Non-formal and Adult Education

Coping in Conflict

Michael Brophy

Concepts that were once referred to simply as adult education and non-formal education have in the past decade become more and more classified and sub-classified with new names, acronyms and initials. It is now difficult to be certain as to what exactly a name or a set of initials refers.[1] One literacy programme notes that it is promoting Basic Literacy, another says Functional Literacy, a third Visual Literacy, a fourth Real Literacies, while, in contrast a fifth reports that it is developing Community Literacy.

A recent World Bank Working Paper (Easton et al 2003) has talked about the importance of "Defining the Field" and notes that although the domain of learning covered by adult and non-formal education programmes is wide-ranging there are some very important denominators. It is difficult, however, to identify common denominators or possible indicators of success or failure if, for example, those programmes have different purposes, are based in different settings and use different means of course delivery.

This problem was encountered by a small team from the African Educational Trust (AET) and Leeds University which undertook a study for the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The study reviewed the different approaches that were used in adult and non-formal education programmes in two areas, namely Somaliland and Southern Sudan (Bekalo, Brophy and Welford 2003) This paper draws on some of the results of that study and discusses their implications for adult and non- formal education programmes, particularly in areas of conflict such as Somaliland and Southern Sudan. It also discusses growing differences in strategies used by larger and smaller organisations in their support for adult and non-formal education in these two areas along with some possible reasons and implications.

The major focus of the study was not to produce definitive definitions but rather to try to describe the different projects. In an attempt to overcome the problem of programmes being excluded on the basis of a definition the team agreed that the study would look at any project which used an "alternative or flexible approach" to education. The team also wanted to look at and report on the approaches and methods that were actually being used in the field, as opposed to what project proposals or documentation might suggest was happening. It was necessary, therefore, to focus on existing or functioning projects. This was not always easy, as there was a tendency amongst organisations at all levels to describe projects as functioning when in reality they were still at the planning or proposal stage. Nevertheless we were able to identify

---

[1] 'For example ABE (Adult Basic Education or Alternative Basic Education), ANFE (Adult and Non formal Education), ABEL (Adult Basic Education for Literacy), ABLE (Adult Basic Learning and Education).

almost forty projects which were functioning and were using alternative or flexible approaches.

The Context

Somaliland and Southern Sudan are not typical sub-Saharan countries. They are both areas of on-going conflict. In Southern Sudan there has been a civil war between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Sudan for almost twenty years. The conflict in Somalia has lasted for over a decade and, while there is relative stability in Somaliland in the North West, there is no official recognition of Somaliland as an independent country. There are threats from the neighbouring region, also regular if relatively small-scale outbreaks of fighting in at least one of the districts. The infrastructure and education systems of both areas have been badly affected by conflict. (AET I UNICEF 2002 and UNICEF 1997). This has meant that in both areas the majority of school-age children are unable to access the formal school system. There are also large populations of teenagers and young men and women who were unable to attend schools when they were of school-age and are now too old to be accepted into the formal school system. This group are thought to number many hundreds of thousands in both places. The local authorities in both Somaliland and Southern Sudan have neither the funding nor the capacity to support them. The only access that most of them are likely to have to education is through small scale alternative or flexible programmes provided by local and international NGOs. Approximately forty such programmes were identified, around thirty in Somaliland but less than ten in Southern Sudan. The majority have been introduced within the past three to four years.

Programmes for Different Beneficiary Groups

As an initial step in the study the Team identified the intended beneficiaries of each programme. In both countries the projects focused on one or more of three different target groups.

• School-age children unable to gain access to the formal system

• Over-age young people who had missed out on schooling

• Adults who never had access to basic education.

School-age Children

All recent research studies agree that 70% or more of school age children in Somalia and Southern Sudan are unable to access the formal education system. This includes the majority of children from nomadic families, most of those living in rural areas, girls in all areas and the children of minority groups such as the Sab minorities in Somaliland. In response to this, the large international agencies such as the European Union, UNESCO and UNICEF, the local authorities and "governments" have focused on improving children's access to formal school-based education. There have been very few attempts to improve access to education by alternative or non-traditional approaches.

Over-age Young People

For at least fifteen years the vast majority of children in both countries were unable to enrol in schools when they were of school age. There is now a "missing generation" of hundreds of thousands of young people who did not get the opportunity when they were young and are now too old for normal schools. This would include almost all teenage girls and young women in both Southern Sudan and Somaliland and the majority of the young men, especially those involved in the armies or militias.

