

Influence of Undugu Basic Education Programme on Access to Basic Education for Vulnerable Out of School Children in Nairobi County

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to find out the influence of Undugu basic education programme on access to basic education for vulnerable out of school children in Nairobi County. This is in the light of the fact that access to basic education 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 study employed a descriptive survey research design. 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 programm. A census of 20 teachers, 4 head teachers and 1 director was considered. The pupils that participated in the study were 100 of which 25 each came from Mathare, Ngomong, Kibera and Pumwani respectively. The study findings showed that that activities of Udungu Basic Education Programme improves access to basic education for vulnerable children in the informal settlement and that good practices and initiatives of Udungu Basic Education Programme contribute towards enhancing access to basic education for vulnerable children in the informal settlements in Nairobi City County. The study concluded that Undugu Basic Education Programme influences access to basic education for vulnerable out of school children in Nairobi County. Government should provide financial assistance to organizations that provide education to children in especially difficult circumstances. The study also recommends that a better way of admitting learners should be developed so that only needy cases are admitted.

KEY WORDS: Undugu Basic Education Programme, Access to Basic Education and Vulnerable out of school children.

Date of Submission: 14-04-2021

Date of Acceptance: 28-04-2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Participation in quality education and training forms the basis upon which, social, economic technological, ethical and political sustainable development of any nation is founded. Education and training is considered a useful ingredient to improving economic competitiveness, raising incomes, improving health, accomplishing peace and stability programmes, and achieving sustained growth of nations. The responsibility for providing education is the obligation of government (Rose, 2015) since education is considered both as a social good and a merit good (Wright, 2013). Globally, governments use education as a means for fighting diseases, ignorance and poverty. However, DeStefano and Schuh-Moore (2010) found that the government alone is unable to 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 directly will be affected, and the country in general will suffer economically as there will be 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. Alternative basic Education enables out of school vulnerable children to be independent thinkers and future responsible citizens that can give a positive contribution to the economy of their states. Alternative basic education became part of the international discourse on education policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Coombs, 1968). 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, 1993). The

conclusion of the conference was that formal educational systems had adapted too slowly to the socio-economic changes around them and that they were held back not only by their own conservatism, but also by the inertia of societies themselves. It was from this point of departure that planners and economists in the World Bank began to make a distinction between informal, non-formal and formal education.

Any child without access to education is, therefore, denied the right and power to participate fully as a member of their society. Moreover, since investing in children's education is the most important contribution a nation can make towards a better future (Lockheed, Marlaine and Verspoor, 1991), children who have been denied access to education are seen as dependent rather than potential active participants in their country's socio-economic conditions (Republic of Kenya/MoEST, 2003). Individual governments across the world constantly reaffirm their commitment to equal opportunity in education. Besides, they are obligated under international human rights conventions, to act on that commitment. And yet most governments are systematically failing to address extreme and persistent education disadvantages that leave large sections of society marginalised (UNESCO, 2010). These disadvantages are rooted in deeply ingrained social, economic and political processes, and unequal power relationships, and they are sustained by political indifference (UNESCO, 2010).

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. Continued inability of many children to access the formal school system could be interpreted as a testimony, not only of the failure of the formal school system, but also of the need for alternative basic education approaches that would address the needs of the out-of-school vulnerable children (Akyampong, 2010). 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 Zimbabwe and Zambia, the majority of vulnerable street children have homes to go to, however those in South Africa live on the streets or in children's home shelters. (Benbow, 2010).

In the Kenya Vision 2030 (GoK, 2007), Kenya recognises that 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 about the society. The education sector is, therefore, 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 endeavours to provide globally competitive quality education, training and research to her citizens for development and enhanced individual well-being. The overall goal for 2015, for instance, was to reduce illiteracy by increasing access to education, improving the transition rate from primary to secondary schools, and raising the quality and relevance of education. 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 endeavour on solid ground, the new Constitution of Kenya guarantees free and compulsory basic education to every child (Article 53 (1) (b)). However, despite education being the cornerstone for economic and social development and an indispensable key to personal and social improvement, the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2015) acknowledges that globally, more than 61 million children fail to complete basic education programmes of whom 42% translating to 26,230 live in The Sub-Saharan Africa (Global Partnership for Education: Quality Education for all children (2017)). Unless appropriate educational opportunities are opened to these children, they will eventually join the ranks of adult illiterates who are estimated at 875 million (UNESCO, 2018).

