practices in a system such as a school or ABE centres. It should be recognised that not all ABE programmes have the capacity to implement a given innovation to the same extent. The basis of individual, institutional and national development is basic education (Gautam, 2013). However educational participation and net gain from education becomes meaningless when access, transition, completion and equity for the marginalised is not well taken care of Rose (2007) promoted the expansion of education to many more children as a priority agenda that developing countries south of the Sahara should pursue. Basic education provision is foundational for access, retention, transition, completion and equity of quality education for all, Sub-saharan African countries.

UNESCO (2015) reported that Undugu basic education programme is possibly the most well-established supplier of education and training services to vulnerable out of school street children in Kenya. It was founded in 1973 by the late Fr. Arnold Grol in reaction to parking children whose situations on the roads of Nairobi city were a beckon to philanthropic action. Although Undugu Basic Education Programme is assisting many vulnerable out of school street children, the Ministry of Education in Kenya is reluctant to recognize the programme or the qualifications of its teachers (Orodho, 2014). Research has shown that there are more than one million eligible vulnerable children who are out of school in Kenya. Certainly, a big percentage of out of school street children are resident in Nairobi's urban informal settlements such as Pumwani, Kibera, Ngomongo and Mathare. (MOE, 2015). It is alongside the background of these problems and challenges that the subject of Undugu Basic Education Programme an alternative approach to basic education should be discussed. Following the Global campaign for education (2007) momentum by the 2001-MDGs under the United Nations General assembly to achieve universal primary Education and gender parity, this study achieves its strength to intervene for the vulnerable children living in informal settlements.

Statement of the Problem

The out of school vulnerable children phenomenon creates the main loss of human capital development. As noted by Orodho (2014), out of school street children are potential criminals. These are human beings who will live a life of depending on other people. When they grow into adulthood, they will create a huge social and economic destabilization factor and a definite cause of political instability (Oketch, 2010). Their existence in the informal urban settlement and the streets of major cities and towns indicates a drop in primary school participation in education and training and an increase in dropout rates (Lewin, 2017).

Capitalizing on the poor out of school vulnerable street children is key to ensure that they can be responsible individual members of society. To this point education and training is fundamental. For this reason, several alternative basic education programmes have developed to complement participation in education and training and therefore assisting to bridge the existing access to education gap. This is not an easy task. Undugu Basic Education Programme of Kenya is the pioneer provider of education to street children and therefore it has the broadest experience with them. However, it has not had a noticeable impact on the magnitude of the problem in Kenya. Against this background, the researcher wishes to examine the effect of Undugu Basic Education Programme on retention rates in public schools in Nairobi County.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of Undugu Basic Education Programme on retention rates in public schools in Nairobi County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Retention of learners in basic education and training schools is critical. Retention in basic education schools raises the chance of learners to attain basic concepts, paramount skills and positive attitudes that creates the basis for future training and learning (Handerson, 2017). It also increases learner's mental, physical well-being, cognitive, language skills, and social-emotional development. Absence of retention of learners to basic education and training school results to inadequate acquisition of fundamental skills that form the groundwork for the even transition to secondary school and school preparedness. In spite of the importance of basic education and training, studies on the rate of retention of learners to basic education schools seem to have acknowledged inadequate attention.

Worldwide, a study carried out in Australia, and Auckland by Kohl and McMahon, 2017 demonstrated that a significant proportion of children lack retention to basic education schools. A significant number of those that are enrolled leave school early or dropout. In addition, a study conducted by Akyeampong, 2010 demonstrated that arid, semi-arid lands and urban informal settlements slums in sub-Saharan Africa

recorded low retention. Nairobi County has a number of urban informal settlements and slums and consequently, it is to be expected to suffer the same problem. Further studies on retention of children to basic education by Kenner and Ruby 2013 have revealed that mutually primary and secondary schools record low retention of children due to various challenges like school fees, parental factors, gender disparity geographical conditions, and health issues among others. This research aims to determine whether Undugu Basic Education Programme influences the rate of retention of children to public primary schools in Nairobi County.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory used in this study is liberal egalitarianism, a socio-political philosophy developed in the 18th century. Liberal egalitarianism is the highest point of a development that goes past the Hebrew prophets and teachings of the Socratic philosophers, from which there developed a sense of the importance of human dignity and individuality. In its comprehensive sense, liberal egalitarianism strives to safeguard the individual from subjective exterior restraints that inhibit the full realization of individual potentialities (McHenry, 2008).

