

SAVE THE CHILDREN DENMARK AND SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY ETHIOPIA

A STUDY ON THE QUALITY OF ALTERNATIVE BASIC EDUCATION IN AMHARA REGION

BY TRACE Consult:

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
ABECs	Alternative Basic Education Centers
ACCESS	Accessible, Cost-Effective Center of Education within the School System
ADA	Amhara Development Association
ATKLT	Amhara Timihirt Kiliawi Limat Tibibr
BRACK	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CIPE	Center for Integrated Public Education
CLC	Community Learning Centers
CMC	Center Management Committee
CREPS	Community Rapid Education Programme for Primary School
EC	European Commission
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESDP	Education Sector Development Programme
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IPO	Input process and Outcome
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PTA	Parent Teachers' Association
SCD - E	Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia
SCN - E	Save the Children Norway Ethiopia
SPSS	Software Package for Social Sciences
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNECEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Purpose

The purpose of the study was to conduct a comprehensive survey on quality of education in Alternative Basic Education (ABE) so that the outputs of the study can assist to improve the effectiveness of the on-going ABE programme in Amhara region.

As stated in the TOR, the objectives of the study were to:

- i. Assess quality of ABE programme in terms of input, process and outcome and in relation to formal primary education and reveal determinants of ABE quality
- ii. Examine the current practices and identify under what conditions ABECs shall be converted to formal primary schools
- iii. Understand the current situations and point out the future fates of ABE programme along with the roles of major stakeholders.

In relation to the above indicated objectives, the study attempts to answer the following basic questions.

- i. To what extent the learning environments of ABE programme have been healthy, safe, productive and gender-sensitive and provided adequate learning facilities?
- ii. To what extent do the content of ABE curricula and materials promote the acquisition of basic skill, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and life skills, and knowledge in such areas as, gender, health, nutrition, civic education, HIV/AIDS prevention and protection?
- iii. To what extent facilitators make use of child-centered teaching approaches and continuous learning assessment to facilitate learning outcomes?
- iv. What is the level of learning outcome of ABE participants when compared to formal school children?
- v. What should be areas of advocacy towards ensuring ABE quality?
- vi. What are the current roles of major stakeholders in ABE and what roles should they play in the future in ensuring ABE quality?
- vii. What are the major determinants of ABE quality?
- viii. What are the current practices and under what conditions ABECs should be converted to formal primary schools?
- ix. What should be the future fates of ABE programme?

2. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey method aiming at assessing to what extent the input, process, and outcome variables have determined ABE quality and what the future fate of the ABECs should be. In this regard, related literatures have been reviewed from a variety of resources from national and international perspectives to establish a firm ground on the theoretical and experiential framework for the study. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were employed in examining the issue at hand - ABE quality in Amhara Region. Specifically, the study used the following plethora of instruments:

- Three sets of questionnaires for students, facilitators /teachers and supervisors
- Focus group discussion guides for education officials and NGO representatives
- Interview guide for community representatives and ABE committees
- Curriculum content analysis matrix
- Classroom room observation format
- Set of examinations on the four core subjects which included Amharic and English languages, mathematics and environmental science.

All these instruments were pre-tested, commented by relevant stakeholders of the study, modified by the consultants and widely employed. Moreover, appropriate data collection procedures such as initial planning with the client, discussion with partner organizations, deploying data gathering field assistants with the necessary training, direct data collection by the consultants and high profile data quality control by the consultant team were employed. On

the top of consultations with Amhara Region Education Bureau, all information were collected with strong collaboration from zonal and Woreda education offices.

Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used to extract the required data from sources like ABE and formal school students, teachers, ABE facilitators, Woreda, zonal and regional education officials, NGO representatives, community members and ABE committees.

The study sampled 8 zones and 21 Woredas of the Amhara Region and conducted with a representative sample of 50 ABECs and 50 formal primary schools which were distributed across the sample zones and Woredas.

Two groups of students at basic education level that comprised 500 students from level 3 ABEC on one hand, and 500 grade 4 students in formal primary schools on the other hand were taken as samples. From each center and school visited for the study purpose, a random of 10 students were drawn from the attendance lists of the schools and ABECs. About 51.1% of the total student respondents were from the ABECs while 48.9% were from formal primary schools. Among both groups, 26.7% of males and 24.3% females of ABEC students and 27.3% of males and 21.6% of females were from formal schools indicating almost balanced ABEC-formal school and sex representation in the study. While the age of student respondents is distributed between 7 and 26 years, the mean age for boys (level 3) was 11.94 and it was 10.53 for girl students.

The age of formal school teacher respondents ranges between 21 to over 32 years. The majority (65%) were over the age of 32. On the hand, the age of the ABE facilitators ranges between 18 and 27, the majority being in the age brackets of 24 and 27. Sex-wise, 81% of the formal school teachers and 65% of ABE facilitators were males. About 45% and 55% of the formal school teachers had 12 + 1 and diploma level qualification respectively. On the other hand, from ABE facilitators 30% were with 12th grade complete and 70% with 10 + 1 and 12 + 1 qualifications.

The study used SPSS software for analysis of data. The analysis and interpretation of data showed the following findings.

3. Findings

- i. Considering the importance of academic performance as one of the best indicators for the quality of education, tests on the 4 subjects – Amharic, English, Mathematics and Environmental Science - were administered to level 3 ABE students and grade 4 formal school students and the results indicated that:
 - Both groups of students performed poorly in all subjects. For example, on average ABE students scored 58.36% in Amharic, 34.32% in English, 42.31% in Mathematics and 56.52% in Environmental Science tests. Formal school students scored a little higher, i.e., 59.67% in Amharic, 37.47% in English, 45.10% in mathematics and 59.15% in Environmental Science.
 - Girls scored less than boys in all subjects and in both approaches of delivering basic primary education.
 - Both ABE and formal school groups of students performed more poorly in English (34.32% by ABE students and 37.47% by formal students) and Mathematics (42.31% by ABE students and 45.10% by formal school students) than in Amharic and Environmental Science entailing that there is a very critical problem on teaching and learning English and Mathematics.
 - Test results revealed that the ABE strategy objectives are not attained to a satisfactory level. On the other hand, the expectation of the strategy seems to lack specificity. For instance, it is questionable to expect a child between 7-11 ages to be in position to investigate and compare cultural malpractices and promote useful beliefs and practices. The same holds true with the ambition to anticipate a child of such an age to attempt to inquire and understand and at the same time give solutions to confronting problems (challenges).
- ii. As regards to home environment determining quality education, the findings revealed that children who come to both ABECs and formal primary schools lack the opportunity to be assisted by their family members as the large majority of parents of the students were found to be illiterate. The performances of such students were found to be low in all subjects. It was also found that students who were given huge variety of responsibilities at home such as herding cattle, fetching water, taking care of siblings, etc did poorly in their academic performances as they did not get adequate time for doing homework and studying.

- iii. As far as the curriculum is concerned, responses made clear that there is no major problem in the supply of textbooks; the student-textbook ratio was 1:1 for all subjects. It is also found out that two-third of the students in both the ABEC and formal programmes do like most of their textbooks and the test scores of the ones who said that they liked their textbooks were higher than those who said they disliked them. Furthermore, with the exception of some observed flaws in the Amharic and Mathematics textbooks, limitation of activities in the stage three of the Environmental Science and non-colorfulness of all the materials, the curriculum seem to be appropriate. .
- iv. With regards to the physical status of the ABECs, the findings revealed that the academic scores of students is higher with students who said that they do not attend in overcrowded classrooms than those who said they attend in overcrowded ones. Moreover, as it is observed during the study field visits:
 - Only 30% ABECs and 41% formal schools have potable water.
 - More than half of ABECs and a quarter of formal schools have no pit latrines.
 - About half of ABECs and a quarter of formal school students have no playgrounds and sports materials.
 - The majority of the ABECs have no reading corners and no supplementary reading materials.
 - A considerable number of the ABECs deliver lessons in overcrowded, unclean and with poor seating arrangements of classrooms. These combined inadequacies of physical learning environment are found to affect quality of education in the ABEC programme - quality attributes which need to be solved without taking time.
- v. As regards to the teaching and learning process, the test results of ABE full-day and shift system students were found to be 60.20% and 50.09% in Amharic, 36.98% and 30.28% in English, 45.42% and 41.64% in mathematics, and then 57.59% and 53.90% in Environmental Science respectively, which confirm that the government's initiative of abandoning shift system is the right move to the improvement of quality education. Full-day and shift system of delivery in the ABECs is meant the same as the operation found in the formal schools.
- vi. On the other hand, data obtained through various sources, including classroom observations revealed that facilitators pretty badly lack the proper capacity that might have emanated from selection, training and the recruitment procedures being undertaken. This has been found to be one of **the most important elements** affecting the quality of Alternative Basic Education.
- vii. Looking into the support system, with the exception of impacts being put by quite a few major stakeholders like Save the Children Denmark-Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway-Ethiopia, Plan Ethiopia, Action Aid Ethiopia, Pact Ethiopia, Amhara Development Association, Forum on Street Children Ethiopia, etc through a variety of support activities in their programme areas, the findings showed that other stakeholders including district education offices are found hardly contributing as to the expected level for the proper functioning of the ABEC programme. This has been found to be due to both human and material capacity limitations.
- viii. As perceived by many of the data sources of the study, ABE has to continue as vital programme but with a profound improvement in learning environment, recruitment, training and placement of facilitators, closer supervision of activities and outcomes by duty bearers and continuous awareness creation among communities.
- ix. As concerns to the future fate of ABECs, it is found out that ABEC shall be transformed to formal school:
 - When the catchments area of ABEC is found to be adequate for primary school standard
 - When the contribution from the community or an investor is ensured to construct and furnish a full fledged primary school
 - When there is no primary school at a distance of 3 kilometers
 - When government recurrent budget allocation is ensured
 - When the Woreda education office is ready to deploy required teaching and administrative staff.
- x. In relation to advocacy for Alternative Basic Education, quality enhancement, issues such as fair budgeting, personal and organizational accountability, genuine partnership and community empowerment and the provision of quality basic education for better achievement of all children have been identified to be focused upon at all levels.

4. Conclusions

On the basis of the study objective, basic questions and the above findings, it is possible to conclude the following.

- i There is poor quality of alternative basic education.
- ii The major determinant of ABE quality is a function of home and school environment, facilitators, the curricula and support systems.

5. Recommendations

- i **Parental literacy:** The large majority of parents of the students were found to be illiterate. Children get very little support from parents in terms of meal, reducing child labour and study. As indicated the non-formal strategy of the Amhara region, it is important to conduct adult functional literacy hand in hand with enhanced ABE for children. Improving household economy using an integrated approach to development endeavours also will help to support the child in comprehensive manner.
- ii **Introducing Early Childhood Care and Development:** It is very essential to introduce home and community based Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) particularly in rural areas so that children will get early mental, physical, emotional and social stimulation before they join ABE or formal primary schools. This can be started by creating awareness on “appropriate” parenting at home level and **ABEC/ formal school plus kindergarten** at community level.
- iii **Improving the learning environment:** The learning environments of ABE programme have been found to be quite limited in providing healthy, safe, productive and gender-insensitive learning facilities. Hence, ABEC specific infrastructural inventory shall be made by all Woredas as soon as possible. The Regional Government and INGOs shall support ABE specific interventions as oppose to blanket support. This approach fits into School Improvement Program (SIP) of the government.
- iv **Curriculum improvement:** The curriculum materials have no as such serious problem. Revision of the curricula when the textbooks deplete may gradually follow as a dynamic process.
- v **Professional development of ABE facilitators:** For the sake of saving the kids, the consultancy team strongly recommends that all those facilitators with poor language and mathematics subject mastery, poor methodological skills and illegible hand writing shall be sucked out and replaced by capable 10+1 and 12+1 teachers as much as possible. To this effect, the simple tests which have been used in this survey can be adapted and used at Woreda level to screen appropriate facilitators. Moreover, continuous practical professional development training using clear teacher development models (like reflective, clinical supervision, collaborative professional development, etc models) should be tested, explored and employed in collaboration with teacher education colleges. Impact assessment, continuous reflection by the facilitators and succession planning are suggested to be part of any professional development.
- vi **Advocacy:** The issues of advocacy towards ensuring ABE quality have to be focused but take a big picture at all levels. The consultants suggest that areas such as revision of ABE strategy, fair budgeting, individual and organizational accountability, genuine community empowerment and partnership for promoting quality ABE shall be focused upon. This may be considered as positive part of the support system at all levels. For instance, the ATKLT forum can be a good opportunity to concentrate on such issues in a form of study and symposia.
- vii **Roles of NGO stakeholders:** It is worthy that the NGOs continue on what they are currently doing. However, on top of this, the consultancy team suggests that it is important to recheck the comparative advantage of using an integrated approach for addressing the indivisible rights (the rights to survival and development, protection, participation, non-discrimination and best interest) of the child and refocusing on advocacy issues indicated above.
- viii **Support systems:** As indicated in the Amhara region non-formal education strategy, it seems worthy to re-invigorate the capacity of non-formal education structure in terms of qualification, assignment, equipment and systematized need driven training. Supervisors should not focus only on activities carried out in schools but also students’ earning outcomes. For instances, they have to regularly prepare and administer tests, analyze results and provide recommendations.
- ix **Transforming ABE to formal schools:** The function of standard primary school space, ensuring the capacity to establish full fledged primary school, non-availability of primary school at distance of 3 kilometers, ensuring allocation of recurrent budget and the capacity to assign formal primary school qualified teachers by the Government need to be agreed criteria and applied to sift out those ABE centers which have been transformed to formal schools. The other option is to support both human and material capacity so that they get strength to discharge quality basic primary education. Donors, local and international NGOs and the private sector may contribute in this regard.
- x **The future fate of ABE:** As to the future fates of ABE programme, it has to continue as complementary programme to the formal system keeping in view of overcoming the observed problems indicated in the preceding sections of the study.

CHAPTER I

1. *Background of the Study of Alternative Basic Education (ABE) in Amhara Region*

1.1. General Context

Amhara National Regional State is the second largest federal state covering 161,831 square kilometers. It is subdivided into 11 zones and 140 (MOE, 2006) Woredas. The altitude ranges from 700m to 4,620m above sea level.¹ In 2003/04, the population of Amhara Regional state was estimated to be 17,266,387 with annual growth rate of 2.86%. From the total population, 3,755,304 accounts for school age children in the 2004/5 academic year.²

The livelihood of about 89% of the population of the region is based on mixed agriculture. Out of all Woredas, 42.5% are exposed to food shortage due to recurrent drought and shortage of rainfall. The health coverage is estimated to be about 41.4% and drinking water coverage is limited to about 23% in rural areas.³

Harmful traditional practices such as child marriage, abduction, physical maltreatment and child labour are common in the region affecting the children's right to protection. HIV/AIDS is rampant. Large proportion of orphans of the country is found in the region.

It is clear that the provision of quality primary education has a significant positive impact on uncontrolled population growth, technological development, increment of household income, food and nutrition security, health, water and sanitation provisions, averting harmful traditional practices, protection and prevention of HIV/AIDS, etc. To this effect, the subsequent pages attempt to highlight the situation of formal primary and alternative basic education in the region.

According to Ministry of Education (2004/05) Educational Statistics Annual Abstract, the primary school gross enrolment rate in Amhara region was 75.9% with a gender parity index of 0.92⁴. This achievement compared to that of the previous year (64%) is very high. The establishment of more than 800 additional primary schools, training and employment of more than 10,000 primary school teachers and establishment of 1,881 Alternative Basic Education Centers (ABECs) have contributed to the increment.⁵ However, this achievement is still inadequate when it is analyzed in terms of net enrolment. The net enrolment rate of the region is only 68%, leaving 32% of the eligible school age children (about 1,239,250) out of school.⁶ Most of these out of school children are from rural areas and girls. The marginalized groups comprise higher proportion. This shows that there remains a lot to do in order to meet the millennium development goals/MDG target for both boys and girls by the year 2015 using both formal and alternative basic education approaches of educational delivery.

¹ Child Situation Analysis for Ethiopia, Save the Children UK

² Amhara Region Education Strategic Plan (2003/04 – 2005/06)

³ Ibid

⁴ Ministry of Education, Educational Annual Abstract 2004/05

⁵ Save the Children Denmark, ABE Quality Study TOR, 2006.

⁶ Opcit

1.2. Rational for Studying Quality of Alternative Basic Education in Amhara Region

While the current government came into power, primary school enrollment was less than 20 percent. This was due to the fact that many schools were dilapidated or destroyed due to civil strikes between the past military and the current government. Consequently, Alternative Basic Education was initiated by several NGOs including Save the Children Denmark for constituting learning opportunities for the vast majority of children who were out of school. Apparently, based on the experiences and lessons gained in projects in the area of Alternative Basic Education supported many stakeholders such as Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia (SCD - E), Save the Children Norway Ethiopia (SCN - E), Action Aid Ethiopia, Plan Ethiopia, Pact Ethiopia, many local NGOs and the government, the Amhara regional education bureau mainstreamed Alternative Basic Education programme into its overall strategy to reach more children in the region. The regional education bureau has developed a regional ABE strategy through a participatory process. The objectives of the ABE strategy states that the ABE programme is to alleviate the problem of access of children to basic education by establishing a cost-effective, flexible, easily reachable, and community-based basic education centers that are closely linked with, and that effectively serve as satellites or feeders to formal primary schools.⁷

According to the regional education bureau statistics, there were 1,881 ABE centers with 4,122 facilitators providing basic education service to 251,753 out of school children (48% girls) in the 2004/05 academic year. This has contributed about 6.7% to the regional primary school enrolment rate.⁸

SCD - E and SCN - E, which have been operating in selected zones in the region, entered into a joint collaboration with the regional government through a project called Amhara ABE Scaling up Project. The primary objective of this project is to provide access as well as to improve quality of basic education in the already established 1,881 centers in Amhara Region.