Again because the majority of international donors agencies have focused on developing the formal primary school system, there have been no large-scale projects to help this age group. The projects that do exist are mainly those developed by community-based organisations or by smaller international NGOs. This is the beneficiary group which seems to be the one most frequently targeted by these local and smaller international organisations, particularly teenage girls and young women.

Programmes for Adults

The education systems in southern Sudan and Somaliland have always been impoverished with literacy rates of around 10% or less. The vast majority of adults in both places have had neither any formal nor non-formal education. Once again, since the local authorities and the major donors have concentrated on re-building the formal primary school system for school-age children, there have been no large adult education programmes in either country for around two decades. The adult education and literacy programmes that do exist have a few hundred or at most a few thousand beneficiaries.

The study found that the programmes were normally aimed at one of these three beneficiary groups but while that may have been the intention of the planners, it was not necessarily reflected on the ground. The study found numerous examples of programmes which, although intended for one target group, had beneficiaries from two or even three different groups. For example, programmes designed for over age young women in their teens and early twenties, were likely to have both adults in their forties or fifties and young school children of nine or ten. One programme for young ex-militia men, had women in their forties and children of nine or ten studying in the class. It was clear that there was such a demand for education that people were willing to join almost any class or course that they could squeeze into.

Programmes for Different Purposes

When the study looked at the programmes which were already functioning in the two areas it found that they focused either:

- on developing basic or functional literacy and were limited in scope but with perhaps some intention or aim of developing "life skills" or an understanding of basic issues in areas such as health, nutrition, the environment and human rights.

- on providing a complete "Alternative Basic Education" Programme which offered beneficiaries the opportunity to gain formal recognition of primary school equivalency.

- on providing courses which were vocational in nature and intended to provide training in specific vocational areas such as tailoring; carpentry and primary health care. As has been found elsewhere, some of these vocational courses also had a literacy component. (Oxenham 2003).

From the analysis of the different programmes it became clear that Literacy Courses were being implemented mainly by local community organisations and smaller to medium international NGOs. For example, by international NGOs such as AET and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). In contrast the "Alternative Basic Education" or school equivalency programmes appeared to be implemented only by larger agencies such as UNICEF and the Save the Children.

Although vocational training and employment oriented courses were implemented by local organisations, this was almost always through funding from bilateral organisations such as CARITAS and NOVIB, especially where purpose-built training centres were used. In contrast, the smaller international and locally funded organisations tended to focus more at providing shorter-term skills or livelihood courses. These were aimed not so much on providing access to full time paid employment but more at developing skills that could be used in part-time work within the extended family or local community.

The reason that the Alternative Basic Education and vocational employment oriented programmes appear to be limited to the UN and larger organisations may be due to the long-term commitment and level of funding needed. For example, the SCF Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) in Southern Sudan is intended to help people aged between 12 and 18 to complete the eight-year mainstream primary curriculum in four years. Nevertheless it still requires a funding commitment of four years for even one class to complete the cycle. Similarly the UNICEF sponsored Non-formal Education Policy of the Ministry of Education in Somaliland stipulates a minimum of three years of study. The recommended curriculum fur this programme, which is still being developed, includes classes in Arabic, civic education, English, Islamic Studies, mathematics, science and social studies. The policy also recommends that students undertake 26 hours study each week, calculated as 40 teaching periods of 40 minutes per week Ministry of Education Somaliland 2002). Therefore, the substantial commitment needed may overwhelm smaller organisations.

A number of organisations have developed their own curricula for literacy and adult education courses. In Somaliland there has also been a series of meetings involving different local and international NGOs to try to harmonise their curricula. However, many of the organisations are concerned about whether or not they will be able to continue their programmes because of the requirements stipulated in the Government's Non-formal Education Policy which, besides the allocation of 26 hours of teaching per week, also specifies that,

"The minimum qualifications for NFBE teachers shall be successful completion of Basic Education and at least two years of basic education teacher education and training" (ibid).

The majority of teachers in the existing programmes in both Somaliland and Southern Sudan are untrained. This is not surprising given, for example, that in Southern Sudan less than 7% of teachers in the formal system have even one year's training (AET/UNICEF-OLS 2002). Those who are trained were trained as primary school teachers. The very few people who have received even rudimentary training in adult education will be working at the programme development level in international NGOs.