In this theory inequality is 'prima facie' objectionable (Howe, 1994). According to Rawls, the justice of social institutions is judged not by their tendency to maximize the sum or average of certain advantages, but by their tendency to counteract the natural inequalities deriving from birth, talent and circumstance (least well-served), pooling those resources in the service of the common good. The common good is measured in terms of a very restricted, basic set of benefits to individuals: personal and political liberty, economic and social advantages, and self-respect (Rawls, 1971; Watt, 1994). The least well served include refugees, street children and those in poor rural villages or deprived urban enclaves.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey research design was used because it helps to determine the frequency of happenings of the phenomenon and ascertain whether or not relations exist between the variables (Bell 2010).

There are four UBEP schools in Nairobi County with 4 head teachers, 4 UBEP directors, 52 teachers and 955 pupils. The researcher used purposive sampling technique. The researcher sampled 16 (30%) teachers and 100 (10%) UBEP pupils since the larger the sample the higher the reliability. All four head teachers and one UBEP director were selected.

Data in the study was collected using questionnaires, document analysis guide and interview schedule. The questionnaires were used to gather information from the head teachers, teachers and pupils. The questionnaires were organized into various sections with the first section seeking demographic information of the respondents then the consequent sections seeking to get data to the research

objectives. The structured questionnaires contained likert attitudinal scale. An interview with the UBEP director was used to gather data. Interview schedule began with the factual information. Interview guide was also used to gather data on the influence of UBEP schools on pupils’ participation in primary education.

A permit for data collection was obtained from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and dates were set for questionnaires collection. Interview schedules and document analysis were conducted.

The gathered data was validated, edited and then coded. Analyses was done using SPSS after which quantitative data was summarized using various descriptive and inferential statistics to determine relationships stated in the objectives before being presented using tables, bar graphs and pie charts. Qualitative data was structured in themes and frequencies generated. These was supported by narratives where necessary.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to examine the extent to which Undugu basic education programme influences primary pupil’s retention rate in Nairobi County. The perspectives of the Undugu Basic Education Programme School graduates and director on how UBEP school and community relations fostered come to bear on pupils in the UBEP School in terms of retainability in the school system was underscored.

The teachers and headteachers’ responses provided further answers to research Question Three. A simple percentage distribution table detailing the opinions of teachers and head teachers of the influence of UBEP School ABEs on retention of pupils was reported on. The Table 1 provides the percentage distribution of the opinions of the teachers and the head teachers.

Table 1: Percentage of respondents’ views on influence of UBEP on pupils’ retention in schools

| Statements | Strongly disagree % | Disagree % | Somehow Agree % | Agree % | Strongly Agree % |
|---|---------------------|------------|-----------------|---------|------------------|
| Retention in UBEP schools increases the opportunity of vulnerable children to acquire concepts skills and attitudes for form the foundation for future learning | 0.00 | 0.00 | 4.20 | 0.00 | 95.80 |
| UBEP attracts and retains pupils in their schools | 0.00 | 0.00 | 4.20 | 8.30 | 87.50 |
| Lack of retention of children to UBEP leads to lack of proper acquisition of basic skills and school readiness | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 29.20 | 70.80 |

The result in Table 1 shows that 95.8% of the respondents agreed that Retention in UBEP schools increases the opportunity of vulnerable children to acquire concepts skills and attitudes for form the foundation for future learning scored. Interestingly, the result shows that only 4.2% of the respondents were not sure whether or not whether Retention in UBEP schools increases the opportunity of vulnerable children to acquire concepts skills and attitudes for form the foundation for future learning. The result in table 4.9 shows that majority (91,6%) n=24 indicated that pupils’ dropout in UBEP is low.

Discourse about the relevance of the Undugu Basic Education Programme school curriculum in addressing the needs of vulnerable children have preoccupied public debate among Kenyans for far too long. Attempts have also been made several times to revise the Undugu Basic Education Programme curriculum in tandem with the objectives of individual vulnerable children learners with even proposals for a complete overhaul of the entire curriculum, including the elimination of examinations at the basic levels. In this the influence of Undugu Basic Education Programme curriculum on retention among vulnerable children in informal settlements of Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo was considered along, the extent of meeting personal goals, extent of equipping learners with skills and value attached the curriculum.

It is prudent management of educational matters to ensure that the Undugu Basic Education Programme curriculum effectively meets the national goals of education, and personal objectives, since education being the service industry to all sectors of development, plays a pivotal role for enhanced prosperity of the country. The process of education and training is meant to result in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes crucial for future survival of the members of the society. Should this noble goal be perceived to be realized out of school, then being in school for a relatively long period may not be worth the effort.