As stated in the TOR, the regional education bureau assisted by one project coordinator is fully responsible for the planning and implementation of the programme. A steering committee comprising country representatives and programme managers of SCD - E and SCN - E and regional education bureau officials has been established with the responsibility of overall management and addressing key strategic issues. According to the joint memorandum of understanding, major activities including planning, periodic monitoring, review and evaluations are agreed to be carried out jointly.

The main activities of the project include capacity building such as training of facilitators (initial and refresher), training of supervisors and experts and establishment and training of center management committee members, provision of textbooks, basic stationery, co-curricular and pedagogical materials/ tools and selected reading materials. To this end, the training of 3,184 ABE facilitators, 501 cluster supervisors, 116 Woreda NFE experts and more than 3,000 selected members of all center management committees in all the Woredas have been carried out. Curriculum revision was also part of the major activities of the project. Moreover, ABE textbooks

⁷ Amhara Region Education Bureau, Alternative Basic Education Strategy, 2003

⁸ Opcit

are made available in all the centers with the concerted efforts of SCD - E, SCN - E, and the regional government. Many other activities are ongoing⁸

As a means to ensure proper mainstreaming, the development of an educational management information system/EMIS is being undertaken. Based on the regional ABE strategy, development of the implementation manual, facilitator-training manual, supervision manual, revision of curriculum and other related modules are also being undertaken. Regional and zonal forums for basic education established earlier are supported and are serving as platforms for experience sharing and as opportunities for advocacy in influencing both the regional and local governments to take the necessary measures in maintaining the quality of the programme and enhancing the network among all the stakeholders. The opening of a non-formal education department at Debremarkos University by Amhara Regional Education Bureau is an encouraging development towards the supply of trained human resources to the non-formal education programme.

However, as indicated in the TOR of this study, there are observations by Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia and other stakeholders that the regional initiative of scaling up ABE programme has faced a lot of problems and challenges including educational inputs due to the unexpected high number of ABE centers establishment at the beginning of the programme. The low level of understanding of the programme strategy on the part of local government offices and communities, coupled with lack of adequate training to ABE facilitators, were also challenges. These changes were observed to directly affect quality of the ABE programme.

Initially, all major stakeholders had jointly planned a study on the relevance of the ABE programme. However, in view of the existing situation and status of the scale up project, it was agreed to revise the purpose of the study and conduct a comprehensive study on quality of education in ABE so that the output of the study can assist to improve the effectiveness of the on-going scaling up project. As shown in the TOR, Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia's country programme review carried out in 2005 has recommended the need for defining quality and appropriateness in relation to education in ABECs and identifying the most appropriate role for SCD - E and other SC Alliance members. The combined effects of these observations and concerns have brought about the need to conduct a wide-ranging quality study on ABE in Amhara Region.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

As stated in the TOR, the objectives of the study were to:

- i. Assess quality of ABE programme in terms of input, process and outcome and in relation to formal primary education and reveal determinants of ABE quality
- ii. Examine the current practices and identify under what conditions ABECs will be converted to formal primary schools
- iii. Understand the current situations and point out the future fates of ABE programme along with the roles of major stakeholders.

As can be observed from the study objectives, studying quality of education is not merely an issue of availing material inputs or schools/classrooms. Rather, quality of education is seen in a broader

sense including educational inputs, teaching-learning process and learning outcomes taking into consideration the national and local context and the regional ABE strategy. Hence, the study focuses on input, process, outcome, current practices and future fates of ABE programme and their implications in determining educational quality. To this effect, the study attempts to answer the following basic questions.

- i. To what extent the learning environments of ABE programme have been healthy, safe, productive and gender-sensitive, and provided adequate resources and learning facilities?
- ii. To what extent do the content of ABE curricula and materials promote the acquisition of basic skill, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as, gender, health, nutrition, civic education, HIV/AIDS prevention and protection?
- iii. To what extent facilitators make use of child-centered teaching methods and continuous assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities?
- iv. What is the level of learning outcome of ABE participants when compared to formal school children in terms of expected knowledge, skills and attitudes?
- v. What should be areas of advocacy towards ensuring ABE quality?
- vi. What are the current roles of major stakeholders in ABE and what should be their future roles in ensuring ABE quality?
- vii. What are the major determinants of ABE quality?
- viii. What are the current practices and under what conditions ABECs should be converted to formal primary schools?
- ix. What should be the future fates of ABE programme?

1.4. Scope and Challenges of the Study

1.4.1. Scope of the Study

Geographically seen, the study was delimited and carried out in the Amhara Region. **From programme view point**, it focused on ABE programme in the regional with an outcome level comparison to formal basic education. **Administratively and technically**, the study was carried out by the team of consultant, with the support of Save the Children Denmark-Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway-Ethiopia and the Amhara Region Education Bureau, zonal and Woreda level representatives. These groups were main participants right from the planning stage. The consultancy team assumes that this participation helps to ensure that the findings and recommendations of the study will be effectively used in improving the quality of ABE and formal primary schools in the future. **From study variables vantage point**, the study most importantly considered the following issues.

i. Quality of the ABE Programme in Terms of:

- **Availability of Educational Inputs:** (Students-Teacher Ratio, Textbook-Students Ratio (core subjects), proportion of trained facilitators, Classroom-Student Ratio, availability of supplementary reading materials/ resource centers, conduciveness of the centers and classrooms, readiness of students, willingness of parents to send their

children, community members' involvements, compatibility of ABE's timetables to students' activities in the house-hold and relevance of curriculum contents to immediate lives of the students.

- **Teaching Learning Process:** Application of active learning methods and techniques, (which means that students are given the opportunity to solve problems by themselves, forward ideas, pose questions and answer questions), application of continuous learning assessment techniques, use of resource centers and monitoring supports given by Woreda education offices and NGO experts.
 - **Learning Outcomes/ Achievements of the Learners** (Basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills) in comparison with formal basic education (the ability of the ABE programme in meeting the learning needs of all out-of-school children in the communities it serves).
 - **Support Systems:** The capacity of Woreda education offices in terms of planning, implementation, monitoring and providing technical support to facilitators, the effectiveness of the school cluster system and school cluster supervisors in benefiting the ABECs; how does training of facilitators link up with activities at teacher training college? How do facilitators benefit from activities at teachers' training colleges? What should be areas for advocacy at regional and Woreda levels towards ensuring ABE quality?)
- ii. **The Future Prospect of the Programme and Role of Stakeholders:** What will be the future fate of ABE programme? What should be the roles the government line offices, the community, SCD - E and SCN - E specifically and all NGOs working in the region in relation to the quality dimension of the ABE programme?
- iii. **Transformation of ABE into Formal Schools:** How and under what circumstances should ABE centers be transformed into formal schools and what should be the regional strategy in this regard (in light of its effect on the quality of education)?
- iv. **As the study mainly concentrated on the quality aspect,** it has not considered the access issues like enrolment, dropout, etc.

1.4.2. Challenges of the Study

ABE quality study is the first of its kind in the Amhara region, implying far-sightedness and outstanding concern (for those children who pursue education in ABE programme in particular and wash-back effect on livelihood and poverty reduction in general) by Save the Children Demark Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia and the Amhara Region Education Bureau. This is a big concern requiring an in depth and comprehensive study that needs adequate time for in depth analysis of input (materials, finance and content of the curriculum), process (teaching–learning process and support systems) and outcome (learners' achievement). This is a very vast and appreciable initiative. However, meeting the timelines of the consultancy service was a big limiting factor.

Studying quality of education encompass so many variables. This made the study a bit cumbersome. Only limited variables such as the effect of facilitators' training and ABE facilities on achievement of the learners would have been considered.

The other limiting factor as regards to time in the process of data collection was that some ABECs did not have level three students so that the tests could be administered. This made the data collectors to go back and forth to find those ABECs with complete levels. In fact, this had consumed a lot of energy and time.

As hand writing of some students in level three Alternative Basic Education Centers and grade four formal schools who took Amharic, English, Mathematics and Environmental Sciences' tests was very poor, reading, correcting and scoring test papers was very difficult and took more time than desired.

There were no clearly recorded budget and expenditure documents in almost all of Alternative Basic Education Centers visited. For instance, labour and raw material contribution from community and students' contributions for construction activities have not been converted into monetary terms. The culture of planning activities along with budget and recording expenditures had not taken root. This made the attempt to study financial status of ABEC difficult and impractical.

CHAPTER II

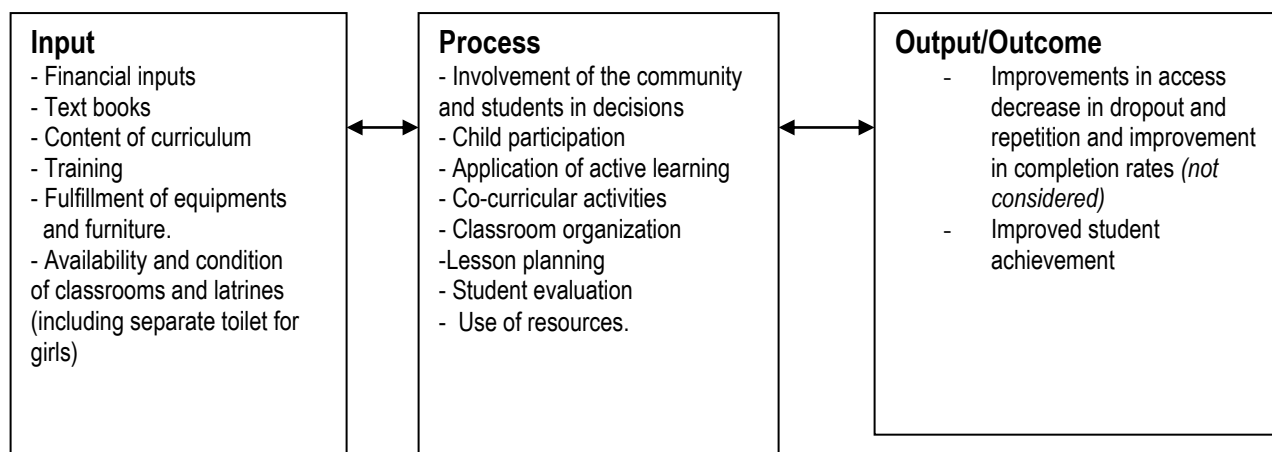
2. Methodology

Given the above background, objectives, scope and challenges of the study, generally this study falls in a descriptive survey study aiming at assessing to what extent the input, process, and outcome variables have determined ABE quality. Therefore, both participatory qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed in examining the issue at hand, ABE quality in Amhara Region.

2.1. The Study Model

In relation to quality in education, UNICEF⁹, UNESCO, USAID take broader perspectives and indicates that quality educational programmes must encompass a broader definition involving learners, content, processes, environments and outcomes. Hence, in this study, the **Input – Process – Outcome (IPO) model** has been used due to the fact that quality of education, in most cases, relates to the input (material, technical and financial), process (teaching-learning activities, building capacity of the stakeholders and monitoring activities) and outcomes achievement of the learners and their communities (improvements in access, attrition and performances of the learners).

Figure I: - The IPO Model¹⁰



⁹ Defining Quality in Education: A paper presented by UNICEF at the meeting of The International Working Group on Education Florence, Italy June 2000

¹⁰ (Adopted from Jaap Scheerens (no date) Perspectives on Education Quality, Education Indicators and Benchmarking, University of Twente, The Netherlands; and A paper presented by UNICEF at the meeting of International Working Group on Education, Florence, Italy June 2000)

This model assumes that input improves the process of learning thereby student achievement and their communities and the probability to stay in the school with proper progress in promotion from grade to grade.

2.2. Tools of Data Collection and Sources of Data

The following plethora of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were utilized towards attaining objectives of the study.

- i. **Document Analysis:** With the aim of reviewing and conceptualizing the problem, the data collection focused upon the following important background documents and relevant literatures.
 - a. Amhara Region ABE Scaling up Project Documents (SCN - E, SCD - E)
 - b. UNICEF, Defining Quality in Education, A Working Paper, 2000
 - c. Amhara National Regional State ABE Programme Strategy
 - d. Regional ESDP(I, II and III) documents and Joint Mission Reports
 - e. Amhara Region Annual Educational Abstracts
 - f. ABE curricular materials
 - g. ATKLT forum proceedings
 - h. UNESCO, Education For All: The Quality Imperative, 2004.
 - i. Etc.

Moreover, the document analysis technique which is suggested by Plikandroff (1988) was used as a tool to collect information on the relevance and depth of ABE curriculum materials. To this effect, **objectives-content matrix (knowledge, life skills and attitudes) of ABE** curriculum was outlined and carefully analyzed by consultants with post graduate studies in curriculum and instruction. Relevant literature and research findings in the field, experiences of some countries in ABE were also carefully reviewed and documented to enrich the study.

- ii. **Key Informant Interview:** This was used to collect data from the Amhara Regional Education Bureau officials, zonal and Woreda education office experts, Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia and Save the Children Norway Ethiopia education programme officers.
- iii. **Focus Group Discussion (FGD):** This was employed to collect data from local and international NGOs working on the area of ABE programme, community leaders (both men and women), ABE facilitators, children (both boys and girls), ABE management committees, community leaders and parents.
- iv. **Questionnaires:** Two sets of questionnaires were prepared, pre-tested and used to collect information from students, facilitators, primary school head teachers and cluster level education supervisors on various issues including inputs, process and outcome. The questionnaires were translated into Amharic language to facilitate better understanding and the provision of adequate information.

- v. **Alternative Basic Education Centre and Classroom Observation Checklist:** This checklist was used to collect data related to the school environment, and classroom interaction, seating arrangement, assessment, and lesson planning and classroom situation. Photographs were used to substantiate collection of data. The exercise books of 3 -5 students in sample schools were observed to see the follow up of the facilitators on student activities.
- vi. **Tests:** As there are no standardized tests for basic education in Ethiopia, the consultants prepared achievement tests for ABE and formal primary school students in the four subjects – Amharic and English Languages, Mathematics and Environmental Science for ABE stage three and for formal grade four students. These tests were constructed using table of specification, and considering objectives and content of ABE and formal basic education curricula with particular focus of basic literacy, numeracy and life skills expected at basic education level.

The test developers were curriculum and measurement and evaluation specialists with adequate knowledge of the curriculum and test construction and administration on one hand, and ABE facilitators and formal primary school teachers on the other hand. Having developed common understanding on the purpose of the study and preparing the tests, the team developed test table of specification depending upon the profile indicated on the 1994 Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia on one hand and respective subject syllabi and text books for ABE and grade 1-4 formal education on the other hand. Sample tests used by ABE facilitators and zonal education departments were also used as references while preparing the tests. These procedures helped in preparing relevant test items with normal level of difficulty.

2.3. Pilot Testing the Instruments

All the above indicated instruments were piloted and pre-tested before widely using them for data collection. Tests to check learning outcome of the learners were administered in 2 ABECs and 2 formal primary schools in North Shewa Basona Warana Woreda of the Amhara Region for pre-testing. The number of students in each pre-test was 50. Accordingly, items answered correctly by 20% of the students and not answered by 90% of the students were amended or replaced by other items. Because, literatures suggest that items with difficulty indices below 20% or above 90% should be revised or discarded.¹¹ Such items between 20% and 90% difficulty indices are judged appropriate in terms of the curriculum objectives, the purpose of the test, content coverage, the age level of students and test construction principles by test developers and researchers. Moreover, all instruments were presented to Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia and Amhara Region Education Bureau experts for review and the feedbacks obtained were thus considered.

¹¹ Keams as retrieved from the web sight <http://www.tridenttech.edu/testingervices/324,69,Slide 69>

2.4. Sampling Techniques

Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used to collect data from various target groups. All relevant programme officers of Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia and Adult and Non-formal education professionals in Amhara Region Education Bureau were direct data sources. About 80% zonal education departments, 10% Woreda education offices, 3% ABECs and 1% of formal primary schools together with their personnel were randomly selected to represent total population of the study. All curriculum materials of ABE and grades 1-4 primary schools of Amhara region were also reviewed for content analysis. Details of the total target population, samples and instruments used to collect data are presented in Table I below.

Table I: Source of Data, Total Target Population, Sample Representatives and Types of Instruments Employed

S/n	Source of Data	Total ¹² Target	Sample* Representatives	Instruments to be Used
1	ABE curriculum materials** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amharic ▪ English ▪ Mathematics ▪ Environmental Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All ▪ All ▪ All ▪ All 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All ▪ All ▪ All ▪ All 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content analysis matrix ▪ Content analysis matrix ▪ Content analysis matrix ▪ Content analysis matrix
2	Amhara Region Education Bureau	1	5	Informant interview
3	Zonal education departments/ desks	11	8	Informant Interview
4	Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia education programme officers	All	1	Informant interview
5	Save the Children Norway Ethiopia education programme officers	All	2	Informant interview
6	Woreda educational offices	140	21	Focus group discussion
7	Local NGOs working on ABE programme	All	5	Focus group discussion
8	International NGOs working on ABE programme in Amhara region	5	3	Focus group discussion
9	Alternative Basic Education Centers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitators ▪ Students ▪ ABE management committees ▪ Kebele representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1881 4122 251753 1881 1881 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50 100 500 50 100 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observation check list ▪ Questionnaire and interview ▪ Test, questionnaire & interview ▪ Focus group discussion ▪ Focus group discussion
10	Formal primary schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers ▪ Students ▪ Parent teachers Associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4056 42,214 2,778,787 4056 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50 100 500 50 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observation check list ▪ Questionnaire and interview ▪ Test, questionnaire & interview ▪ Focus group discussion

* Male and females are equally considered in all cases of data collection wherever available.