There is divergence appearing, therefore, between community organisations and smaller international NGOs continuing to focus on basic literacy often linked with life skills and livelihoods, and larger organisations moving towards three or four year alternative or primary school equivalence programmes.

Approaches to Course Delivery

The use of purpose-built centres was one of the characteristic approaches to course delivery for the alternative and flexible education programmes reviewed. For example, in Southern Sudan, UNICEF/OLS has built special "Evening Centres" for girls being supported through the African Girls Initiative (AGEI) and CARE has built Family Life Education Centres (FLECs) in Somaliland. Again, as might be expected, there would appear to be a link between purpose built centres and larger international agencies and donors.

In contrast, the majority of local and the smaller international organisations) preferred to make use of existing buildings, such as schools and community centres. However, the timing of these classes or courses usually varied to suit the target beneficiaries. For example, many of the literacy, life skills and vocational courses for girls and women were held in primary school classrooms after formal teaching had finished for the day.

Given the lack of formal education and training facilities which exists in both Somaliland and Southern Sudan, it might be expected that international donors and agencies would have placed a strong emphasis on the use of distance education as a delivery method. However, to date, this has not been the case. UNICEF OLS is supporting or piloting two relatively small projects for the formal primary sector. Yet there has been very little use of distance education in the non-formal sector. AET and the BBC World Service launched the SOMDEL Somalia Radio Literacy Project in 2001 and the New Sudan Council of Churches is due to start an initiative for training Parent Teacher Associations by radio in southern Sudan. There are a few opportunities for university level study by correspondence or by distance education but, with the exception of the SOMDEL Project, there has been no large-scale use of distance teaching to increase access to basic education or literacy in either country.

Different Practices of Participation

The DFID study looked at the target beneficiaries, the intended purposes and the delivery methods used in these different alternative and flexible approaches to education in Somaliland and Southern Sudan. Since then one of the team has also looked at the way that the different organisations have interpreted or used the concept of participation within their projects.

In many of the projects participation was seen purely in terms of learner or classroom participation. In others it was seen only in terms of community or learner participation in the development of the programme or materials. It was difficult to find a project in either Somaliland or Southern Sudan which included both interpretations.

Participation in the Lesson

The majority of teachers and trainers appear to be aware of the idea of encouraging their pupils or students to participate and be involved in the lesson. However, in a number of instances when asked to demonstrate how this could be done, teachers explained that they would write a word or sentence on the board and either ask individuals to read it aloud or tell the class to read it out in unison. Traditional didactic teaching is the norm in all non-formal and alternative programmes in both Somaliland and Southern Sudan but as has been reported elsewhere (Wright 2001) some teachers are able to adapt it effectively to suit local constraints and conditions.

UNICEF/OLS is making an attempt to develop a more learner-centred approach in its BRAC-style Girl's Village Education Project in Southern Sudan but this is a small pilot programme in one county. Most of the other flexible programmes relied on, at most, a few weeks of in-service training to develop the skills of the teachers.

Community Participation

A number of projects encouraged community participation in the design and management of the programme, for example, by carrying out Participatory Impact Assessments (PIA) involving beneficiaries and other stakeholders. However, in general, participation tended to be "front-end loaded" taking place during the first few months of the project, for example to establish appropriate project outcomes and performance indicators, with sometimes a mid-term or follow-up review. What happened in the "classroom" was still the prerogative of the teacher.

Learner Participation in the Process

The Somali Educational Incentives for Girls and Young Men (SEIGYM) Programme has tried an interesting approach to promoting participation by encouraging the negotiating power of the beneficiaries in their choice of course or training. The programme is managed by two "national" and five regional Non-formal Education Committees, each made up of representatives from different local community

organisations. The national and regional committees make policy decisions about the implementation of the programme in their region. They also select the beneficiaries and provide them with "Education Vouchers" worth approximately US$50 each. The learners are then able to use their vouchers to buy the education or training of their choice, through local community groups, local teachers, or even private schools or trainers. In this way it was hoped that the community and the learners would be able to participate at least in the decision-making about the training they might benefit from. The teachers and trainers were given some basic training to help develop their teaching skills and teaching performance is monitored. However the course and materials were developed centrally. Neither the regional committees nor the learners were involved in their development. (Tomlinson 2002)

Participation in Course and Materials Development

One of the central principles of programmes such as REFLECT which use Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques is that the beneficiaries both define what they want to learn and develop their own learning materials. It has been suggested that this allows the programme to "systematise the existing knowledge of participants and promote the detailed analysis of local issues" (Archer and Cottingham 1996).