Therefore, the respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire indicating the value UBEP pupils attached to learning and their responses noted as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Influence of value attached to being in Undugu Basic Education Programme School on Retention

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Knowledge acquisition | 10 | 41.67 |
| Physical maturity | 4 | 16.67 |
| Social development | 6 | 25.00 |
| Economic stability | 4 | 16.67 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

Table 2 reveals that, of the 24 respondents who filled the questionnaire stating the value UBEP pupils attached to learning, 10(41.67%) attached being in school to the

acquisition of knowledge, 4(16.67%) mentioned attaching physical maturity as the value of education, 6 (25%) attributed education to social development and 4 (16.67%) indicating economic stability. The statistics in Table 2 give the impression that many respondents attached education to more valuable issues, yet a significant percentage equivalent of 41.67% attributed education merely to physical maturity and social development, which can still be obtained through engagement in none educational activities. This was indicative of the number that did not attach meaningful value to school attendance.

The study further sought the respondent’s opinion on the extent learning environment aspects of Undugu Basic Education Programme schools such as Availability of Textbooks/Teaching Aids /parents, Clubs and Social facilities around the school, Gender of children in family and Achievement level affects retention rate of vulnerable children primary schools in Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo. The results are shown on Table 3.

Table 3: Learning environment of Undugu Basic Education Programme schools

| | N | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|----|------|-----------|
| Availability of Textbooks/Teaching Aids | 24 | 4.37 | .945 |
| Clubs And Social facilities around the school | 24 | 3.46 | .994 |
| Gender of children in family | 24 | 4.10 | .886 |
| Achievement level | 24 | 4.00 | .877 |

The results in Table 3 showed that majority of the respondents indicated that learning environment of Undugu Basic Education Programme schools affects retention rate of pupils in informal settlements of Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo in Nairobi City County to a great extent. The results indicated scores above mean with aspect of Availability of Textbooks/Teaching Aids/parents scoring a mean of 4.37, Clubs and Social facilities around the school scoring a mean of 3.46, Gender of children in family scoring a mean of 4.10 and Achievement level scoring a mean of 4.00. This implies that learning environment of Undugu Basic Education Programme schools affects retention rate of vulnerable pupils in primary schools in the informal settlements to a great extent. This results concurs with Muthoni, (2014) who found that factors such as classroom dynamics for instance poor methods of delivery, inefficient teaching, lack of proper qualifications for some teachers handling children with special needs in the integrated programmes, lack of knowledge of the subject matter and lack of commitment of teachers. Such factors made learners lose interest in learning.

For the researcher to determine the influence of UBEP teacher’s attitude on the retention of vulnerable children in UBEP schools in Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo alternative basic education primary schools in Nairobi City County, the researcher sought to know if the teachers

commitment towards good learning affects the retention of vulnerable pupils, if lack of coherence between classroom practices and expressed educational beliefs affects negatively the retention of pupils, if teachers tend to perceive school failure as a result of the socio-psychological deprivation due to social conditions of child and family and the extent to which teachers’ attitude affect the resources which affect the retention of pupils. The researcher investigated whether UBEP teachers’ commitment towards good learning affects the retention of pupils. The findings are presented in Figure 1.

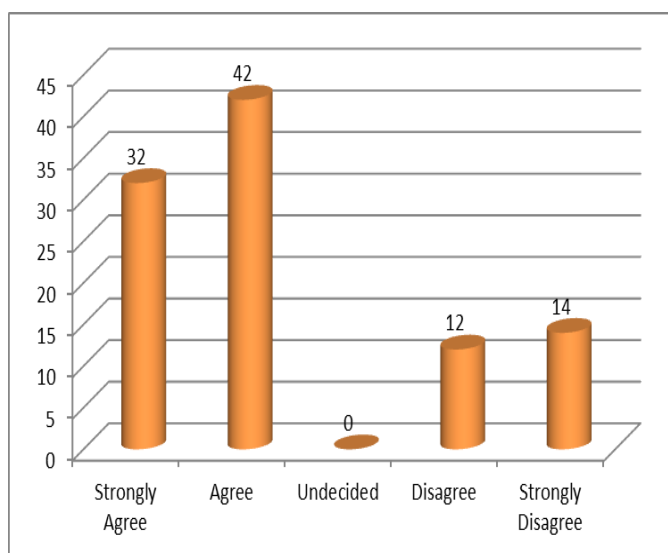


Figure 1: UBEP teachers’ commitment towards Good Learning

Many (42%) of the respondents agreed that teachers’ commitment to good learning affects pupils’ retention. Teachers are regarded as the basic tools in education and curriculum implementations. Teachers’ beliefs, practices and attitudes are important for understanding and improving educational processes. They are closely linked to teachers’ strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-being, and they shape pupils’ learning environment, influence pupil motivation and achievement. This therefore must be influencing vulnerable children pupils’ retention in schools.