**In the case of curriculum materials, all student textbooks for the 3 levels are taken.

¹² ABECs, schools, teachers and facilitators' data in # 9 and 10 were taken from Amhara\National Regional State, Draft Education Sector Development Program III (2005/06-2009/10), 2006.

2.5. Data Collection Procedures

- i. **Initial Planning Discussion:** Planning discussion was conducted with Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia and representatives of Amhara Region Education Bureau representatives on overall objectives, contents and methods of the study. Issues of concern (like focusing on quality issues) were clarified and joint planning and schedules of the study were formulated with the purpose of enriching and sharpening data collection contents, tools and procedures.
- ii. **Data Collection, Supervision and Organization:** Six data collection managers (three consultants and 3 research assistants) with a minimum of first degree qualification and 25 data collectors with a minimum of 12 grade education and experience in data collection were selected and given two days training in such a way that they generate reliable and valid data from the target groups by using the instruments which were prepared, pre-tested, revised and reproduced. The six data managers divided themselves into 3 teams. One team went to East and West Gojjam including Awi. The other team collected data from North and South Gondar zones. The third team covered North Wollo, South Wollo and North Shewa zones. The six data managers (three consultants and three research assistants) together with Woreda level representatives had the roles of directly collecting data from ABECs and primary schools, supervising data collectors, ensuring that appropriate, reliable and valid data were collected. This means that they collected data on their own and also made data quality control, corrected the test items and organized focus group discussion results.
- iii. **High Profile Data Quality Control:** All data from the Amhara Region Education Bureau, Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia and international NGOs were directly collected by the consultancy team members. Furthermore, they made double check for data quality control on sample study sites. They also conduct direct observation to sample ABECs, primary schools and their overall activities. All relevant and curricular documents were reviewed, analyzed and documented by two of the consultancy members who have post-graduate level educational background in curriculum development and instruction. The achievement tests administered on both ABE and formal primary schools students were constructed by two consultant team members who have postgraduate level background in test construction, measurement and evaluation. Output data cleaning on SPSS was carried out by three consultant members who are well versed in the software.

2.6. Data Analysis and Interpretation Procedures

Data obtained through questionnaires and test results of 1000 students were entered into computers using SPSS software and analyzed and interpreted by the consultancy team members. The analyses included comparison of findings in ABECs and formal primary schools particularly at outcome level.

All other information secured from documents, focus group discussion, content analysis, individual interviews and observation checklists were qualitatively organized and used in augmenting the statistical data.

Series of consultations were carried out with relevant SCD - E, SCN - E and Amhara Region Education Bureau staff during the preparation of data collection instruments, in the course of data collection, the preparation of draft reports and submissions. Relevant comments and feedback were captured and accommodated.

CHAPTER III

3. *Review of Related Literature*

3.1. **The Conception of Alternative Basic Education (ABE)**

Alternative Basic Education is one variety of Non-Formal Education (NFE). According to UNESCO (1997), NFE is defined as “any organized and sustained educational activity with a specific purpose and provided outside the formal education system”. In most cases, NFE programmes are meant for those people who are currently not participating in school education or those who could not receive sufficient education in the past, consisting of both adults and children. The main characteristic of NFE is its vast diversity in educational/learning content, scope, target group, and organizational modalities. For example, NFE activities can range from literacy education to vocational training, and the provision and modality of learning can vary from a community-based literacy class to distance education. Providers of NFE activities are also diverse and there are no fixed standard for certification after completion of a course.¹³

Alternative Basic Education, as defined by Proceedings on Alternative Basic Education Conference (April 2003) in Amhara Region of Ethiopia, is one type of non-formal education, referring specifically to basic education that is organized outside the formal education system. Berhanu and Ahmed (2002) have also defined it as innovative and non-conventional (non-formal) approach to children’s basic education with the primary objective of providing quality basic education to disadvantaged children in different contexts. As these definitions and other contextual presentations show, Alternative Basic Education is a form of non-formal education that can be taken as a foundation for further life-long learning for those who are not reached through the formal schooling system of relevant skills training opportunities. It is seen as an opportunity that paves the way for children and youth who are not able to participate in the formal schooling system so that they benefit from alternative educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs such as literacy, numeracy, oral expressions and problem-solving.

Other words used in place of alternative education by educational professionals include non-traditional, non-conventional, or non-standardized, although these terms are used somewhat less frequently and may have negative connotations and multiple meanings. Alternative schools often emphasize the value of small class size, close relationships between students and teachers and a sense of community.¹⁴ ABE programmes are expected to be flexible in curriculum design, learning time, venue, facilitators, etc in order to serve their purposes.

Though Alternative Basic Education (ABE) is a form of NFE, it seems to focus on out of school children. Most of the ABE programmes appear to complement formal school programmes rather than continuing in parallel with formal education system. They seem to fill gaps which formal schools could not address.

At present, the concept that considers the formal school system alone as means of providing

¹³ UNESCO (1997)

¹⁴ Encyclopedia

education to school-aged children is changing and is giving way for the utilization of alternative means of non-formal approaches. As Evans (1981) comments, the category of non-formal education is the one that attracted the attention of education planners since it offers the promise of feasible and low cost methodologies for reaching the growing number of people...who had little prospect of being served in the near future.¹⁵ Education planners, policy makers and researchers as well as international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and Save Alliance have begun to seek innovative, less costly and more flexible alternatives of providing alternative education and this led to emergence and subsequent development of varied alternative innovations in different developing countries¹⁶ and various parts of the world (Asia, Latin America and Africa) as indicated in the subsequent pages.

3.2. Overview of International and Local Experiences in Alternative Basic Education

3.2.1. Community Learning Centers (CLC) in the Asia- Pacific Region

In Asia and the Pacific region Community Learning Centers (CLC) have emerged as a potential grassroots'-based institutions for delivery of literacy, basic and continuing education and other development activities.

Learning centers are defined in the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All training materials ... as local institutions outside the formal education system for villagers or urban areas usually set up and managed by local people to provide various learning opportunities for community development and improvement of people's quality of life. Community Learning Centers are for every citizen and are adapted to the needs of all people in the community through active community participation. The CLC is often located in a simple building. Its programmes and functions are flexible and well adapted to the needs of the community in that they cater for the needs of adults as well as young people, and in particular to the disadvantaged groups.

CLC programmes are founded in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. CLC activities may include education and training such as literacy classes, provision of education and skills training activities, promotion of life long learning and training of non-formal education personnel. They may have also a function in community information and dissemination of resources, community development, coordination and networking between government and NGOs, linking traditional village structure with official administrative structure, etc.¹⁷

Currently Farmers' Training Centers with the purpose of providing agricultural extension services are emerging in Ethiopia. Having visited some of the above countries and by learning from experiences, the Farmers Training Centers of Ethiopia may be explored to grow into multifaceted

¹⁵ Evans (1981) P.22

¹⁶ MOE (2002)

¹⁷ Source: UNESCO (2006), Guidebook for Planning Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction, P.1 in IIEP web site: www.unesco.org/iiep.

Community Learning Center including Alternative Basic Education for out of school children and adults.

3.2.2. The BRAC Experiences in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's (BRAC) non-formal education programme began in 1985 with 22 experimental schools in rural Bangladesh. The purpose of the programme was to provide basic education to rural children who never attended primary schools or who dropped out from formal schools. Since its inception, BRAC was able to provide education to more than a million children previously left out of the formal primary school system. The programme expanded rapidly and by the end of 1997 there were 34,334 BRAC schools throughout Bangladesh (Ahmed et al 1993, BRAC, 1997) as cited by Ayalew and Girmaw. BRAC gained worldwide reputation of being a highly successful programme in reducing the cost of primary education without affecting quality.¹⁸

Perhaps, what distinguishes the BRAC experience from several Alternative Basic Education programmes including that of Ethiopia is that BRAC started with experimentation and gradual scaling up throughout Bangladesh. The piloting processes seem to provide time for learning, self-reflection and shaping the success of the BRAC programme. This seems to be a good experience to learn from.

3.2.3. The Centers of Integrated Public Education (CIPE) Experiences in Brazil

The Centers of Integrated of Public Education (CIPE) was created in Brazil as innovation during the first democratically elected state administration of Rio de Janeiro (1982-1986) with the purpose of addressing problems in conventional education system that consist of:

- i. Cultural incongruence between the school curriculum and the students' background
- ii. Lack of integration across subject matter areas
- iii. Pedagogical approaches that emphasize individual rote memorization, dictations and mechanical drills reinforcing the superficial acquisition of knowledge
- iv. Lack of specific programme goals
- v. Teachers' inadequate training
- vi. Teachers' negative views of students and
- vii. Lack of parental involvement in the schooling process.

This educational project was devised by Darcy Ribeiro, the Vice-Governor of Democratic Labour Party. The innovation specifically aimed at enrolling economically disadvantaged children. CIPEs are identified by their structures of prefabricated cement modules and by their strategic and visible locations along freeways, highways, in the middle of city squares or in elevated positions such as mountain sides. The construction cost was covered by the government.

During the implementation of CIPE project there was a general concern that these new schools would constitute a parallel system for public education. In response to this, teachers were asked to elect representatives to attend the Congress of Mendes. Two hundred teachers, school administrators and union leaders were present at this Congress and together they worked out a

¹⁸ Source: Ayalew and Girma (2001)

common set of beliefs that came to constitute the major educational guideline for the CIPEs. A Committee for Pedagogical Training was also created at this time with the objective of training and assisting CIPE staff members in the project guidelines.

The CIPE schools students were supposed to spend the entire day. The day was divided into four hours of instruction and four hours of extra curricular activities. Frequent training, staff meetings and other activities were important as staff members move from traditional schools to a new type of school quite different in philosophy and practice. The CIPE replaced the traditional assortment of separate subjects with an integrated curriculum. To achieve this integration, teachers meet frequently to plan across subject matter areas. Activities were designed to encourage students to make connections across subject matter areas and promote logical thinking. Extra curricular activities were designed to be closely integrated with the main curriculum. That means the CIPE classrooms were designed to motivate students to engage in dialogue and express their own views towards enhancing their self-esteem, confidence and high order logical thinking. CIPE aimed at using the students' culture and knowledge as source of and means of teaching those skills and knowledge desired in the larger society. History, for instance, was taught from a critical and dynamic viewpoint encouraging students to be agents of their own history.

The CIPE stressed a greater integration between students' communities and the schools. This is clear in the presence of "Culture Animators" from the students' communities and in the incorporation of community's culture into the curriculum and school activities. Parental and community involvement was promoted through enjoyable extracurricular activities held during weekends in the CIPE. Besides these weekend events, in which the community comes to school, teachers were advised to go out in the community to become more familiar with students' reality and more sensitive to it.

A comparative case study between conventional and CIPE conducted in 1997-1998 indicated that:

- i. As opposed to conventional schools CIPE schools staff members had a collegial approach to discussing problems. The school administration members encouraged team work; teachers planned their lesson plans together with the aid from pedagogical coordinator.
- ii. The CIPE curriculum content was based on students' cultural background and knowledge was designed to foster higher order thinking and analytic skills. Students were engaged in a wide variety of activities such as drawing, writing, discussing a topic, explaining to a teacher what they had done, singing or exercising.
- iii. At the CIPE, parents and community as a whole were frequently involved to take part in events held on the weekends. This involvement made parents to understand the schools' human and martial problems and this reinforced them to support the school programmes.
- iv. It was reported that CIPE students had higher promotion rate (82.74%) than conventional public schools (62.33%). Moreover, it was understood that CIPE students were trained in undertaking creative tasks while students in conventional schools were trained for more reutilized activities¹⁹.

¹⁹ Source: Henry and others (1993), *Effective Schooling in Developing Countries*, PP. 69-85

Usually, ABE projects and programmes are initiated by donors, bilateral agencies or NGOs. In converse to many ABE initiatives throughout the world, CIPE is a brain child of Darcy Ribeiro, the Vice-Governor of Democratic Labour Party. In fact, one of the challenges of such party initiated programme is that its successful results fade with the election of another ruling party and state representatives and the CIPE faced the same constraint.

3.2.4. The Small School Experiences in Egypt

As a result of low participation rate, high rate of dropout and high gender inequalities in enrolment that characterized Egypt's conventional school system, community school projects were established to curb this state of affairs in 1992 with the support from UNICEF. The projects were able to decrease the problem of low enrolment among rural children, especially girls.

The curriculum in the community schools is closely related to the day- to- day lives of the rural population. The flexibility of the schools' schedules is another positive aspect of these schools. Moreover, there is extensive community participation in the schools' activities. These schools show that the expansion of primary education in a developing country can alternatively be promoted through carefully designed, cost-effective and flexible non-formal education programmes.²⁰

Considering the experience of the Egyptian Small Schools, it may be possible to explore the potential of madrasas (Quranic schools) as an important venue to provide Alternative Basic Education particularly among Muslim communities in Ethiopia.

3.2.5. The Complementary Rapid Education Programme for Primary School (CREPS) in Sierra Leon

The Complementary Rapid Education Programme for Primary School (CREPS) was set up in May 2000 by the Government of Sierra Leon Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) with support from UNICEF and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) as an accelerated learning programme.

It was designed to target children between the age of 10-16, who had been unable to complete their education during the conflict either because of involvement with fighting factions or due to school closure or displacement. It was estimated that 500,000 children were eligible.

CREPS condenses the regular six years of primary schooling into three years, after which the children are able to mainstream into the formal system. Classes are held in primary schools usually in the afternoon when the buildings are not being used or in temporary shelter. Teachers were trained specifically to deliver the CREPS programme and are supported with ongoing training. All learning materials were provided, children did not have to pay fees to attend classes and uniforms were not compulsory.

²⁰ Source: Ayalew and Girmaw (2001)

The programme is functioning in 185 centers across the country, and the enrollment in March 2004 was 26,646. Demand for CREPS programme continue to be growing but expansion is being obstructed by the Government's inability to pay the salaries of the recruited teachers.²¹

3.2.6. The ACCESS Experiences in Ethiopia

In 1996, ActionAid Ethiopia developed non-formal education programme for out of school children named as ACCESS - Accessible, Cost-effective Centers of Education within the School System. ACCESS was intended to make Alternative Basic Education in Ethiopia more sustainable by integrating it into the state education system. Principally, it was intended to improve children's enrolment, particularly girls' access to basic education on a larger and more long-term scale. The goal of ACCESS was to influence government education policies and practices to formally integrate ACCESS within the school system.

At least in principle, what characterizes ACCESS as an alternative basic education is that it is:

- **Community based** for its sustainability and proper functioning. That is, community's input of labour and locally available materials.
- **Cost-effective**, for the centers are constructed with cost saving local materials and free services such as committee members are obtained and facilitators' salaries are reasonably low and students' time is saved due to the proximity of the centers to residential site.
- **Accessible**, for most of the centers are said to be roughly 4 km from most students' homes and this is roughly half the distance of the formal primary schools.
- **Flexible** whereby the time table is negotiated with local community and the curriculum is also applied flexibly.
- **Adaptable and relevant** for the reason that the education at the ACCESS centers suited to the day-to-day lives and to the needs of the local communities in that, it is tried to adapt the curriculum to the local realities.
- **Linked and integrated** with formal schools whereby graduates of ACCESS programme are easily transferred to formal primary schools²².

3.2.7. Basic Education through Community Participation in Ethiopia "Mana Berumsa Ummata"

This project, launched in October 2003 in Oromia Region of Ethiopia, with the support of JICA, is today better known by its nickname "ManaBU (Mana Barnoota Ummataa)", which means "community learning center" in the local language. This project aims at both quantitative and qualitative improvements in the provision of basic education for the rural children in Oromia Region through the expansion and consolidation of community-initiated non-formal education with the purpose of expanding basic education in the region in order to improve living conditions.

²¹ Source: UNESCO (2006), Guidebook for Planning Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction, P. 6 IIEP web site: www.unesco.org/iiep

²² Pinnock (2002)

ManaBU project covers six Woredas in three zones of the region, and the main activities consist of training for policy-makers and teachers for the expansion of NFE, studies, classroom construction and development of guidelines, etc.

A baseline survey was conducted at the beginning of 2004 in the project sites, and on the basis of which a construction guideline of ManaBU classes was prepared introducing the methodology for community-based construction management. At present ManaBU project is respecting and promoting educational activities initiated by the community.²³

3.3. Determinants of Quality Education

Improving educational quality is one of the six goals of EFA. It is stated as “Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential skills”.

Educational quality is a complex subject simply because it means different things to different people. Its attributes vary depending upon individual/organisational biases, experiences, social philosophy, values, etc. In fact, even the same words, such as quality, standards, relevance and effectiveness used by observers can mean very different things to different people, resulting in a great confusion when they venture to talk to each other.²⁴ Any definitions of quality in education exist, testifying to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept. However, if one has to monitor it effectively, he/she should have a common agreement on what it should entail.

In this study, educational quality is the results of many inputs, outputs and the process followed to achieve it. This implies that educational quality could be defined in terms of innumerable indicators. However, to collect data on them on a regular basis and monitor them closely, a long list of indicators will not be of much value since resources available to any institution supporting education are limited. Therefore, one needs to apply knowledge, experience and judgment and determine what should constitute educational quality. Overviews of international initiatives to monitor educational quality determinants are indicated below.

3.3.1. The UNESCO Quality Determinants

Since improving educational quality is one of the EFA goals, UNESCO has been monitoring selected indicators as quality determinants. Since there are no direct indicators of quality, international trends are based on two sets of proxies. They are:

i Teachers:

- a. Teacher students ratio
- b. General level of educational attainment of teaching staff
- c. Percent of teachers who are certified to teach according to national standards.