The phenomena of out of school vulnerable street children in Kenya first started in the early 1950s when the British colonial government administration ruined up African families by arresting and detaining African men and women or took them away to concentration base camp. The African children were then left vulnerable and helpless. They roamed off to the streets of Nairobi with the expectation of finding some food and means of survival (Oketch 2010). By 1975, there were about 115 out of school vulnerable street children in cities and towns of Kenya. This number changed to 17,000 in 1990 and afterwards to over 150,000 in 1997. In Nairobi city, the number has rose from 3,600 in 1989 to 40,000 in 1995 and 60,000 in 1997. In 2009, Mombasa city had 5000, Kisumu city 4000, Malindi town and Kilifi town 2,500 each and Kitale town and Nakuru town 2000 each (Somerset, 2010). The above statistics indicate that out of school vulnerable street children can be found in all major cities and towns in Kenya. The out of school street children's lack of access to education and

training is considered a violation of a fundamental human right; the right to basic education proclaimed in the 1948 universal declaration of human rights and the 1989 convention on the rights of the child (UNESCO, 2014).

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 the predicament of parking children whose situations on the roads of Nairobi city were a beckon to philanthropic action. Research has shown that still 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 in order 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 urban informal settlement and the streets of major cities and towns definitely indicates drop in primary school participation in education and training and an increase in dropout rates (Lewin, 2017).

Capitalizing in the poor out of school vulnerable street children is key to ensure that they can be responsible individual members of the 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. It is against this background that the researcher wishes to find out whether Undugu Basic Education Programme influences access to basic education for vulnerable out of school children in Nairobi County

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to find out whether Undugu Basic Education Programme influences access to basic education for vulnerable out of school children in Nairobi County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to realize the Education for All and Millenium Development Goal two and three, Kamberelis (2013) say that just investing in the development and expansion of the normal public system is not enough. It is considered a challenge for governments and state systems to enroll school aged people the world over and as such expanding existing facilities does not support the agenda of opening up schools to never enrolled (Hartwell, 2008). Alternative basic education has been used as an avenue to improve access of hard-to-reach children (DeStefano and Schuh-Moore, 2010, DeStefano, Hartwell, Schuh-Moore, and Benbow, 2006). Global mention can be made of Bangladesh, where the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Primary Schools, is another example of alternative basic education that provided education to the underserved.

According to (Benbow, 2010), the BRAC offered access to education gateway as well as provided the enabling environment for the achievement of international educational milestones. The government had backing from donor community and partners in order to achieve these feats. Regionally, there are a lot of complementary basic education programmes that had brought about results in terms of access, retention and transition and even completion. For example, Uganda's community oriented primary education programme schools which supported school aged children to access schools. Also, mention can be made of Zambia's Community Schools for orphans and the vulnerable (Chimombo, 2011).

In Kenya, Undugu Basic Education Programme is the premier alternative basic education programme that has been put together for many children who are vulnerable and not enrolled in school in the urban informal settlements in Nairobi City County. The Undugu Basic Education Programme (UBEP) gives access to education and training to the vulnerable out of school children in four informal settlements areas. UBEP provides access to participation in education and training through a four-year basic education programme carefully tailored to their living conditions of the vulnerable children. The curriculum used in teaching the vulnerable children and young people at four schools in the informal settlements of Mgomongo, Kibera

Pumwani and Mathare, includes reading, writing, arithmetic, Swahili, and English. In comparison to the curriculum used at formal schools, the curriculum is more competent and practical oriented. It is closely connected to real life situation and challenges. The UBEP schools attract children who dropped out of formal schools and are actually vulnerable or too old to attend primary school. Moreover, the UBEP students receive instruction in economics, agriculture, natural sciences, and home science.

Although many developing countries attempt to provide education at a free and compulsory scale, it is often not possible to provide universal access to education through the government provision alone. Non-governmental provision has thus grown by default to fill the gap (Orodho, 2014). The alternative basic education programme have been designed not with lifelong education in view but offer a beginning point so that enrollees would exit to join the state provided educational systems. This system according to DeStefano, Schuh-Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell (2010) showed increases in access, participation and completion rates.

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.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

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

Target Population

Population is a collection of individuals who have various features in common that are of concern to the researcher (Bell, 2010). There are four UBEP schools in Nairobi County with a total population of 4 head teachers 4 UBEP directors, 52 teachers and 955 pupils.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The researcher used purposive sampling technique. The researcher therefore sampled 16 (30%) teachers and 100 (10%) UBEP pupils since the larger the sample the higher the reliability. All the four head teachers and one UBEP director were selected.