The researcher found out that the majority of the respondents 13 (53%) agreed that lack of teachers in the school makes the learning process less fun and tiresome and this to some extent affects the pupil’s retention while a few 2 (8%) disagreed to the statement. According to Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin, (2003) issues of teacher shortages have pervaded policy discussions for decades. Lack of trained teachers in specific subjects such as math or science, recruiting difficulties in urban centers, or elements of quality such as availability of fully certified teachers has varied over time and across locations, the perceived need to act has not been done.

The researcher then investigated if teacher inadequacy has made teachers performance not good hence some preferring to move to private schools, the findings are presented in the

Table 4. Teacher inadequacy has made teachers performance not good hence some preferring to dropout.

Table 4: Teacher Inadequacy Affects Retention

| Extent | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly agree | 2 | 8.33 |
| Agree | 14 | 58.33 |
| Neutral | 3 | 12.50 |
| Disagree | 2 | 8.33 |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 12.50 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

From the above Table 4, 14 (58%) of the teachers agreed that teacher's inadequacy has made teachers performance not good hence some preferring to move to private schools. A study was carried out in American public schools by Boyd (2012) to establish why so many teachers were leaving the public schools and the impact it had on the retention of pupils. The study found that the public schools had more teachers transferring and quitting their jobs annually due to many challenges with the public school system. Key among these was; poor salaries and remunerations, lack of career growth and poor working conditions.

38% of the teachers agreed that the poor ratio of teachers to pupils has contributed to some pupils moving to other schools. This implies that the UBEP has few teachers that cannot manage all the pupils causing them to drop out. The study by (MOEST, 2005) established that with the increased loss of the competent teachers the parents also withdrew most of their children from the school because they felt the schools were not stable. The study also established that not only did the schools lose more pupils to the private schools but also the performance of the pupils went down drastically.

The findings of this study are similar to those found in other alternative basic education programmes on how ABE School promoted with regard to retention and participation. These include the Harambee Secondary School Movement in Kenya, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), the Community Support Project (CSP) in Balochistan and Fey Algeria (FYA) in Bolivia and Venezuela that Rugh and Bossert (2018) and Reimers (2017) found in their study of alternative basic education programmes.

This study found that there was a substantial influence that teacher attitude and disposition played in the school and community relations that were noted in the UBEP Schools Alternative Basic Education programme. This is similar to the findings of Gonzalez, (2004) and Davies (1996) that the attitude of the teacher has an influence on the school and community relationship. Gonzalez (2004) noted also that teacher attitude also bears on the child's academic and social participation. Again, Ahmad and Said (2013) found a significant positive correlation between teacher attitude and

student motivation (including the motivation to remain in lower primary). These findings concur with those of Adams (2005) and Shakeel (2004) school stakeholders' activities influence the school's capacity to retain pupils. These other studies have shown that the findings in this study on alternative basic education programmes such as the Undugu Basic Education Programme are significant in that they lend themselves to capacity of the schools to retain more pupils.

VI. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Further, this study found that Undugu Basic Education Programme has effect on retention rates in public schools in Nairobi County. High retention rates of pupils were recorded in the UBEP schools. The opportunity to attend and participate in school came to the informal settlement at almost no costs to the communities.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The UBEP School has a bit different style from other Alternative Basic Education programmes thus tend to offer new ways presenting schooling and education since it uses half primary years expected for primary schooling as compared to the other ABEs that use full pupil years.

The stimulation and assurance of community buy-in for the establishment of the UBEP Schools and other ABEs are recommended besides support from the Ministry in charge of education and its major affiliated agencies.

It has been noticed that the UBEP policy worked for informal settlements only. The UBEP can be set up in the rural areas to increase participation in education and training.

The management should adapt an all-inclusive and open management approach that would invite, recognize and appreciate the input and potential of all its members. The head teachers should be accorded some degree of autonomy.

The government should ensure that there are adequate teachers and favorable learning environment of Undugu Basic Education Programme schools. This can be done by allocating more funds for employing teachers and ensuring that there are adequate school infrastructure and learning materials.

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