²³ Source: A web page on JICA and Non-Formal Education (2007)

²⁴ Philip H. Coombs, (1985), The World Crisis in Education: The views from the eighties.

ii Expenditure on Education:

- a. Public expenditure on education as a proportion of GNP
- b. Share of primary education in the public education budget and national expenditure²⁵.

3.3.2. The UNICEF Quality Determinants

UNICEF perhaps has come close to defining quality of education more comprehensively. Although no specific indicators have been recommended, the definition entails the following:

- i Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities
- ii Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities
- iii Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and life skills, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace
- iv Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities
- v Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.²⁶

3.3.3. The European Commission Quality Determinants

European Commission (EC) considers quality of education and training to be a concern of the highest political priority. Therefore, a working committee of national experts have selected sixteen indicators and categorised them into four main areas as indicated below.

i. Attainment

- a. Mathematics
- b. Reading
- c. Science
- d. Information and communication technologies (ICT)
- e. Foreign languages
- f. Learning to learn
- g. Civics

²⁵ UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4 in IIEP web site: www.unesco.org/iiep

²⁶ UNICEF (2000), Defining Education in Quality: A working paper, in IIEP web site: www.unesco.org/iiep.

ii. Success and Transition

- a. Dropout
- b. Completion of upper secondary education
- c. Participation in tertiary education

iii. Monitoring of School Education

- a. Evaluation and steering of school education
- b. Parental participation

iv. Resources and Structures

- a. Education and training of teachers
- b. Participation in pre-primary education
- c. Number of students per computer
- d. Educational expenditure per student

3.3.4. The US Department of Education Quality Determinants

The US Department of Education has used 31 indicators to compare education in the US and other G8 Countries²⁷. This comparison has used only the following determinants for pre-primary and primary education:

- i Early Childhood Enrolment (also used in EFA monitoring)
- ii Student/Teacher ratios in primary education (also used in EFA monitoring)
- iii Public school teachers' salaries in primary education
- iv Instructional strategy (methodology) in primary education
- v Primary students' attitudes towards Mathematics and Science
- vi Mathematics and Science achievement in primary education

Having considered the above quality determinants of various organizations, it may be worthwhile to summarize in a matrix table (showing indicators and reasons for recommendations) in relation to the context of Ethiopia, with particular reference to Alternative Basic Education. Here it goes.

²⁷ National Centre for Educational Statistics (2002), Comparative Indicators of Education in the United States and other G-8 Countries

Table 2: Summary of Relevant Quality Determinants

Recommended indicator	Reason for recommendation	Remarks
i Inputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teacher, students ratio b. Students, textbook ratio for language and mathematics and Environmental Science c. Class size (students-section ratio) 	These inputs have been proved to have a very high influence on children's learning internationally	Recommended by UNICEF and UNESCO USA
ii Process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Representation of boys, girls and women in the school governments b. Involvement of children and parents in the decisions on school management and improvement c. Teaching style (democratic, authoritarian and laissez-faire) 	Proxies for child and community participation	Emphasized much by UNICEF
iii Outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Health and hygiene behaviour of children b. Reading, writing and numeracy achievements of boys and girls in level 3 	Learning outcome is a very serious issue among ABE and primary school children	Others including UNICEF are focusing on health and hygiene behaviors. Reading, writing and arithmetics have been included by most actors in their indicators list.

CHAPTER IV

4. Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

4.1. Geographic Area of the Study and Respondents' Profile

To make a wider coverage, the study sampled 8 zones and 21 Woredas of the Amhara Region though it was agreed in the proposal to cover only 5 zones out of 11. The study was conducted with a representative sample of 50 ABECs and 50 formal primary schools which are distributed across the sample zones and Woredas. A comparable two groups of students in the basic education level, that comprise (a) the ABECs with level 3 students, and (b) the formal primary schools with grade 4 students were taken as samples. From each school and center visited for survey study purpose, random of 10 students were drawn from the attendance list provided by school heads concerned. The detailed size of the sample zones, Woredas, ABECs, formal primary schools and students are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Study Geographic Area

S/N	Name of Zones	Name of Woredas	School Type	N	% of Total N
1	North Wollo	Kobo	ABEC	40	4.0%
			FORMAL	40	4.0%
		Guba lafto	ABEC	40	4.0%
			FORMAL	40	4.0%
		Habru	ABEC	40	4.0%
			FORMAL	40	4.0%
2	South Wollo	Tehuledere	ABEC	40	4.0%
			FORMAL	40	4.0%
		Dessie Zuria	ABEC	40	4.0%
			FORMAL	40	4.0%
3	East Gojjam	Dejen	ABEC	10	1.0%
			FORMAL	10	1.0%
		Guzamen	ABEC	10	1.0%
			FORMAL	10	1.0%
4	Agew Awi	Banja	ABEC	10	1.0%
			FORMAL	10	1.0%
		Fagita Lakuma	ABEC	10	1.0%
			FORMAL	10	1.0%
5	West Gojjam	Mecha	ABEC	20	2.0%
			FORMAL	20	2.0%
		Dembecha	ABEC	10	1.0%
			FORMAL	10	1.0%
		Jabe Tahnan	ABEC	10	1.0%
			FORMAL	10	1.0%
		Machakel	ABEC	10	1.0%
			FORMAL	10	1.0%
6	North Gondar	Dembia	ABEC	20	2.0%
			FORMAL	20	2.0%
		Chilga	ABEC	20	2.0%
			FORMAL	20	2.0%

S/N	Name of Zones	Name of Woredas	School Type	N	% of Total N		
7	South Gondar	Libu Kemkem	ABEC	50	5.0%		
			FORMAL	20	2.0%		
		Fogera	ABEC	19	1.9%		
			FORMAL	31	3.1%		
8	North Showa	Tarma Ber	ABEC	40	4.0%		
			FORMAL	40	4.0%		
		Geramidir	ABEC	30	3.0%		
			FORMAL	30	3.0%		
		Basona Worana	ABEC	10	1.0%		
			FORMAL	10	1.0%		
		Mamamidir	ABEC	30	3.0%		
			FORMAL	30	3.0%		
		Total			ABEC	509	50.9%
					FORMAL	491	49.1%
			Total	1000	100.0%		

As indicated in the methodology section, information were collected from ABE and formal school students, ABE facilitators and primary school teachers, parents, Woreda, zonal, regional education bureau officials and NGO representatives. Their profiles are as indicated in the succeeding Tables.

Table 4: Age and Sex Profile of Student Respondents

School Type	Sex	Mean	N	% of Total N	Minimum Age	Maximum Age
ABEC	Male	11.94	266	26.7%	8	26
	Female	10.53	242	24.3%	8	15
	Total	11.27	508	51.1%	8	26
FORMAL	Male	12.14	272	27.3%	9	24
	Female	10.90	215	21.6%	7	16
	Total	11.59	487	48.9%	7	24
Total	Male	12.04	538	54.1%	8	26
	Female	10.70	457	45.9%	7	16
	Total	11.43	995	100.0%	7	26

As can be observed from the Table, 51.1% of the total student respondents were from ABECs and 48.9% were from formal primary schools. Furthermore, within each school type grouping 26.7% of males and 24.3% females of ABEC students and 27.3% of males and 21.6% females were from formal schools indicating almost balanced sex representation in the study.

While the age of the students' respondents is distributed between 7 and 26 years, the mean age is 11.94 for male ABE students and 10.53 for female students. Minimum age of 7 at level 3 indicates that age 5 children joined level one ABE before 2 years. This means that almost kindergarten children were expected to pursue basic education and this is beyond their capacity. On the other hand, the mean age for formal school male students is 12.14 while it is 10.90 for female students. Again this implies that younger students are enrolled in ABEC than in formal schools. Though the purposes of ABEC to make the school closer to out of children by reducing school distance appears to be maintained this has brought about that sending under-aged children to schools. This is a nice achievement when compared to the fact that as over-aged children used to take part in ABE program when it was initiated before 10 years. However, as the curriculum and the teaching styles do not much the maturity of under aged children, it requires serious attention.

Table 5: Profile of ABE Facilitators and Formal School Teachers

Age	Formal School teachers		ABE Facilitators	
	No	%	No	%
18-20	0	0	21	21
21-23	5	5	19	19
24-27 years	15	15	60	60
28-32 years	15	15	0	0
Over 32 years	65	65	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100
Sex				
Male	81	81	65	65
Female	19	19	35	35
Total	100	100	100	100
Education Level				
12 complete	0	0	30	30
12 + 1	45	45	70	70
Diploma	55	55	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100
Total Years of Service				
1- 5	20	20	70	70
6 -9	25	25	30	30
10 -13	10	10	0	0
14 -17	12	12	0	0
18-21	6	6	0	0
Over 21	27	27	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 5 indicates that the age of formal school teacher respondents ranges between 21 to over 32. The majority (65%) are over the age of 32. On the other hand, the age of ABE facilitators ranges between 18 and 27, the majority being in the age brackets of 24 to 27.

Sex wise, 81% of the formal school teachers and 65% of ABE facilitators were males. About 45% and 55% of formal school teachers had 12+1 and diploma level qualification respectively. On the other hand, from ABE facilitators 30% were with 12 complete and 70% were with 10+1 or 12+1 qualifications.

As indicated in the methodology section, 5 experts from the regional education bureau, 8 zonal officials and experts, 21 Woreda officials, 6 International NGO and 5 Local NGO representatives took part in the FGDs.

4.2. Academic Performance of ABE VS Formal School Students

In much of the evidence on the relationships between education quality and levels of economic growth and personal incomes, test scores (academic performances) serve as a direct indicator for education quality. Assessment of learners' progress, using cognitive tests, serves a number of

purposes. It can provide an indication of how well items in the curriculum are being learned and understood. Equally, it can provide a signal as to how well learners have done at the main exit points from the school system. Precisely because of their role in rationing access to scarce opportunities, such assessments can have an important impact on what goes on in schools.

Governments, the people at large and parents in particular expect schooling to help children acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for them to lead productive lives and become responsible citizens. If children do not master the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and life skills by the end of their basic primary school, it is wastage of resources for countries²⁸.

Having considered the importance of academic performance as one of the best indicators of educational quality, the study administered the same academic tests of the Amharic language, the English language, mathematics and environmental science to level 3 ABE students and grade 4 formal school students. The mean scores of all the 4 subjects of both groups by sex are indicated in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Test Results by School Type and Sex

School Type	Sex		Amharic	English	Mathematics	Environmental Science
ABEC	Male	Mean	60.23	35.18	42.60	57.76
		N	262	256	258	266
	Female	Mean	56.28	33.38	42.00	55.14
		N	235	234	237	242
	Total	Mean	58.36	34.32	42.31	56.52
		N	497	490	495	508
FORMAL	Male	Mean	59.89	37.99	44.86	59.05
		N	274	276	273	275
	Female	Mean	59.38	36.81	45.42	59.27
		N	213	213	215	215
	Total	Mean	59.67	37.47	45.10	59.15
		N	487	489	488	490
Total	Male	Mean	60.06	36.64	43.76	58.42
		N	536	532	531	541
	Female	Mean	57.75	35.01	43.63	57.08
		N	448	447	452	457
	Total	Mean	59.01	35.89	43.70	57.81
		N	984	979	983	998

Data in Table 6 indicate three important points:

- i. Both groups of students performed poorly in all subjects. For example, on average ABE students scored 58.36% in Amharic, 34.32% in English, 42.31% in Mathematics and 56.52% in Environmental Science tests. Formal school students scored a little higher, i.e., 59.67% in Amharic, 37.47% in English, 45.10% in mathematics and 59.15% in Environmental Science.
- ii. Girls scored less than boys in all subjects and in both approaches of delivering basic primary education.

²⁸ Proceedings...2003, EFA Global 2005

- iii. Both ABE and formal school groups of students performed more poorly in English (34.32% by ABE students and 37.47% by formal students) and Mathematics (42.31% by ABE students and 45.10% by formal school students) than in Amharic and Environmental Science entailing that there is a very critical problem on teaching and learning English and Mathematics.

The Amhara region non-formal education strategy expects the students to exhibit the following outcomes at the ABEC level.

- i. Have skills of reading writing and calculation specified for the level
- ii. Have understanding of themselves, their families and their surrounding and appreciate the feeling of responsibility
- iii. Have understanding and appreciate the type of work that prevails in their respective surroundings
- iv. Be in position to investigate and compare cultural malpractices and promote useful beliefs and practices
- v. Attempt to inquire and understand and at the same time give solutions to confronting problems (challenges)
- vi. Show considerable interest commensurate to their level of capacity and skills in acquiring and mastering various trades of their localities
- vii. Aspire to keep their personal hygiene and appreciate their local environment
- viii. Be ever ready to actively participate in group and collective works
- ix. Be motivated to remain in the value of lifelong learning and continuing education.²⁹

However, test results revealed that the ABE strategy objectives are not attained to a satisfactory level. This means that the language test results indicated that students hardly read and write. Random oral reading tests conducted showed that the students hardly read passages drawn from their own English and Amharic textbooks. The mathematics test results also reveal that the students have very limited capacity to do simple arithmetics as per the expectation of the strategy. Moreover, observation of personal hygiene and sanitation of the majority of the students is not to the desired level.

Moreover, class observations and FGD with regional, zonal, Woreda, teachers, head teachers, supervisors and ABE facilitators also showed that there is a long way to go in improving personal hygiene, creatively solving problems, avoiding harmful traditional practices, appreciating themselves and others.

On the other hand, the expectation of the strategy seems to lack specificity. For instance, it is questionable to expect a child between 7-11 ages to be in position to investigate and compare cultural malpractices and promote useful beliefs and practices. The same holds true with the ambition to anticipate a child of such an age to attempt to inquire and understand and at the same time give solutions to confronting problems (challenges).

In fact, the reasons for poor performance of the learners and quality education (as per the strategy objectives) are quite multiple and diverse as revealed below.

²⁹ Amhara Region Education Bureau (2003), Alternative Basic Education Strategy

4.3. Determinants of Quality in Alternative Basic Education in Amhara Region

4.3.1. The Home Environment

4.3.1.1. Parents Literacy Level of ABEC and Formal Students

It is apparent that children who come to schools from family background with reasonably good literacy levels will be in better positions than those who come from poor literacy background. These children whose parents are literate will be assisted in their school works by such parents and will build confidence that boosts their academic achievements. Therefore, in order to find out how many of the children in both the ABEC and the formal programmes have got the advantages of such opportunities, children were asked to reflect it and their responses are shown in the following Table 7.

Table 7: Fathers' Education Level

Fathers' ³⁰ Education	School Type		Total	%
	ABEC	Formal		
Illiterates	203	187	390	53
Grades 1-4	103	74	177	24
Grades 5-8	48	53	101	14
Grades 9-12	29	29	58	8
Certificate	1	2	3	0
Total	368	361	729	100
%	50	50	100	

As the table indicates, quite a significant number of students from both programmes come from family with illiterate fathers that are 390, which are 53% of the grand total. Out of these 203, which are 52.1%, are in the ABEC and 187, which are 47.8% are in the formal programmes.

This data reveals that children who come to the ABECs lack the opportunity to be assisted by their fathers (52%); even though the situation with the formal students is not different (47.8%). To know whether or not family support has significant bearing on the academic performances of the students, data are drawn to compare and contrast the extent of the support of the parents against the test scores of the students in the four core subjects.

³⁰ Students did not fully respond to the education of their mothers.

Table 8: Family Support Students Get while Studying

School Type	Get family Supports when Studying	Test Scores in the Core Subjects			
		Amharic	English	Maths	E. Science
ABEC	No response	Mean 49.38 N 8	Mean 21.88 N 8	Mean 30.38 N 8	Mean 53.75 N 8
	Yes	Mean 57.05 N 290	Mean 32.75 N 282	Mean 43.16 N 290	Mean 58.19 N 296
	No	Mean 60.63 N 199	Mean 37.02 N 200	Mean 41.55 N 197	Mean 58.54 N 205
	Total	Mean 58.36 N 497	Mean 34.32 N 490	Mean 42.31 N 495	Mean 58.52 N 508
Formal	-9 (Missing)	Mean 74.69 N 16	Mean 36.88 N 16	Mean 47.11 No. 16	Mean 66.88 N 16
	Yes	Mean 58.45 N 242	Mean 37.06 N 245	Mean 43.85 N 244	Mean 57.77 N 245
	No	Mean 59.91 N 229	Mean 37.00 N 228	Mean 45.10 N 488	Mean 59.15 N 490
	Total	Mean 59.67 N 487	Mean 37.47 N 489	Mean 45.10 N 488	Mean 59.15 N 490
Total(Grand or aggregate for both school types)	-9 (Missing)	Mean 66.25 N 24	Mean 31.87 N 24	Mean 43.47 N 24	Mean 56.26 N 24
	Yes	Mean 57.69 N 532	Mean 35.17 N 527	Mean 43.47 N 534	Mean 56.38 N 540
	No	Mean 60.24 N 436	Mean 37.01 N 428	Mean 43.87 N 426	Mean 59.36 N 434
	Total	Mean 59.01 N 984	Mean 35.89 N 979	Mean 43.70 N 983	Mean 57.81 N 998

As the data in Table 8 clearly shows, there is no difference in the achievements of the students both in the ABEC and Formal programmes on the basis of the support they get from their families. There does not seem to be marked difference in the test scores between those who said that they get support (yes) and those who said that they do not get the support (No). This phenomenon exposes that there exists quite a serious problem at each household as regards to their ability to deliver the required support for their children even though they tried to do so due to probably their inability to comprehend the contents of the subject matters – being illiterate, which puts the students in disadvantage.