One programme in Somaliland involved the participation of the beneficiaries or at least the potential beneficiaries in the development of the course and materials, although not in a way normally envisaged in the REFLECT approach. This programme is the Somali Literacy for Life Skills or SOMDEL Project. It used a Three-way Distance Teaching Approach involving (media) radio broadcasts, printed materials (learner textbooks and teacher's guides) and face-to-face teaching.

During the planning stage, the programme organisers ran a series of meetings and interviews with potential beneficiaries, local workers and volunteers in community organisations to develop a set of themes which the beneficiaries felt were important for their everyday lives. These stakeholders were next asked to develop eight main ideas within each theme and finally to identify a set of seven or eight key words for each of these ideas. The key words were later cross-checked with Somalis who had specialist knowledge or qualifications in health, nutrition, environment, culture and language. Teachers' guides, student books and radio programmes were then developed, in Somali, structured around the learner's themes, ideas and key words. (AET 2002)

The first phase of the Somdel programme was completed in March 2003. Around 11,000 students had enrolled in the programme. Over 9,600 passed the final examination. Audience surveys suggest that over a quarter of a million others listened to the radio programmes. An external evaluation conducted in May 2003, noted that The Radio Teacher (Somdel) is a novel and successful initiative — it provides access to education to some of the most marginalised and excluded from society and raises public consciousness on very important themes and issues that are crucial to development". It also reported that "Somdel classes are extremely successful in

offering females their only opportunity for education. The classes are adaptable and flexible which compliments the diverse needs of its female learners" (Fentiman 2003).

Fully Participatory Methodologies

The DFID study identified almost 40 alternative or flexible programmes in Somaliland and Southern Sudan. However, none of these programmes used what might be called a fully participatory approach. One programme used the REFLECT approach with Southern Sudanese living in Northern Sudan but none of the programmes in Southern Sudan was using this approach. Similarly one programme has used the REFLECT methodology with Somali speakers in a region of Ethiopia bordering on Somaliland but not in Somaliland itself.

In writing about REFLECT Archer and Cottingham (1996) have suggested that literacy in itself "probably does not empower and does not bring benefits in respect of health, productivity, community organisation, population growth." The REFLECT approach, they suggest, interweaves and balances the literacy and the empowering processes, and so gives people the practical skills to help in the empowerment process while also creating uses for literacy in people's everyday lives.

REFLECT has been used in other areas of conflict, so why is there an apparent absence of the use of this approach in Somaliland and Southern Sudan? Is it simply because the agencies and organisations working there are unfamiliar with it or could it be related to some specific conditions in these two areas? Might the sheer presence of numerous local armies, armed militias and warlords militate against a methodology dependent on the learners developing their own learning materials? Might methods which use more centralised approaches in developing the curriculum and materials have an advantage where there are limited local infrastructures and severe shortages of trainers, teachers and facilities

Conclusion

In researching alternative and flexible approaches to education in Somaliland and Southern Sudan it was clear that there is a great demand from local people for increased access to literacy and basic education. The major international donors, to date, have concentrated on increasing access through support for the development of formal primary schools. However, after a decade of aid three-quarters of school-age children in both countries still do not have access to education. In addition, hundreds of thousands of young people who missed out on education when they were of school age are now too old to enrol in the already overcrowded primary schools.
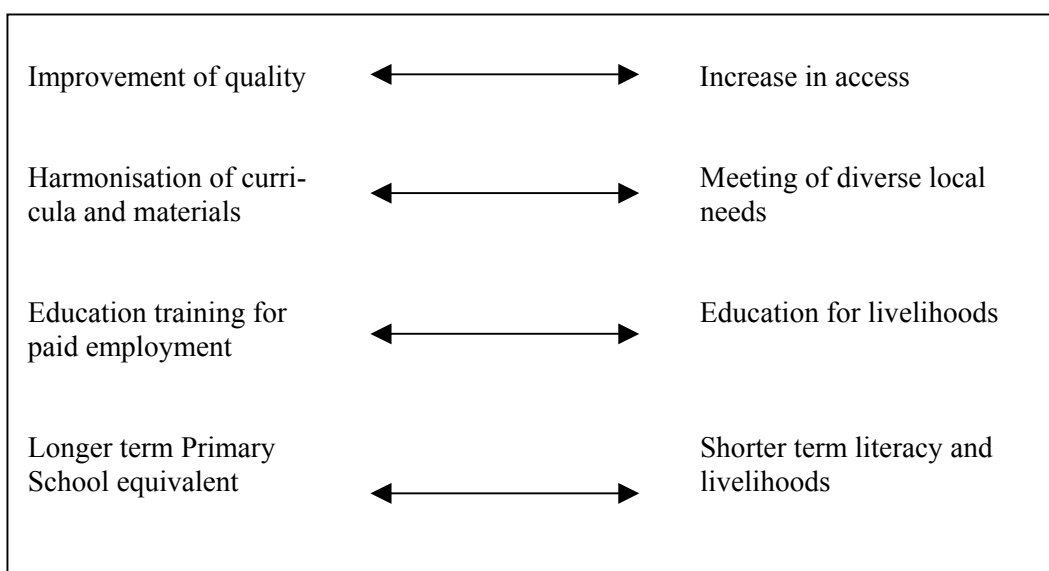
Flexible approaches offer one means by which excluded school age children, young people and adults can gain access to literacy and basic education. Different approaches are already being used in Somaliland and Southern Sudan. They include programmes which use existing facilities at flexible times, those that use purpose built centres and a few that use distance and open learning. These flexible programmes have been developed for a range of different purposes. Some, for example, were