Research Instruments

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 begun with the factual information. Interview guide was also used to gather data on the influence of UBEP schools on pupils' participation in primary education. According to (Bell, 2010) interviewing is suitable because it ensures a higher response rate and the interviewer is able to enquire deeper into the answer given by an interviewee.

Data Collection Procedure

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.

Data Analysis Techniques

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.

Research Findings and Discussions

The research study sought to find out from the respondents their opinion on what ways the Undugu Basic Education Programme facilitates access to education and training of the vulnerable children in Nairobi County, Kenya. The respondents were asked to give their views on the activities done by UBEP and whether the activities influence access to education of the vulnerable children. the result is shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of % of respondents' views on access to education of the vulnerable children

Statements	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Somehow Agree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
Activities of UBEP improves access to basic education for vulnerable children	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
UBEP contributes towards enhancing access to basic education for vulnerable children	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.3	91.7
UBEP provides a curriculum tailored to vulnerable children living in slums in order to enhance access to basic education	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.8	79.2
Good practices and initiatives of UBEP contributes towards enhancing access to basic education for vulnerable children	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
UBEP protects and promotes the best interest of vulnerable children access to basic education	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Lack of facilities was a major problem to UBEP	29.2	50.0		20.8	0.00
Travelling long distances was a major problem to UBEP	25.00	45.8	4.2	25	0.00
Absenteeism was a major problem to UBEP	12.5	50.00	8.3	29.2	0.00

Table 1 indicates that there is high degree of agreement with the set of statements measuring what ways the Undugu Basic Education Programme facilitates access to education of the vulnerable children in Nairobi County, Kenya. For instance, of the 24 teachers and head teachers who responded to this questionnaire, 100 percent agreed that activities of Undugu Basic Education Programme improves access to basic education for vulnerable children in the informal settlement. Another 100 percent agreed that good practices and initiatives of Undugu Basic Education Programme contribute towards enhancing access to basic education for vulnerable children in the informal settlements in Nairobi City County. It was evident that 79.2 percent disagreed that lack of facilities was a major problem to Undugu Basic Education Programme. As to whether the Undugu Basic Education Programme protects and promotes the best interest of vulnerable children access to basic education, the teachers and headteachers present a 100 percent depth of agreement. On the whole, the direction for all the indicators for access tilted towards agreement as against disagreement thus indicating that the Undugu Basic Education Programme influences access to education of the vulnerable children to public schools in Nairobi County, Kenya.

The Undugu Basic Education Programme pupils pointed out that access to schools was a bit difficult for most pupils because most of them exceeded the average age of six to eight years of age for phase one and phase two and nine to thirteen years of age for phase three and four. On the question, what do you like about your Undugu Basic Education Programme school? one of the pupils had these to say they like the food, the social teachers, the caring social workers who monitor their school progress, the various club activities in the school and the teaching approaches used by their teachers that include dramatization and singing.

The participants in the group discussions gave factors that attract them to Undugu Basic Educaiaon Programme. These factors included; the free meal that were provided in the schools, free stationery, the teachers who were very good and patient, the social workers who follow up their daily activities, the playing ground and various sports activities. On the question, Do you think you could have gone to school if not for the Undugu Basic Education Programme schools? Majority of the pupils responded that they would not have had a chance to access education if it was not for the Undugu Basic Education Programme. For instance, one of the pupils had

these to say that their single parents cannot provide meals for them, they cannot afford to buy stationery for them and they cannot afford to purchase school uniform.

It is clear from the standpoint of the pupils that most of them came to the Undugu Basic Education Programme Schools and remained there because of the opportunities offered them. The opportunities offered them related to the free stationery that was provided to the pupils. Good teacher-and-pupils relations also played a major role in keeping pupils in the Undugu Basic Education Programme Schools. Besides, the Undugu Basic Education Programme School pupils felt those opportunities were not common to pupils in the public school system.

The director of the Undugu Basic Education Programme provided a basis for establishing the UBEP Schools. He said the following as the reasons that informed the institution of the Undugu Basic Education Programme Schools project:

- Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo were with the least performance in participation in education and training nationally at the time of introducing the project
- There was an estimated 51% out of school children in Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo.
- There were 42% out-of-school girls in Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo.