Quite interestingly enough, the performances of the students in the two very important core subjects – English and Mathematics are drastically down below the passing mean; for both school types whether they get the support or not. As many studies indicate that there is strong relationship between students academic achievement and parents literacy level, the low academic achievement in language and mathematics may attribute to wide spread prevalence of illiteracy among the rural communities that has to be addressed through adult literacy programmes to enable the community members be models for their children, to enable them assist at least at their early school years.

4.3.1.2. Students Responsibilities at Home

As much as important is the existence of conducive atmosphere at home for the positive result of students' academic performance, so is the level and magnitude of other responsibilities children are entrusted to carry out on routine basis have direct intervening effects on their school works. The more responsibilities they bear, the less their time to spend on their school works and this will ultimately result in poor performances. Since engaging children in a variety of responsibilities beyond their call of duties are common practice in rural communities, it was asked in the questionnaires for the students to respond whether or not they take part in activities like fetching water and firewood, herding cattle, taking care of siblings, ploughing etc and their test results were compared and contracted. The responses for taking care of siblings are further broken down for the two sexes to see which sex is more responsible for such activities. The object here is to see what impact these responsibilities have on the academic performances of the students.

Table 9: Herding Cattle

School Type	Herding cattle	Test Scores in the Core Subjects			
		Amharic	English	Maths	E. Science
ABEC	No response	Mean 75.00 N 1	Mean 50.00 N 1	Mean 51.05 N 1	Mean 80.00 N 1
	Yes	Mean 58.41 N 386	Mean 34.07 N 381	Mean 42.42 N 389	Mean 58.36 N 397
	No	Mean 59.05 N 110	Mean 37.42 N 108	Mean 47.93 N 100	Mean 59.09 N 110
	Total	Mean 58.36 N 497	Mean 34.32 N 400	Mean 42.31 N 406	Mean 56.52 N 506
Formal	Yes	Mean 58.36 N 129	Mean 34.69 N 360	Mean 44.89 N 356	Mean 58.41 N 360
	No	Mean 60.14 N 358	Mean 39.68 N 129	Mean 49.05 N 130	Mean 60.95 N 130
	Total	Mean 59.67 N 457	Mean 37.47 N 489	Mean 45.10 N 458	Mean 59.15 N 490
Total	No response	Mean 75.00 N 1	Mean 50.00 No. 1	Mean 51.05 N 1	Mean 80.00 N 1
	Yes	Mean 50.24 N 744	Mean 31.00 N 741	Mean 41.60 N 747	Mean 51.81 N 757
	No	Mean 59.22 N 239	Mean 38.12 N 237	Mean 47.07 N 236	Mean 59.70 N 240
	Total	Mean 59.01 N 954	Mean 35.89 N 979	Mean 43.70 N 983	Mean 57.81 N 996

The impact of the responsibility students' on their academic results can be observed from the data in Table 9. In all the test scores, the test results are lower for students who said that they herd cattle (yes) while the results for students who do not herd cattle (no) are higher in relative terms. Though it may be assumed that those children who look after cattle get adequate time for studying and doing home works, the non-child friendly situations like wind, rain, sun, etc may not allow small children to provide attention to school extended activities. These children may give more attention to playing activities than schooling assignments in an open air.

Table 10: Taking Care of Siblings

School Type	Taking care of Siblings	Sex	Test Scores in the Core Subjects				
			Amharic	English	Maths	E. Science	
ABEC	Yes	Male	Mean 68.39 N 165	Mean 37.48 N 168	Mean 47.46 N 168	Mean 55.70 N 100	
		Female	Mean 51.02 N 108	Mean 33.67 N 166	Mean 41.04 N 106	Mean 50.05 N 171	
		Total	Mean 58.22 N 273	Mean 33.21 N 271	Mean 41.68 N 278	Mean 56.98 N 281	
	No	Male	Mean 56.68 N 154	Mean 37.06 N 151	Mean 43.00 N 150	Mean 53.80 N 71	
		Female	Mean 50.68 N 70	Mean 32.65 N 68	Mean 40.33 N 69	Mean 56.96 N 227	
		Total	Mean 58.53 N 224	Mean 35.68 N 210	Mean 43.11 N 219	Mean 55.96 N 227	
	Total	Male	Mean 60.23 N 262	Mean 37.15 N 256	Mean 40.60 N 258	Mean 30.26 N 260	
		Female	Mean 58.28 N 238	Mean 33.38 N 234	Mean 42.00 N 237	Mean 55.14 N 242	
		Total	Mean 58.36 N 497	Mean 34.36 N 497	Mean 42.31 N 495	Mean 56.52 N 505	
	Formal	Yes	Male	Mean 62.89 N 76	Mean 39.09 N 77	Mean 45.00 N 76	Mean 62.99 N 77
			Female	Mean 50.49 N 179	Mean 32.42 N 116	Mean 40.54 N 119	Mean 57.49 N 119
			Total	Mean 60.21 N 195	Mean 30.08 N 195	Mean 44.08 N 195	Mean 59.64 N 186
No		Male	Mean 58.74 N 108	Mean 37.56 N 199	Mean 44.50 N 197	Mean 57.53 N 198	
		Female	Mean 60.52 N 94	Mean 36.05 N 95	Mean 46.51 N 96	Mean 61.46 N 96	
		Total	Mean 59.31 N 292	Mean 37.07 N 294	Mean 45.36 N 293	Mean 58.32 N 294	
Total		Male	Mean 59.89 N 274	Mean 37.99 N 276	Mean 44.86 N 273	Mean 59.65 N 276	
		Female	Mean 59.38 N 213	Mean 36.81 N 213	Mean 45.42 N 215	Mean 59.27 N 215	
		Total	Mean 59.57 N 487	Mean 37.47 N 489	Mean 45.10 N 486	Mean 59.15 N 490	

As the data in the table above depicts, the test scores of those who take care of siblings are lower than those who do not take care for both sexes. However, there exists a more marked difference in the performances of the female respondents who indicated that they take care of their siblings than the male respondents who said the same in all the four subjects test scores. The test results of the girls are lower in uniform manner in all the subjects than the boys' results. This finding reveals that girl students, in addition to the other responsibilities like fetching water and fire wood and carrying out various errands, take the burden of taking care of their siblings which is more than just being engaged in activities but also playing the mother role. Such a role does take away not only time but also the physical energy, for it includes feeding, lullabying, cleaning and soothing them when they cry and get irritated. It seems that this condition does not spare them even a slight portion of the time they have outside the school compound.

The data however does not show any difference between the ABEC and the formal programmes participants in their test scores. They have scored equally low in English and Mathematics-lower than average. The informal discussions the researchers made with some of the girl students in the sample schools revealed that they do carry a variety of activities at home that are exclusively left for girls like making coffee, cooking food, cleaning the house, washing the clothes of their siblings and also taking part in farm activities with the exception of ploughing. According to the girls', remarks, they have no time at all at home. If they have to work on their homework, they have to do them while in the school. Once they reach home they must be directly engaged in the routine activities of helping their parents. They remarked with regret that the boys are even allowed to play if they need it after schools while the rule is highly stern upon them. These all appear to contribute to the poor performances of girl students, which ultimately lead to drop out of school as they keep lagging behind their boy counterparts. The following table substantiates these facts.

Table 11: Getting Time to Study VS Test Results

School Type	Get time to Study	Test Scores in the Core Subjects			
		Amharic	English	Maths	E. Science
ABEC	Yes	Mean 68.59 N 284	Mean 39.05 N 278	Mean 43.99 N 279	Mean 63.60 N 292
	No	Mean 48.47 N 180	Mean 30.53 N 180	Mean 40.68 N 183	Mean 50.49 N 183
	Total	Mean 58.55 N 464	Mean 34.85 N 458	Mean 42.20 N 462	Mean 56.79 N 475
Formal	Yes	Mean 61.43 N 341	Mean 47.68 N 342	Mean 51.43 N 341	Mean 67.83 N 344
	No	Mean 58.73 N 127	Mean 39.37 N 128	Mean 40.10 N 128	Mean 50.28 N 127
	Total	Mean 59.32 N 468	Mean 37.37 N 470	Mean 44.72 N 469	Mean 58.95 N 471

Both in the ABEC and the formal programmes , those who said that they do not have time to study (No), have scored lower than those who said they do get time. The finding reveals that the students who have not got time for studying are being victimized in their academic performances. As the previous data in the preceding tables showed, those who said they do not have time to study must be those who are engaged in a variety of responsibilities, the majority of them being girl students.

4.3.1.3. Availability of Meal before Going to School

As a vital factor in the home environment category, the availability of meal for the students before going to school was tried to be assessed through the questionnaire for the students. From the data, perhaps, why the largest majority (68.62%) of the respondent students said "yes available", may be to maintain their family pride, even the small proportion of the respondents who said "not available" showed drastic decrease in their test scores both in the ABEC and formal programmes as indicated in Table 12.

Table 12: Availability of Meal before Going to School

School Type	Meal Availability before Going to School		Test scores			
			Amharic	English	Maths	Environmental Science
ABEC	Yes available	Mean N	60.23 354	36.44 348	45.74 354	58.09 363
	No, not available	Mean N	52.37 93	29.95 94	40.97 92	50.16 95
	Total	Mean N	58.59 447	35.06 442	42.20 446	56.65 458
Formal	Yes available	Mean N	69.33 409	42.52 411	47.03 410	66.08 412
	No, not available	Mean N	50.18 57	30.37 57	40.98 57	50.81 57
	Total	Mean N	59.43 466	37.50 468	44.78 467	58.93 469
Total	Yes available	Mean N	64.74 763	40.02 759	53.50 764	68.62 775
	No, not available	Mean N	50.33 150	29.75 151	33.59 149	43.65 152
	Total	Mean N	59.02 913	36.31 910	43.52 913	57.80 927

Contrary to the students' responses as regards to the availability of meal before going to school, the researchers' observations at the sample school and according to the facilitators / teachers feedbacks, the physical condition of the students demonstrate the greater majority of them seem to be malnourished. The facilitators/teachers said that the students yawn and sleep in classrooms even in the early morning sessions showing that either they do not get meal or do not get enough to energize them. As a result of this problem, which is the direct reflection of the prevalence of abject poverty at home, it is difficult for the students to concentrate on their school academic works. The bodily presence of such students is said to put them not in a better position in their performance than the ones who are physically absent. According to the feedbacks from the teachers and facilitators, it is such students who come to school with empty bellies who are oblivion in their school works who ultimately end up as school dropouts. For students from such home environments, education seems to become a luxury but not a necessity. This finding shows that poverty alleviation is a key issue to be addressed along basic education in an integrated fashion as urgently as possible. Otherwise, the whole effort in reaching the un-reached children focusing only on education may be wastages of valuable resources.

4.3.2. The Curriculum

4.3.2.1. Students' Responses on the Textbooks

The students, especially in the ABEC programme, reflected through their responses to the questions in the questionnaire for them that there is no major problem in the supply of text books. The student-textbook ratio is almost on a 1:1 basis in all the subjects. The researchers have also observed physically in the classrooms of the sample schools that text books were availed for almost each student.

The students were also asked which subjects they like most and their responses are indicated in the following table, which also shows their test scores on the basis of their liking or disliking the subjects.

Table 13: Liking or Disliking Subjects VS Test Scores

School Type	Amharic		Test scores			
			Amharic	English	Maths	Environmental Science
ABEC	Like	Mean	67.23	43.26	52.29	65.60
		No.	393	390	397	403
	Dislike	Mean	52.64	28.45	32.40	50.05
No.		104	100	98	105	
Total	Mean	58.36	34.32	42.31	56.52	
	No.	497	490	495	508	
Formal	Like	Mean	69.00	48.38	54.88	69.78
		No.	298	302	302	301
	Dislike	Mean	50.15	26.02	35.46	48.14
No.		189	187	186	189	
Total	Mean	59.67	37.47	45.10	59.15	
	No.	487	489	488	490	
Total	Like	Mean	68.42	45.49	53.41	67.38
		No.	691	692	699	704
	Dislike	Mean	50.39	26.86	34.40	48.82
No.		293	287	284	294	
Total	Mean	59.01	35.89	43.70	57.81	
	No.	984	979	983	998	

As the data in Table 13 clearly show, about 2/3 of the student respondents in both the ABEC and the formal programmes do like most of their text books. The test scores of the ones who said that they liked the text books are higher than those who said they disliked them. This finding tells us that the preparation of text books as the principal curriculum component has to be given priority and caution, which is found to be reasonably taken care of as the content analysis showed. Relevant illustrations with glooming colours together with catching and leveled text materials help to attract the attention of children.

Furthermore, it was also tried to solicit information from the respondent students on the reasons behind their likings of the text books with indicatives like the “well preparedness” of the text books, the good delivery systems of the facilitators and influences from their parents on the subjects. From among these reasons for liking the textbooks, the well preparedness of them is found to be the most chosen ones, where 85% of the respondents favored it.

To know if their liking of the textbooks has any impact on their academic achievements, their mean score was tabulated against each subject and the finding showed that test scores for those who said the subjects are “well prepared” are proportionally higher than those who said otherwise as Table 14 depicts.

Table 14: Perception of Student Respondents on the Preparation of Textbooks

School Type	Text Book are well Prepared		Test Scores			
			Amharic	English	Maths	Environmental Science
ABEC	Yes	Mean N	67.78 390	44.61 385	52.27 389	67.15 396
	No	Mean N	49.18 107	23.90 105	32.38 106	45.64 112
	Total	Mean N	58.36 497	34.32 490	42.31 495	56.52 508
Formal	Yes	Mean N	70.18 353	48.40 357	55.31 355	69.63 357
	No	Mean N	49.12 134	26.44 132	34.88 133	48.62 133
	Total	Mean N	59.67 487	37.47 489	45.10 488	59.15 490
Total	Yes	Mean N	68.90 643	46.41 642	53.69 644	68.30 653
	No	Mean N	49.15 341	25.25 337	33.70 339	47.20 345
	Total	Mean N	59.01 984	35.89 979	43.70 983	57.81 998

Apart from data procured from the respondent students, a thorough content analysis was made on each subject at each stage topic-by-topic using content analysis matrix, the summary of which is as follows.

4.3.2.2. Summary of Textbook Content Analysis

4.3.2.2.1. Amharic Textbook

i Amharic Stage One

It is reasonably illustrated followed with ample instructive and active sentences by giving emphasis to practicing reading letters, word and simple sentences. Less emphasis is given to narrative sentences which show that the methodology inclines to activity-oriented approach.

However, the text material has sequential arrangement problems. It seems to lack strength in making the contents relevant to the day-to-day lives of the students and to that of the communities. Less emphasis seems to be given to knowledge and life skills development schemes in the overall development of the textbooks.

To cite some of the sequential order problems; after dealing with skills of handwriting, handling of pens and pencils, exercising writing drills on paragraphs, and dealing with grammar exercises, from UNIT TWELVE up to UNIT FIFTEEN, the book goes back to letters and formations of word from letters, which should have been exhaustively included in the previous units that dealt with letters and word formation (proceeding from simple to complex) consistently.

As regards to relevance, it is to be observed that most of the reading passages are copied from old books that dealt with commonly known themes, for example, such passages as “A Leopard and a Gazelle, A Lion and a Rat , the Clever Monkey,” etc. These are commonly found in almost every storybooks of the regular primary level. Rather than dwelling upon such redundantly used themes, it could have been advisable had the reading passages contained a mix of stories with functional themes like conservation and development of natural resources like soil conservation, forest development, modern crop production, modern dairy farming, on HIV/AIDS, how it is transmitted and on how it can be prevented.

ii Amharic Stage Two

Sound sequential order is observed in this textbook, like dealing with listening skills in UNIT ONE, speaking skills in UNIT TWO and WRITING SKILLS in UNIT THREE in their accepted orders. The remaining units that follow these first three units are units that elaborately detailed the contents in them. With the exception of limited narrative sentences that describe rules, the greater majority of the sentences used in the textbook are activity-oriented instructive ones. Furthermore, objectives, contents and methods are highly synchronized here in this textbook. In relative terms, relevant reading passages are used in this textbook dealing with the depletion of forests and its effect, UNIT TWENTY-EIGHT and others which are educative as well on a variety of issues.

However, the book from the first to the last units does not have any illustrative presentation and is none- attractive, it does not appeal to the different senses of the children.

iii Amharic Stage Three

The instructive active and narrative sentences in this textbook are almost equal with a slight exceed of the active sentences. As such there is no flaw in sequential arrangement. Objectives, contents and methodological approach are well linked. Relevance is not also a problem. However, the presentation of the whole text including the passages is dull with little illustrations.

Generally, the Amharic textbooks for the three stages are reasonably acceptable with the exception of the observed minor problems.

4.3.2.2. The English Language Textbook

i English Stage One

The textbook seems well illustrated from the first to the last units. All instructive and active sentences, which are plenty, are supported by pictures. Narrative sentences are almost non-existent, which shows that the presentation is activity-oriented with sound sequential arrangement from simple to complex. Every content presentations, activities and exercises are related to the stated objectives. The contents are tried to be relevant and related to the children’s day-to-day lives and teach relevant knowledge and life skills, like identifying domestic animals, phenomena outside home and family members.

ii English Stage Two

The textbook:

- is well illustrated
- is properly sequenced
- is activity-oriented with plenty of instructive active sentences
- has no narrative sentences
- is relevant with knowledge and life skill contents like identifying blood relatives, domestic and wild animals and farming activities, etc
- stated objectives are strictly followed throughout the presentations

iii English Stage Three

The textbook:

- is well illustrated
- is activity-based with ample instructive sentences
- has no narrative sentences showing that it is activity-oriented
- has very good inter-linkage between objectives, contents and methodological approaches
- has excellent relevance to the day-to-day lives of the children
- has careful presentation of grammar to be expressed through the activities and passages
- has content presentations that are well sequenced

All in all, the English Language text books of the three stages are very good in their overall preparation. When all the three stages books are seen, it appeared that they are vertically linked by proceeding from simple to complex by gradually elaborating the simple presentations in the previous books in a much understandable way in the next ones as the stages progress. The review and content analysis of the English language textbook unequivocally reveals that the poor test scores of the students in the English language cannot be attributed to the preparation of the textbooks. Lack of supply cannot also be held responsible for, it is observed that students are supplied with adequate textbooks. Hence, it is possible to assume that poor performance and low quality lay upon the other determinant factors.