designed to help young men and women to develop literacy and life skills, others to provide access to longer-term education or primary school equivalency qualifications.

From a review and analysis of the existing programmes a number of potential differences and tensions appear to be developing between the different organisations involved in these flexible approaches. This includes issues related to:

Figure 1 Differences in Developing flexible Approaches

Improvement of quality	⟷	Increase in access
Harmonisation of curricula and materials	⟷	Meeting of diverse local needs
Education training for paid employment	⟷	Education for livelihoods
Longer term Primary School equivalent	⟷	Shorter term literacy and livelihoods

To some extent these differences may reflect a difference in the strategies used by larger and smaller organisations. Although there is no simple dichotomy from the programmes reviewed it would seem that the local authorities and larger organisations tended to favour the quality, harmonisation, training for employment and alternative basic education ends of the spectrum. In contrast smaller organisations seemed more likely to focus on increasing access, meeting local needs, training for livelihoods and supporting shorter term literacy and livelihood programmes.

One suggestion is that a focus on harmonisation and longer term alternative primary education may reflect the larger organisations' concerns for helping local authorities to meet EFA targets, for example with regard to the increase in enrolment in basic education and the enrolment and retention of girls. Students who follow agreed curricula for three or four-year alternative primary school courses will count towards meeting such targets, whereas those enrolled on eight month literacy courses or livelihood courses will not. There is concern, however, that with the pressure for harmonisation and longer-term courses, smaller and local organisations may be in danger of losing the flexibility required to meet the diverse and often shorter-term needs of the local communities they serve.

REFERENCFS

Africa Educational Trust (2001) SOMDEL Distance Education for Literacy: A Life Skills Approach, Participatory Impact Assessment ART London.

Africa Educational Trust - UNICEF/OLS, (2002) *School Baseline Assessment Report* AET.

Archer D. and Cottingham S. (1996) REFLECT Mother Manual, ACTIONAID London.

Bekalo S., Brophy M., and Welford G., (2003) *Flexible Approaches to Education in Sub-Saharan Africa : ImprovingAccess and Retention*. ED 20001107 DFID(UK).

Easton P., Sidikou M, Aoki A, Crouch L (2003) *Rethinking World Bank Policy and Practice In Support of Adult and Nonformal Education*. HDNED EFA /Adult Outreach World Bank Working Paper.

Fentiman A., (2003) Evaluation Report SOMDEI. *Somali Distance Education Literacy Programme,* International Research Foundation for Open Learning Cambridge

Ministry of Education, Republic of Somaliland (2002) *National Non-formal Basic Education Policy*. Hargeisa.

Oxenham, J. at al (2002) *Skills and Literacy Training for Better Livelihoods: A Review of Approaches and Experiences*. The World Bank Africa Region, Washington, DC.

Tomlinson S., (2002) *Report of the Evaluation of the AET SEIGYM Programme*. AET London

UNICEF (1997) *Survey of Primary Schools in Somalia*, UNICEF Somalia Support Centre, Nairobi.

Wright M. W, (2001) More Than Just Chanting, in Street B V., (Editor) *Literacy and Development* Routledge, London.