The director inferred that the thrust of the Undugu Basic Education Programme Schools was related to the provision of opportunity to out of school vulnerable children in Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo. The UBEP director further intimated that the Undugu Basic Education Programme School had a huge success in that it afforded several vulnerable children of school-going-age an opportunity to enter into schools. The Undugu Basic Education Programme achieved much more than was intended. The concept provided opportunities for out of school children (over 1,000 children enrolled in Undugu Basic Education Programme by 2018 academic-year) in deprived informal settlement areas to attend school and to receive quality education and training. The figures provided by the director confirm what had been established by the headteachers and teachers that Undugu Basic Education Programme enhanced pupil access to education and training in Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo. There is substantial evidence suggesting that Undugu Basic Education Programme has achieved considerable success in meeting the needs of underserved vulnerable children populations especially in increasing access to basic education and training in the informal settlements of Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo. This increase in access to education and training should not only be noticed in terms of enrolment and equity but also in terms of participation, promotion, transition and completion besides other schooling outcome indicators that link with a return to formal schooling, one other than the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) that was promoted.

In addition to describing the influence of Undugu Basic Education Programme on access of vulnerable children to education and training, a series of actual and potential barriers to access were identified. The most commonly reported generic challenges included:

- **Resources.** Lack of appropriate resources were a barrier mentioned by around a quarter of respondents. Some UBEPs highlighted general financial constraints, while others pinpointed a lack of funding to support developments within the system.
- **Securing admissions.** The majority of the respondents mentioned schools' reluctance to admit pupils, or different admissions criteria/systems. Some groups face particular issues due to culture or language issues.
- **Curriculum and planning.** The lack of a widely available diverse and differentiated curriculum was also seen as a barrier to access across all age ranges and phases. Other barriers to effective access mentioned include; lack of records from previous education; and poor monitoring of action plans.
- **Pupils/parents.** Lack of engagement from pupils and/or parents can also undermine access to education, including issues around the location of schools and pupil/parental perception of them.
- **Teacher training/staffing.** Several respondents felt that many schools are unequipped to deal with pupils with special needs or challenging behaviour.

These findings are much like the finding of Arkorful (2013), Jere (2014) and Namukwaya and Kibirige, (2014) that argued that Alternative Basic Education Programmes provide an 'opportunity' for these vulnerable children who are underserved with education to access education and training institutions.

It was also revealed that there are other indicators that cause increased access to education and training such as fee free education (Nkurunziza, Broekhuis, & Hooimeijer, 2012, Grogan, 2009, Deininger, 2003) but it is worth noting that such fee free policies do not categorically increase access all the time as evidenced in Kenya (Bold, Kimenga, Mwabu, & Sandefur, 2011). Furthermore, 'free textbooks and uniforms' intervention programmes also increase enrolment (Manimagala, 2012). Interventions like these include the provision of additional teachers (Banerjee, Cole, Duflo, & Linden, 2005); deworming for school-aged children (Miguel & Kremer, 2004); school building constructions (Duflo, 2001) and vouchers for private schooling (Angrist, Bettinger, Bloom, King, & Kremer, 2002).

On the basis of the fact that specifically targeted interventions like fee-free education, free textbook and uniform projects and school building constructions led to an increase access to education and training in

beneficiary communities. It thus stands to reason that participation for UBEP School and alternative Basic Education which brings several of these identified interventions in the UBEP School programme has the potential to increase access to education and training in Kibera, Mathare, Pumwani and Ngomongo. That is exactly what the findings of the present study portray. However, it was noted that such increase in access to education and training were not enough as internal efficient given that there was more than 10% drop-out rates recorded for three consecutive years.

IV. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The study concluded that Undugu Basic Education Programme influences access to basic education for vulnerable out of school children in Nairobi County. It was noted that the rate of access to education for the vulnerable children kept increasing steadily.

V. 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.

Government should provide financial assistance to organizations that provide education to children in especially difficult circumstances. This will ensure that vulnerable out of school children have access to basic education. Although replicating Undugu-like programmes for vulnerable out of school children would help in the short term, attacking poverty in all its manifestations would offer a lasting solution to the phenomenon.

The study also recommends that a better way of admitting learners should be developed so that only needy cases are admitted. The process of identifying needy cases should be continuous and thorough. This should be done by social workers, with teachers performing a complementary role. This will ensure that more vulnerable out of school children have access to basic education.

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Parasi Belinda, et. al. "Influence of Undugu Basic Education Programme on Access To Basic Education For Vulnerable Out Of School Children In Nairobi County." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(04), 2021, pp. 26-33.