4.3.2.2.3. Mathematics Textbook

i Maths Stage One

The textbook:

- is reasonably well illustrated
- is well sequenced
- is developed on the basis of the stated objectives in the teachers guide

- On the other hand, it has too much narrative sentences that give emphasis to describing and explaining directives and rules, which could have been imparted through appropriate practical activities, e.g., in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight.
- has more worked out examples than exercises to be computed by the students

ii Maths Stage Two

The textbook:

- has not considered the age level of the students who are in most cases age 8 and above and as a result has completely left out illustrating the presentations
- is dwelling too much on narrative sentences
- has overcrowded texts with no attention to presenting it in attractive and appealing way
- has dummy and small letters and figures difficult to read

iii Maths Stage Three

The textbook:

- has no problem as regards to sequential ordering
- is a bit difficult when the topics being dealt with are compared to the age levels of the students at the stage, especially the geometry part
- has relatively too much narrative sentences

Despite the fact that the above indicated problems are observed, they cannot be reasons for the poor test scores of the students in the subject. It was quite visible during the classroom teaching observations that facilitators displayed lack of subject mastery and as a result were seen resorting to chorus type mechanical teaching on simple addition exercises which show that the problem was from the facilitators' side.

4.3.2.2.4. Environmental Science Textbook

i Environmental Science Stage One

The textbook is:

- well illustrated with appropriate pictures that make the presentations attractive and understandable
- appropriately fit to the age levels of the students
- is highly activity-oriented where by useful knowledge and life skills are derived from the surrounding environment
- full of instructive active sentences that encourage participations of the students
- Every content in every unit is quite relevant to the lives of the students
- properly sequenced (from the farthest to the nearest)

ii Environmental Science Stage Two

The textbook:

- is well illustrated and as a result is very attractive
- The contents are not too much and are not overcrowded
- is clearly a continuation of the previous stage
- is well sequenced (from simple to complex)
- Teaches relevant knowledge and life skills that are derived from the surrounding environment.
- is highly activity-oriented with instructive active sentences that encourage students to participate in the process
- Though there are narrative sentences, their presence is highly important for clarity sake.

iii Environmental Science Stage three

The textbook:

- is well sequenced with well thought out linkage between it and the previous one, stage two
- has contents highly relevant to the day-to-day lives of the students and to the communities at large
- teaches knowledge, life skills and has contents that are vital for bringing change of attitudes towards life , the physical environment and the country Ethiopia
- is reasonably illustrated with simple and attractive texts

The only observed problem is that it uses more narrative sentences than instructive active ones, e.g., 53:10 in Chapter One and 61:15 in Chapter Two respectively. The problem with such composition of narrative sentences leads the students to a more receptive role than being actively involved in the process.

With the exception of the observed flaws in the Amharic and the Mathematics textbooks, limitations in illustrations and activity orientation and absence of colorfulness as which have to be dynamically rectified as possible, there is no major problem on the textbooks for ABE.

4.3.3. Physical Status (Inputs) of Alternative Basic Education Centers (ABECs)

The very purpose of establishing ABECs is to make educational facilities accessible to children even at the remotest areas. Constructing and furnishing schools and classrooms at appropriate locations from materials locally available and at the financial capacity of the government and the other stakeholder is recommended. In fact, this does not mean that the ABE facilities should be to the level of affecting the teaching-learning process and the students well being. Many scholars believe that safe and welcoming learning environment is one of the vital components for quality education. For instance, Pinnock, 2002 notes that:

- ii Schools must have facilities that assure healthy learning environments. They need to have clean, tidy, spacious and attractive compounds with separate latrines for boys and girls with reasonable distance of separation.
- iii They must have clean and adequate drinking water supplies.
- iv They must have classrooms that fulfill the basic facilities - wide enough with proper lighting and air circulation and with the decent availability of chairs/benches, tables and chalk boards placed in their proper places and with appropriate arrangements.
- v They must have pedagogical centers for the production of learning and teaching aids both by the teachers and learners.
- vi They must have reading rooms/ corners.³¹

In this connection, the survey tried to examine to what extent the school facilities determine learning outcomes of ABE and formal school students. Observation check lists that consisted of 68 items with 6 categories was prepared and filled in by the researchers and data collectors by thoroughly scrutinizing the in and outs of the sample ABECs and formal schools. Moreover, information was collected from students with regard to physical facilities of their respective ABECs and schools. Their responses were correlated to their academic performances and the findings are presented in the following tables.

Table 15: Attending in Overcrowded Classrooms VS Students Academic Performances

School Type	Attend in a Crowded Class		Amharic	English	Mathematics	Environmental Science
ABEC	Yes	Mean	58.07	31.27	42.31	58.36
		N	57	59	57	58
	No	Mean	58.47	34.82	42.82	56.34
		N	402	392	399	411
FORMAL	Yes	Mean	58.00	34.12	44.59	61.71
		N	85	85	85	85
	No	Mean	63.34	38.65	45.07	67.85
		N	377	379	378	380

Table 15 shows that academic achievement of students is slightly higher with students who responded that they do not attend in overcrowded classrooms than non-overcrowded classes in both ABE and formal schools.

The magnitude of academic achievement in non-overcrowded classroom is higher in formal schools than ABECs. For instance, environmental science test scores of students in overcrowded classroom is 61.71% and it is 67.85% in non-overcrowded classroom. The photograph below taken during classroom visits and observation shows casual example in ABEC and formal schools.

³¹ Pinnock (2002)



An overcrowded Classroom in ABEC

It is clear that overcrowded classrooms have negative implications in the teaching-learning process in terms of teaching methodology and giving individual support that each and every student requires. It is observed that lecture methods were employed in such overcrowded classes. Teachers were observed to complain difficult to continuously provide class and home works, make correction and give feedback. The consultants sensed that the classrooms were overcrowded that they were suffocating and difficult to get fresh air. Such classroom conditions may have negative bearing on health of the learners in addition to obstructing teaching-learning process and resulting in poor quality of education.

The child-friendly classrooms should not be only non-overcrowded but also they have to have adequate seats and neatness. The situations of both ABECs and formal schools and their impacts on students' learning outcomes are presented in Table 16.

Table 16: Neatness and Seats of Classrooms and Their Implication to Learning Outcomes of the Students

Types of School	Is the Classroom neat?		Amharic	English	Mathematics	Environmental Science
ABEC	Yes	Mean	58.53	34.56	44.18	57.94
		N	378	373	378	385
	No	Mean	57.80	33.54	42.19	55.33
		N	82	82	80	86
FORMAL	Yes	Mean	59.69	37.71	46.03	59.69
		N	356	357	356	358
	No	Mean	59.17	36.96	41.90	59.33
		N	108	108	108	108
	Does it have suitable seats?					
ABEC	Yes	Mean	59.87	35.87	44.42	59.18
		N	243	234	238	245
	No	Mean	56.82	33.35	42.50	53.64
		N	227	229	230	236
FORMAL	Yes	Mean	63.21	42.94	47.32	61.87
		N	274	277	276	277
	No	Mean	55.00	33.50	42.38	55.90
		N	195	194	195	195

Table 16 shows that neatness of the classroom and suitability of seats have impact on learning performance of the students. Academic achievements of those students who responded that their classes are neat and have suitable seats have performed better than their counterparts both in formal schools and ABECs. And this is consistent across all subjects. The photograph below is just an example of a classroom with poor tidiness and seating arrangement in ABEC.



The worst example of seats and neatness of ABE classroom

The classroom situation observed with poor neatness and stone and log seats indicated in the above photograph has negative impact on teaching-learning process and outcome of the learners. It is observed students are obliged to bow down and write on their lap. This will have negative bearing in correctly shaping alphabets/ letters, words and sentences. Most of the students were observed to have illegible handwriting. A student who has not legible handwriting has less interest in reading. They had little interest to show their exercise books to the consultants. They may have similar interest to show their peers while doing group work.

Untidy and unsuitable seats in classrooms may also have negative impact on physical well-being of the students. Seating on a piece of stone or log for half or the whole day is quite difficult and intolerable for a small child who is 7-12 years old. It may have negative impact on the physical structure of the child.

In addition to classroom setups, availability of potable water, gender segregated latrines and play grounds have roles in creating child-friendly learning environment. The status of ABEC and formal schools in terms of facilities out of classrooms are presented in charts A-c.

Charts A - C - Status of ABECs and Formal Schools in Relation to Potable Water, Latrines and Play Grounds

Chart A

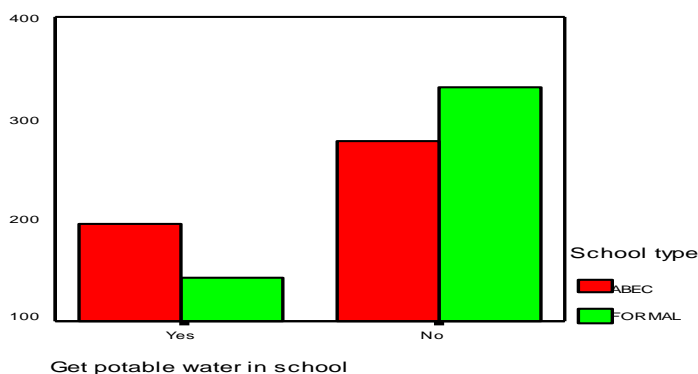


Chart B

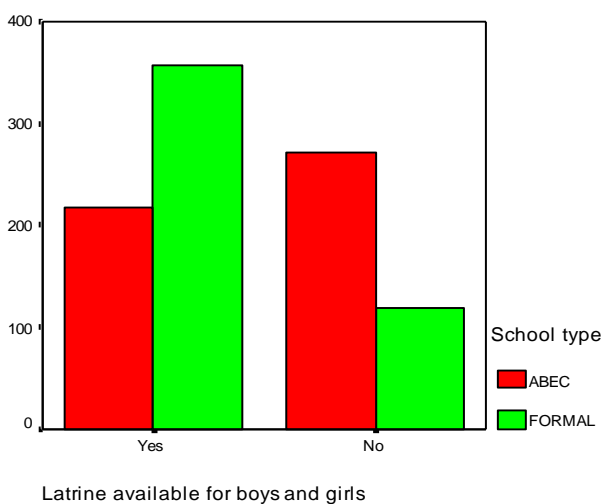
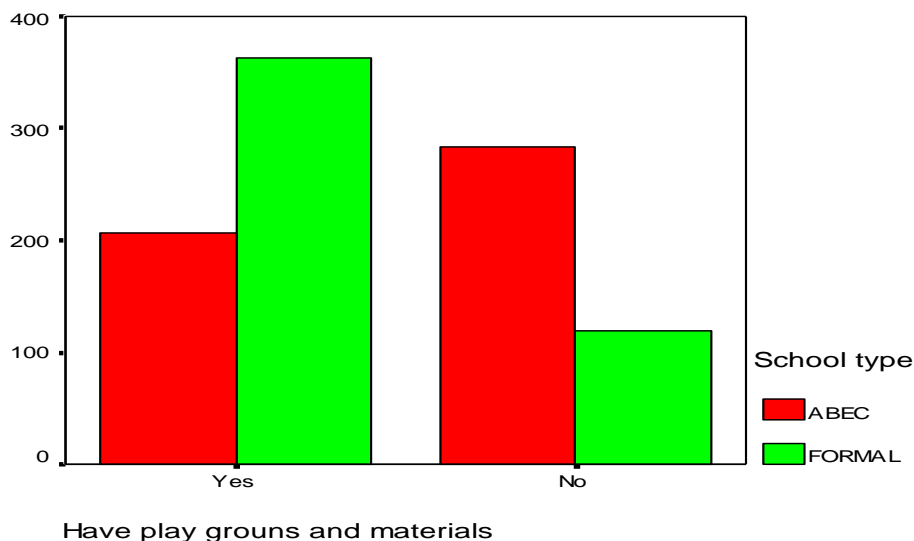


Chart C



The above three charts indicate the following points.

- i Very few of ABECs (30%) and formal schools (41%) have potable water. This means that most of the children cannot get the opportunity to drink water when thirsty. Lack of potable water in scorching climate means that the students are forced to wander around for searching water or completely forfeit classes by going to their homes or rivers. If a student is thirsty at school, he/she will have little attention. The commutative effect of non-attentiveness will result in poor academic performance and dissatisfaction of learning on the part of the students and their parents.
- ii The second Chart indicates that more than half of ABECs and a quarter of formal schools have no pit latrines. The consultants observed that children defecate in open air around school compounds. This has at least two implications. (a) What the students learn about personal and environmental hygiene and sanitation in the curriculum and by teachers/ facilitators has been challenged by what has been practiced. This is very dodgy towards the formulation of sanitary habits for it opposes what is cherished by the curriculum and teachers. (b) The open air solid and liquid waste disposal may result in perilous conditions on the health of the students and teachers.
- iii Though children shall enjoy various types of sport and gymnastic activities, about half of ABECs and a quarter of formal school students have no play grounds and materials. The consultants observed the availability of quite limited balls and almost zero gymnastic materials, wooden or metal bars. The causes for sheer absence of play grounds and materials seem to be rooted in limited attention by supervisors, head teachers and ABE facilitators. Otherwise these materials would have been at least prepared from locally available materials. Perhaps, hands on training might have not given to enable the facilitators and teachers to prepare play grounds and respective materials. Scarce pieces of land allocated for ABECs and formal schools as observed by the consultant also seem to contribute for non-availability of play grounds. The study

conducted by Melesse Delelegn (2005) also indicates that school compounds are used as farmlands as an income generating for schools to cover some opportunity costs.³² The consultants also observed similar incidents in some of ABECs and formal schools. As children shall take part in sport and gymnastic activities, the absence of play ground and materials mean negative impact on nurturing their physical and mental growth and development.

The Focus Group Discussions conducted with zonal and Woreda education offices, local and international NGOs and direct observations indicate that there was a wide difference in availability of material and human resources between the ABECs supported by NGOs like Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia, Plan Ethiopia, Amhara Development Association, etc. The ones being supported by NGOs have at least vital teaching-learning inputs while in non-NGO supports, ABECs are poorly facilitated and committee members are reluctant to give the required support. This trend of dependency on NGOs will in the long run jeopardize the sustainability of the programmes and needs strong commitment from the government side by allocating adequate financial and human resources and community resource mobilization and empowerment.

Apart from the availability of physical facilities, safe and peaceful learning environment also requires that schools must be free from harassments. Schools shall be free from sexual exploitation, gender, economy, health based discrimination and various forms of physical and emotional abuses. These will deter children from coming to school which in turn decreases the learning time or which may totally force them to dropout. Most of the participants in the FGD pointed out that both physical and emotional abuses at ABECs and formal schools have been very much reduced both in rural and urban areas. Even some claimed that child marriage is decreasing from-time to time due to the fact that a lot of community awareness workshops, discussions with judiciary bodies, children's drama club activities and legal actions taken by the Government.

The close observation at the sample ABECs and formal schools revealed that there exists shortage of supplementary reading materials. And reading corners are either non-existent in most of the ABECs and formal schools or there are no supplementary reading materials in the ones that have reading corners. Despite the fact that ABECs which have been supported by the SCN-E and SCD-E as pilot centers since their inceptions show exceptional fulfillments of such facilities as reading corners, the problems of lack of reading corners and reading materials is a prevalence in most centers. The lack of such vital inputs can attribute to the inability of the majority of students to properly read and comprehend their text books. This implies that the major stakeholders, including the government has to play pivotal role of closely observing and fulfilling such important inputs.

It is not only the school facilities that determine quality of teaching-learning process and students' learning outcomes but also the amount of time devoted for teaching and learning as indicated in Table 17.

³² Melesse Delelegn (2005)

4.3.4. The Teaching-Learning Process

Table 17: Shift System* VS Academic Achievement of ABE and Formal School Students

School Type	Shift System		Amharic	English	Mathematics	Environmental Science
ABEC	Yes	Mean	56.09	30.28	41.64	53.90
		N	257	254	259	264
	Full day	Mean	60.20	36.98	45.42	57.59
		N	83	83	83	86
FORMAL	Yes	Mean	53.85	33.72	44.65	38.90
		N	382	384	383	385
	Full day	Mean	63.54	57.92	46.67	58.87
		N	24	24	24	24

**shift system refers to morning or afternoon sessions for classroom teaching-learning process.*

According to Stephen (1986), test scores that are conducted by different education researchers, clearly show that the amount of class time spent on various core subjects at the primary level strongly affects performances of the learners³³. Similarly, as can be observed in the above Table, those students who are pursuing their education in full day have scored better than those who are learning in the shift system. For instance, the test results of ABE full day and shift system students are 60.20% and 56.09 in Amharic Language, 36.98% and 30.28% in English, 45.42% and 41.64% in Mathematics and 57.59% and 53.90% in Environmental Science respectively. The improvement of academic achievement with full day learning and teaching process is similar in formal schools. This finding reinforces Governments' present initiative of abandoning the shift system all over the region in formal schools.

Focus Group Discussions conducted with zonal, Woreda and ABE level with various target groups indicate that time flexibility stated in the Amhara Region Education Bureau ABE strategy is not put into practice in most of the ABECs. Many of the ABECs carry out the education programme either in a full day or shift system for 5 days a week and 4-5 hours a day. The so called flexible time table which is intended to be a unique characteristic of ABECs is now being changed and is becoming similar to that of the regular primary schools. This is because:

- Parents seem to perceive the ABEC programme inferior to the formal when they see their children are not following the regular school time table.
- Facilitators seem to play hidden roles to persuade parents to oppose the flexible time table as they like to consistently follow regular time-table.
- Adequate promotion work is not done by the Woreda education offices in the creation of awareness about the flexibility of the ABEC programme.

Though flexible time may be encouraged as far as alternative basic education is concerned, reducing time for learning will have negative impact on as attested by various researchers in the

³³ Stephen (1986)

field and academic scores indicated above. Hence, it seems essential to promote flexible schedules without compromising durations specified in the syllabi.

Table 18: Students' Perception on Teachers' and Students' Absenteeism per Week

Days	Teachers' Absenteeism	School Type		Total
		ABEC	FORMAL	
1 day	N	89	100	189
	%	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%
2 days	N	17	29	46
	%	37.0%	63.0%	100.0%
3 days	N	17	25	42
	%	40.5%	59.5%	100.0%
Present all the days	N	371	321	692
	%	53.6%	46.4%	100.0%
Students' Absenteeism				
1 day	N	186	168	354
	%	52.5%	47.5%	100.0%
2 days	N	78	39	117
	%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
3 days	Count	28	34	62
	%	45.2%	54.8%	100.0%
Present all the days	Count	200	239	439
	%	45.6%	54.4%	100.0%

Table 18 reveals 3 important points:

- i Almost all ABE facilitators and formal school teachers were present for all working days. From the total number of the 1000 of student respondents only 17 of ABE and 25 of the formal school students claimed that their teachers were absent for about 3 days in a week.
- ii When one looks into alternate number of days (1-3 days) on which the teachers and facilitators were absent, one understands that more formal school teachers exhibit absenteeism than ABEC facilitators. This may reflect the fact that there are more controls of ABECs by community members than formal schools.
- iii Examining students' absenteeism, it is possible to understand again that more formal school students exhibit more absenteeism than ABE students. For instance, from 1000 cases only 28 students of ABE and 34 students of formal primary school experienced 3 days absenteeism in a week. This may relate to the purpose of establishing ABECs for reducing school distance and virtual flexibility of learning time in some centers.

As shown above absenteeism from teaching-learning process on the part of the facilitators/teachers have negative effect on learning performance of the learners. However, what matters in the teaching-learning process is not only the duration devoted for teaching-learning but also the extent to effectively using the allocated time. Authorities like Perrot (1986) argue that the amount of time used by students among themselves and their facilitators/ teachers for interaction and personal reflection and hands on exercises is quite important for developing multitudes of physical,

mental, social and emotional development. Panchal (1984) and Hycraf (1989) also argue that photographs, posters, cartoons, pictures, graphs and diagrams help to summarize content of the curriculum with minimum words and lines. The subsequent table reveals the use of active learning and teaching-learning aids VS academic performances of the students.

Table 19: Teachers/ Facilitators Use of Active Learning Methodology and Teaching-Learning Aids VS Students' Academic Performances

School Type	Teachers/facilitators' Use Active Learning ³⁴ and Teaching Aids		Amharic	English	Mathematics	Environmental Science
ABEC	Yes	Mean	58.55	34.79	42.97	56.44
		N	359	354	360	368
	No	Mean	58.02	33.36	40.09	56.39
		N	480	473	477	490
FORMAL	Yes	Mean	60.13	38.10	45.53	59.14
		N	381	384	382	385
	No	Mean	59.42	36.19	43.51	57.86
		N	84	84	84	84

Table 19 indicates that test scores of those students who said their facilitators and teachers use active learning methodology and teaching-learning aids are better than those who responded otherwise. This finding is consistent with the findings of Flanders (1979) and Perrot (1986).

However, looking into the average scores, one clearly understands that the scores in English and Mathematics are below 50%. That of Amharic and Environmental Science ranges between 56% and 60%. Among many other inputs, indeed, many educationists believe that teachers/ facilitators are critical in improving learning performance of the learners. In this connection, the consultants tried to collect information from parents, Woreda, zonal, regional and NGO offices on the capacity of the facilitators. Diversified points mentioned were the following.

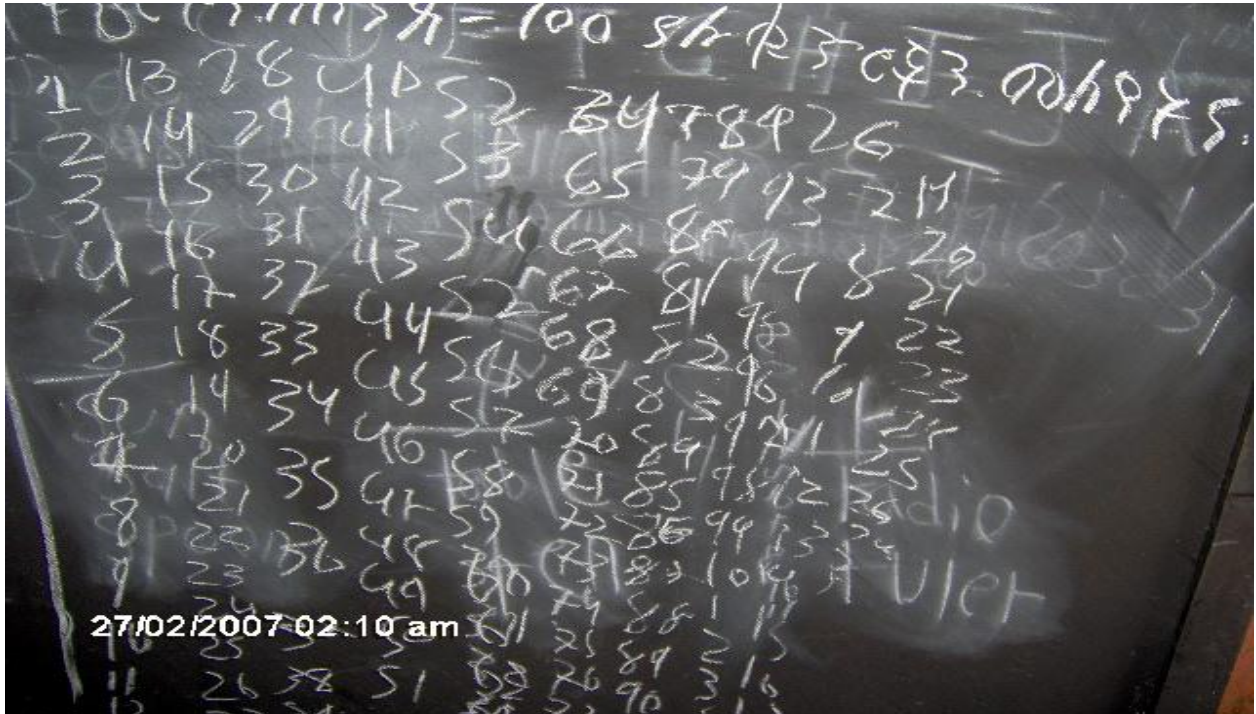
- i Facilitator training is based on teacher training colleges' syllabi but the facilitators who are made to take part in summer courses and certified show, as such, no change in their abilities and this casts shadow on the seriousness of the training.
- ii Pre-service trainings are also being given but since the facilitators have low school background and have been away from school for a long time, given a rush summer in-service approach, the training do not seem to bring about changes on their capacities.
- iii Facilitator training gives more emphasis to methodology than subject-mastery but facilitators' ability on both content and methods is not as required.
- iv Whatever efforts were made to raise the skills of facilitators through short term trainings there is no change in their ability of lesson planning, child-centered teaching, adapting the teaching to the lives of the community, etc.
- v Woreda education offices and zonal departments strongly question the abilities of facilitators to handle the teachings of all subjects. It is repeatedly reflected by the

³⁴ Active learning is interactive activities experienced by the students among themselves, with the teacher and other learning facilities.

interviewees that a good number of facilitators have highly felt difficulty in the understanding of the contents of some of the subjects, especially the English Language, Mathematics and Environmental sciences in their order of difficulty.

- vi Supervisors, community members and ABE committee members have doubt on the academic abilities of facilitators. Majority of them are said to have difficulty in reading and writing themselves.
- vii The different salary scales being practiced in the ABECs relative to the primary school and even between ABECs in different areas in same Woreda/ zone has created dissatisfaction among facilitators. The salary scales range from Birr 200 to 300.
- viii Lack of proper facilities like house, market and clinic in the vicinity of schools is eroding the morals of facilitators, especially those trained ones who are being employed and deployed in the ABECs since recently.
- ix The directives state that if a facilitator enables his students in "all pass" record to stage 3, then he/she is able to be paid the standard salary a primary teacher earns. But this is argued by the facilitators to be quite difficult to realize as many variables are counteracting on academic performance of the learners.
- x The cluster programme shows little effect on facilitators' ability and so does the mobile supervisors. They are nicknamed as "bizar bayizor" which means "no effect if he/ she visits a school/ ABEC or not".

The consultants also observed that the hand writing of many facilitators is not legible.



An example of bad use of blackboard and non-legible handwriting at ABEC

Moreover, facilitators reproduce mono-dimensional pictures from textbooks which do not allow critical thinking and active learning. The subsequent picture depicts the reality.



An example of mono-dimensional drawings in ABEC and heap of old textbooks

Quality of inputs can be one important indicator for the provision of quality education. It is also relatively simple to reveal quality level of inputs as revealed above. However, the most difficult part to showing qualitative side of the educational process. To this end, the researchers attempted to observe sample classroom interactions and what they found out was saddening. That is, though the students have textbooks to a ratio of 1:1, facilitators were seen resorting to teacher-centered approach where students were spending most of their time copying from the blackboards. Rather than allowing students work on their own giving various activities, facilitators forced them to repeat simple sentences in unison. Mechanical rote learning seems to be the deep rooted learning fashion under the 'commands' of facilitators. In such an instance, it is difficult to expect the desired quality of alternative basic education.

Table 20: Extent of Reading Supplementary Materials by Students

School Type	Extent of reading supplementary materials			Total
	Always	Occasionally	Never Read	
ABEC	15.4%	39.6%	45.0%	100.0%
FORMAL	39.6%	10.7%	49.7%	100.0%

Table 20 shows that nearly half of ABE and formal school students never read supplementary reading materials to improve their knowledge and skills. On the other hand, more formal school students seem to read supplementary reading materials than ABE students. As observed by the consultants, this appears to emanate from two reasons. (a) There is serious scarcity of supplementary reading materials and libraries in most of primary schools. (b) There is no tradition of collecting supplementary reading materials and establishing at least reading corners in ABEC. In such an instance, it is difficult to assume that students develop reading skill which is a very important life skill to learn all other subjects. The subsequent photograph taken during field work reveals just an example that there are only textbooks and no supplementary reading materials in most of ABECs.



An example of scarce supplementary reading materials in ABEC

One of the most important strategies in teaching-learning process is the use of continuous learning assessment, particularly the use of class and home works. It has great educational value since it enables the students to independently or in group plan and perform various activities, helps to improve their ability to use textbooks and other reference materials in and out of the schools, helps to develop intellectual qualities of self reliance, self-direction, a habit of reading which goes a long way in the pursuit of knowledge and skills. Table 21 shows to what extent ABE facilitators and formal school teachers make use of these important assessment strategies.

Table 21: Facilitators and Teachers Provisions and Marking of Class and Home Works

School Type	Teachers Give & Mark Class works			Total
	Always	Give but Do not Mark	Do not Give & Mark	
ABEC	5.7%	91.9%	2.4%	100.0%
FORMAL	15.1%	81.7%	3.2%	100.0%
Total	10.3%	87.0%	2.8%	100.0%

The data in the table indicate three important points.

- i The vast majority of ABE facilitators (91.9%) and 81.7% of formal primary school teachers give class and home works but they do not correct and provide feedback to their students. The observation on exercise books of the students by the consultants also warrants that class and home works are given but not corrected. The information obtained from the facilitators and teachers indicate that the problem is related to the over crowdedness of classrooms and reluctance of facilitators and teachers to the tedious patience that marking class and home works require. However, if class and home works are not directly corrected, it is very doubtful that the students give serious attention to doing the given tasks.
- ii It seems that more formal school teachers tend to “Always” give and correct class and home works than ABE facilitators. This perhaps relates to the fact that the value formal teachers provide to providing and correcting assignments and supervision by head teachers in the formal schools.
- iii Very few facilitators (2.4%) and 3.2% of formal school teachers were found not giving and correcting class and home works. This seem to imply that the majority of ABE facilitators and teachers believe in the importance of giving and correcting class and home works though they use over-crowdedness as escape-goat for not marking it.

4.3.5. Roles of Various Stakeholders and the Support Systems

As the discussants reflected and as it is stated in the strategy documents of the Amhara Regional Education Bureau, the Bureau, having made the commitment to expand access to primary education gives all the legal (policy) and supervisory support for all the ABECs in operation. To that effect, it has developed a strategy document clearly specifying the goals to achieve, levels of responsibility and the mode of operation expected. It underlines the unique feature of these learning centers to be cost effective in classrooms construction, use of local materials for instruction and the use of flexible learning time managed by facilitators and community representatives. As seen in reality, and as hinted by the discussants, they were found very much similar in their physical and organizational setup to that of the formal primary schools. Moreover, most of the ABECs do not follow flexible academic calendar that they operate in the shifts system with a rigid semester divided timings in the same way as the formal schools in the Woredas.

Such a marked deviation of the ABECs, especially the trend of canceling the flexible time tabling, which is a unique characteristics of the programme, is a serious problem. If ABECs are left unattended and facilitators are given the right to sway the CMC and parents against this benefit of flexibility, and set up their own time tabling as they wish, the programme will ultimately become similar to formal primary education.

Though Woreda education officials said that they offer as much support as they can whenever they visit the ABECs, facilitators on the other hand said that supervisors get exhausted when they reach the ABECs and there is little they can contribute in a form of support. However, as the facilitators put it, supervisors are not ‘harsh’ and are not serious enough in taking punitive measures even

though they find some unacceptable encounters at the ABECs such as facilitators being absent or find some messy conditions done. To the opinions of the consultants who observed the disorderly situations in some of the sample centers, this may have resulted from not taking corrective measures on the parts of the supervising officials. What this shows us is that the Woreda education officials are not playing their vital roles as major stakeholders in the support system of the programme.

On the other hand, the Woreda education officials claim that with the exception of short term trainings, seminars, workshops or information exchanges, there was no need-driven and regular training programme scheme to raise their capacities. The implication is that in order that they dispose their responsibilities in supporting the ABECs, their capacities have to be maximized.

When it comes to ABEC committee members, it was disclosed by Woreda education officials and zonal officials that the activities of these committee members differ from center to center depending upon the level of support they get from NGOs and government stakeholders. Those center management committee (CMC) members who got chances to participate in experience sharing programmes and who participated in training programmes seem to do much better contributions to the centers development than those that did not have these chances. Some of the activities cited are that they:

- i Mobilize the community members
- ii Regularly assist the center directors and the facilitators in solving problems of discipline, finance, labour, shelter and other services to facilitators
- iii Work in procuring land for the centers that can be used as playgrounds, garden plots and for fencing
- iv Work in promotion works to encourage parents send their children to the centers
- v Decide jointly with the directors and facilitators on the flexible time-table arrangements in ABECs that still keep the flexibility of time – tabling as the unique nature of the ABECs.

What this indicates is that the involvement of the committee can be enhanced when adequate awareness and capacity building training is provided to convince them that they can invest their energy and time in the interest of their children. Specific areas of attention in running and managing the ABECs should be identified for discussion in workshop organized. In order to correct the situation, a coordinated effort should come from the higher authorities and other stakeholders such as the Regional Education Bureau, international and local NGOs in terms of funding and technical support.

Another point that the study team found out through the discussion is the uncontrolled expansion of the ABECs to the extent that the minimum criteria in their setup is not met. Field observation also has shown that a considerable number of the centers lack the classroom facilities. It is expected that seats, blackboard and educational material supports must be fulfilled so that the facilitators can teach with ease and the learners can show the desired skills and knowledge to their level. To make the situation comparable to the formal primary schools, the Regional Education Bureau needs to carefully check the fulfillment of the minimum standards in all ABECs. The non-NGO supported

ones should be allocated additional budget for center level overhead cost. Besides, the salary of the facilitators has to be comparably equal to the formal school teachers to maintain their morale until they get the upgrading training by the teachers colleges and then their salaries are adjusted as per the scale.

The Woreda education officials emphatically expressed their recognition of the concrete and substantial support provided by Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia, Plan Ethiopia, Action Aid Ethiopia, Amhara Development Association, SOS Sahel, Forum Street Children in Ethiopia, etc. Their immense contributions as International NGOs were mentioned to include intervention activities like:

- i ABE centers construction in permanent and all – inclusive manner
- ii Provide the necessary facilities and materials (textbooks and stationeries) for schools under their support
- iii Training support for facilitators and center management committee members
- iv Supervising the activities of the centers in collaboration with the Woreda Education Office experts – by covering the expenses of the tours
- v Building the capacities of the Woreda Education Offices through the supplies of vehicles, materials and arranging training programmes, etc.

Such an intervention needs to be continued and sustained through coordinated and synchronized efforts among similar NGOs, the Regional Education Bureau, the Woreda education offices and the respective communities.

According to the information collected from various duty bearers, major stakeholders are expected to fulfill their responsibilities properly if ABECs are to function efficiently and effectively. The following points summarize their suggestions.

i. The Government:

It has to give serious focus on:

- The recruiting and placement of facilitators who fulfill a certain reasonable criteria as regards to their training backgrounds, academic achievements and character qualities.
- The coordination of the other major stakeholders such as international and local NGOs' activities towards supporting ABECs, in the training and placement of personnel – facilitators, zonal and Woreda officials and CMC members.
- The fulfillment of vital inputs at the center levels such as reading corners, supplementary materials and the like.
- The supervision of Woreda education experts activities at the ABEC levels and making sure that cluster programmes are supporting facilitators to the required level.
- Ensuring the teaching capacities of facilitators by making classroom observations regularly to see that the teaching learning is being conducted as expected.

- Ensuring that students' academic achievement is tested continuously to see to the realization of the set objectives.

ii. **NGOs and Donor Agencies:**

NGOs and donor agencies can bring significant differences as it was observed in ABECs being supported by SCD - E and SCN – E since their inceptions as pilot projects where the positive impact is quite vivid. They can continue taking part in terms of:

- Providing technical support for local capacity building of the REO, DEO and LNGOs in line with the objectives of the Amhara region ABE strategy
- Supporting capacity building in ABE teacher training, training of trainers and supervisors
- Supporting the construction and equipping of ABE centers
- Supporting the production and provision of learning materials
- Providing financial, material and technical support in establishing and building sound ABE supervision and coordination activities
- Providing ABE material capacity building including equipments and vehicles
- Advocate for community empowerment and institutional capacity building

iii. **CMCs and Community Members:**

The involvement of community members at large and that of the CMCs should not be on a casual basis, but rather a concerted effort has to be exerted by the government and NGOs to fully engage them in the activities of ABECs. They have to be made fully aware of on the uniqueness of the programmes especially with regard to the flexibility of time-tabling, overseeing their performances of the facilitators, land provision and fulfillment of basic inputs. Specifically as commented by FGD participants they can:

- Participate in decision making (identification and prioritization of needs, ABE planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation)
- Participate meaningfully in school management through CMC
- Participate in ABE teacher selection, hiring and firing
- Contribute towards teacher salaries (in cash or kind)
- Participate in the identification of ABE learners/ children
- Encourage enrolment in ABE with a special emphasis on girls
- Mobilize local resources for school construction, maintenance and running the program
- Provide land for ABE centre construction

iv. **Local Universities and Colleges:**

They can support in:

- Technical capacity building of ABE teachers, REO, DEO and CMC members

- Conduct applied research on the overall management and teaching learning process of ABE and provide feedback with practical recommendations to the Regional Education Bureau and other actors
- Conduct research on ABE and actively play advocacy role on quality universal primary education
- Conduct symposia on ABE research findings and recommendations

v. The Private Sector:

According to participants of the FGD the private sector should also support in:

- Contributing towards the provision of ABE through financial and material support
- Supporting capacity building through experience sharing programmes
- Organizing the Amhara Region Diaspora to take substantial leave and act as role models and guest speakers in REO, DEO, and ABE centers to encourage the education personnel, experts, teachers and the learners.

4.3.6. Perceptions and Criteria on the Future Fate of Alternative Basic Education

4.3.6.1. Perception on the Future Fate of ABE

As the discussants clearly indicated, ABE has immensely contributed to the spread of education and to reaching those who had no chance of going to school, and as a result, they said that it had to continue as a vital programme. However, they wanted the programme to undergo profound improvements in the recruiting and placement of facilitators, in closer supervision of the activities, in the proper fulfillment of facilities and in the awareness creation and promotion works on the communities to keep with its complementary nature of being responsive to the communities needs in providing option to the right to quality basic education.

The discussants suggest that, ABE programme has to continue as complementary programme to the formal system keeping in view of overcoming the observed problems indicated in the above sections. They also suggest various criteria for transforming ABEC to formal schools as indicated below.

4.3.6.2. Criteria for Transforming ABE into Formal Schools

As major criteria for transforming ABECs into formal system, the combinations of the following criteria were suggested by the discussants.

- i When the area of ABEC is found to be adequate for primary school standard
- ii When the contribution from the community, an investor, NGO or donor is ensured to construct and furnish a full fledged primary school
- iii When there is no primary school at a distance of 3 kilometers
- iv When government recurrent budget allocation is ensured
- v When the Woreda education is ready to deploy the required teaching staff

4.3.7. Areas and Levels of Advocacy for Alternative Basic Education

4.3.7.1. Areas of Advocacy

According to qualitative feedbacks obtained from participants of FGD, advocacy is said to focus upon:

- i Fair budgeting and expenditure for ABE
- ii Personal and organizational accountability of all duty bearers (the government, NGOs, parents, facilitators) in ensuring quality of ABE
- iii Genuine community empowerment and partnership for promoting quality ABE
- iv ABE innovations
- v Reviewing and revitalizing the regional education bureau's strategy of the ABE programme and disseminating it to all stakeholders
- vi Comprehensive and continuous capacity building for ABE facilitators and WEO experts
- vii Improvement of ABE facilities for ensuring child-friendly learning environment
- viii Improving household economy through integrated ABE programme
- ix Adult functional literacy in conjunction with ABE programme
- x Performance based salary increment for ABE facilitators
- xi Continuous assessments on the implementations of the programme and rectifying faced problems as promptly as possible

In addition to the above areas, the researchers have strong belief that a research based dynamic advocacy work is made on areas identified by research on regular and sustainable manner for smooth and efficient implementation of the programme, which may contribute to get rid of ever cropping problems in ABE.

4.3.7.2. Levels of Advocacy

Qualitative discussions conducted with Woreda and Zonal Education officials and NGO partners pointed out that, in order to ensure the provision of quality ABE programme, coordinated advocacy has to be carried out at all levels:

- i The community level
- ii Woreda level
- iii Regional level
- iv National level
- v International level

According to the discussants, advocacy at all level helps to provide ABE a big picture and helps to solve the practical problems which this study identified. They also pointed out that the required human, financial and material resources have to be coordinated, issues prioritized and while making advocacy at all levels. They emphasized that advocacy shall be carried out so that tangible outcomes will be achieved.

CHAPTER V

5. *Summary of Findings*

The study sampled 8 zones and 21 Woredas of the Amhara Region and conducted with a representative sample of 50 ABECs and 50 formal primary schools, which are distributed across the sample zones and Woredas.

A comparable two groups of students in the basic education level that comprises the ABECs with level 3 students and the formal primary schools with grade 4 students were taken as samples. From each center or school visited for the study purpose, a random of 10 students were drawn from the attendance lists of the schools.

In general, information were collected from ABE and formal school students, ABE facilitators and primary school teachers, parents, zonal, regional education bureau officials and NGO representatives.

As regards to student respondents, 51.1% of the total students were from the ABECs while 48.9% were from formal primary schools. Among both groups, 26.7% of males and 24.3% females of ABEC students and 27.3% of males and 21.6% of females were from formal schools indicating almost balanced sex representation in the study. While the age of student respondents is distributed between 7 and 26 years, the mean age being 11.94 for male ABE students and 10.53 for female students.

The age of formal school teacher respondents ranges between 21 to over 32 years. The majority (65%) were over the age of 32. On the hand, the age of the ABE facilitators ranges between 18 and 27, the majority being in the age brackets of 24 and 27. Sex-wise, 81% of the formal school teachers and 65% of ABE facilitators were males. About 45% and 55% of the formal school teachers had 12 + 1 and diploma level qualification respectively. On the other hand, from ABE facilitators 30% were with 12th complete and 70% with 10 + 1 or 12 + 1 qualifications.

Considering the importance of academic performance as one of the best indicators for the quality of education, tests on the 4 subjects – Amharic, English, Mathematics and Environmental science - were administered to level 3 ABE students and grade 4 formal school students and the results indicated that:

- Both the ABE and formal school students scored more poorly in the English language and Mathematics than Amharic and Environmental Science.
- Girls scored less than boys in all subjects and in both approaches of delivering basic primary education.

As regards to the other determinants to quality education, the findings revealed that children who come to both ABECs and formal primary schools lack the opportunity to be assisted by their family members and the performances of such students were found to be low in all subjects. It was also found that students who are given huge variety of responsibilities at home such as herding cattle, fetching water, taking care of siblings, etc did poorly in their academic performances.

As far as the curriculum is concerned, responses made it clear that there is no major problem in the supply of textbooks; the student-textbook ratio is 1:1 for all subjects. It is also found out that two-third of the students in both the ABEC and formal programmes do like most of their textbooks and the test scores of the ones who said that they liked their textbooks are significantly higher than those who said they disliked them – a finding that tells us that the preparation of textbooks as the major curriculum component has to be given high priority and caution. Furthermore, the significant problem in the preparation of the textbooks with the exception of some observed flaws in the Amharic and Mathematics textbooks, limitation in activities in some of the books and the last stage (Stage Three) of the Environmental Science.

When it comes to the physical status of the ABECs, the findings revealed that the academic scores of students is higher with students who said that they do not attend in overcrowded classrooms than those who said they attend in overcrowded ones. Observations also showed that formal schools are more overcrowded than ABECs.

Moreover, as it is observed during the study field visits that:

- Only 30% ABECs and 41% formal schools have potable water.
- More than half of ABECs and a quarter of formal schools have no pit latrines.
- About half of ABECs and a quarter of formal school students have no playgrounds and sports materials.
- The majority of the ABECs have no reading corners and no supplementary reading materials.
- A considerable number of the ABECs deliver lessons in overcrowded, unclean and with poor seating arrangements classrooms.

The existence of these combined physical inadequacies is considered to bring about a significant negative impact on the quality of education in the ABEC programme - quality attributes which need to be solved without taking time.

As regards to the teaching and learning process, the test results of ABE full-day and shift system students are found to be 60.20% and 50.09% in Amharic, 36.98% and 30.28% in English, 45.42% and 41.64% in mathematics, and then 57.59% and 53.90% in Environmental Science respectively, which confirm that the government initiative of abandoning shift system is the right move to the improvement of quality education. Full-day and shift system of delivery in the ABECs is meant the same as the operation found in the formal schools. On the other hand, data obtained through various sources, including classroom observations revealed that facilitators pretty badly lack the proper capacity that might have emanated from selection, training and the recruitment process procedures being undertaken.

When it comes to the support system, with the exception of the significant impacts being put by quite a few major stakeholders like Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia-Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway Ethiopia-Ethiopia, Plan Ethiopia, Action Aid Ethiopia, Pact Ethiopia, Amhara Development Association, Forum on Street Children Ethiopia, etc through a variety of support activities in their programme areas, the findings showed that other stakeholders including District

Education Offices are found to be not contributing as they are expected for the proper functioning of the ABEC programme due to capacity limitations.

In relation to the perceptions of many of the data sources of the study, ABE has to continue as vital programme but with a profound improvement in the recruitment and placement of facilitators, the closer supervision of the activities, in the proper fulfillment of facilities and in the awareness creation and promotion works on communities to keep with its unique needs. Furthermore, vital criteria for transforming ABECs into formal schools are forwarded and plausible areas and levels of advocacy are also obtained through the study for effective implementation of ABE programme.

In relation to facilitators' capacity, the perceived low performance as this study found out suggests that they be exposed to deeper and profound trainings of different modalities. This could include summer in-service upgrading programmes at the teachers' training colleges', continuous professional development such as planned training at the cluster centers by providing close support by supervisors on topics like subject mastery, lesson planning, child-centered teaching methodology, active classroom organization and management, and supporting their lessons by teaching-learning aids, etc. In addition to these, the finding further revealed that facilitators:

- Need to be competent enough both in methodology and subject-mastery
- Integrate the curriculum with the lives of the community
- Improve their abilities in the teaching of the English Language, Mathematics and Environmental sciences in their order of difficulty.
- Improve their reading and writing skills.
- When recruited from their respective communities fulfill minimum entry criteria such as adequate academic background, acceptable diligence and character make-ups, duty bounded-ness, clear handwriting, etc.
- Be remunerated with the same and reasonable salary scales across all Woredas and zones and that they be supplied with incentives like housing facilities.

The stakeholders' supports were suggested to revolve around:

- Resource mobilization
- Capacity building
- Working in genuine partnership
- Provision of reasonable level of ABE facilities
- Coordinated and focused advocacy
- Selecting, training, hiring and firing facilitators
- Providing adequate and dynamic and supportive supervision
- Joint advocacy at all levels

As concerns the future fate of ABECs, the following is summarized from the findings particularly in relation to major criteria in transforming the centers to formal schools:

- When the catchments area of ABEC is found to be adequate for primary school standard

- When the contribution from the community or an investor is ensured to construct and furnish a full fledged primary school
- When there is no primary school at a distance of 3 kilometers
- When government recurrent budget allocation is ensured
- When the Woreda education office is ready to deploy the required teaching and auxiliary staff

In relation to advocacy for Alternative Basic Education quality enhancement, issues such as fair budgeting, personal and organizational accountability, genuine partnership and community empowerment and the provision of quality basic education for all children have been identified to be focused upon at all levels.

CHAPTER VI

6. *Conclusions and Recommendations*

6.1. Conclusions

On the basis of the research questions and the above data analysis and interpretation, it is possible to conclude the following.

6. Both ABE and formal school groups of students performed poorly in all subjects (Amharic, English, Mathematics and Environmental Science). Girls scored less than boys in all subjects and in both approaches of delivering basic primary education. Both ABE and formal school groups of students performed more poorly in English and Mathematics than in Amharic and Environmental Science though the performances of formal school students were slightly higher than ABE students.
7. The major determinants of ABE quality has been found to be a function of home and school environment, facilitators, the curricula and support systems.

6.2. Recommendations

- xi The large majority of parents of the students were found to be illiterate. Children get very little support from parents in terms of meal, reducing child labour and study. Thus, it is important to conduct adult functional literacy hand in hand with enhanced ABE for children. Improving household economy using an integrated approach to development endeavours also will help to support the child comprehensive manner. It is also very essential to introduce home and community based Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) particularly in rural areas so that children will get early mental, physical, emotional and social stimulation before they join ABE or formal primary schools. This can be started by creating awareness on “appropriate” parenting at home level and ABEC plus kindergarten at community level.
- xii The learning environments of ABE programme have been found to be unhealthy, unsafe, non-productive and gender-insensitive, and provided inadequate resources and learning facilities. It has been found to hamper teaching-learning process and deter learning performance and the quality of ABE. Hence, ABEC specific infrastructural inventory shall be made by all Woredas as soon as possible. The Regional Government and INGOs shall support ABE specific interventions.
- xiii Only few contents of the curricula were observed illogically sequenced, hardly illustrated and seem to lack activity-orientation. This means that the large part of the curricula promote the acquisition of basic skill, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as, gender, health, nutrition, civic education,

- HIV/AIDS prevention and protection. They have no significant negative effect on students' performance and quality of ABE. The distribution of student-textbook ratio is almost 1:1. In depth training of capable facilitators on content and methods of the curricula may help to alleviate the current curriculum gaps. Revision of the curricula when the textbooks worn out may also gradually follow as a dynamic process.
- xiv The facilitators were not found to make use of child-centered teaching approaches and continuous assessment to facilitate learning and improving performance of the students. This incapability seems to emanate from their selection, training, assignments, salary and motivational incentives. Hence, for the sake of saving the kids, the consultancy team strongly recommends that all those facilitators with poor language and mathematics subject mastery, poor methodological skills and illegible hand writing shall be sucked out and replaced by capable 10+1 teachers as much as possible. To this effect, the simple test which has been used in this survey can be adapted and used at Woreda level to screen appropriate facilitators. If this is not feasible continuous need based practical training both on content and method areas should be provided to the facilitators in collaboration with teacher education colleges. Impact assessment and succession planning are suggested to be part of any on-job training.
 - xv The issues of advocacy towards ensuring ABE quality have to be focused but take a big picture at all levels. The consultants suggest that areas such as fair budgeting, individual and organizational accountability, genuine community empowerment and partnership for promoting quality ABE shall be focused upon. This may be considered as positive part of the support system at all levels. For instance, the ATKLT forum can be a good opportunity to concentrate on such issues in a form of symposia.
 - xvi NGO stakeholders are contributing in terms of constructing and furnishing ABECs, training facilitators and CMCs. ABECs which are supported by NGOs like Save the Children Denmark Ethiopia and Norway, ActionAid Ethiopia, Plan Ethiopia, ADA, etc were found to be more equipped in terms of human and material resources than those solely run by the Government. It is worthy that the NGOs continue on what they are currently doing. However, on top of this, the consultancy team suggests that it is important to recheck the comparative advantage of using an integrated approach to addressing the indivisible rights of the child and refocusing on advocacy issues indicated above.
 - xvii The technical support given by Regional, zonal and Woreda education has been found to be insignificant to change ABE learning environment, classroom practices and learning outcomes. It seems worthy to re-invigorate the capacity of non-formal education structure in terms of qualification, assignment, equipment and systematized need driven training.
 - xviii Many ABECs have been transformed to formal schools without any criteria. This has constituted negative impact on quality of ABE. Hence, the function of standard primary school space, ensuring the capacity to establish full fledged primary school, non-availability of primary school at distance of 3 kilometers, ensuring allocation of recurrent budget and the capacity to assign formal primary school qualified teachers by the Government need to be agreed criteria and applied to sift out those ABE centers which have been transformed to formal schools. The other option is to support both in human and material capacity so

that they get strengthen to discharge quality primary education. Donors, local and international NGOs and the private sector may contribute in this regard.

- xix As to the future fates of ABE programme, it has to continue as complementary programme to the formal system keeping in view of overcoming the observed problems indicated in the preceding sections of the study.

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