

Educating Adults and Youth in Tanzania: Complementary Basic Education (COBET) and Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE)

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Since independence the Government of Tanzania has made significant attempts to fight poverty, disease and eradicate ignorance and illiteracy. The guiding principle thereby has been that everyone has the right to personal development. Thus earlier efforts were targeted at universal primary education (UPE) and mass adult education. In 1970, for instance, a national literacy campaign was launched to make all adults literate by 1975. In addition, UPE was launched in 1974 to ensure that all school-age children (7–13 years) go to school by 1977.

Although there were impressive gains in the field of adult basic literacy over the last three decades following the establishing of mass functional and post-literacy, these gains could not be sustained for various reasons, including over-dependence on donor support, a centralized planning system and lack of motivation among facilitators (Mnjagila 2004). The adult illiteracy rate increased from 9.6% in 1986 to 16% in 1992, and the net enrolment ratio (NER) in primary schools dropped from 71.6% in 1983 to 59.6% in 1990 (Ministry of Education and Culture [MOEC] 1993). By 1998, it was estimated that 2.5 million school age children in Tanzania were not in school.

A large number of school-age children were left un-enrolled especially in the rural areas. Children were either forced into late enrolment because of lack of space or were not enrolled at all. Most of

those enrolled at an older age often became discouraged, were often truant or dropped out completely. They added to the already high number of illiterate adults. As a remedial measure, the government made an education paradigm shift in which a series of policies and reforms were initiated with the aim of ensuring that all citizens receive basic education.

This chapter focuses on the innovations Tanzania embarked on to ensure equitable access and quality provision of basic education to adults, out-of-school children and youth.

It should be noted from the outset that, in 2003, the Government of Tanzania developed a National Strategy for Adult Education and Non-Formal Education for implementation from 2003 to 2008. The strategy aims to implement educational programmes targeting adults, youth and out-of-school children. Two programmes—Integrated Community Based Adult Education (ICBAE) and Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET)—were given high priority. To ensure proper implementation of these programmes, Council Implementers have been trained to decentralise planning and management of adult and non-formal education programmes.

Complementary Basic Education (COBET)

COBET was initiated in Tanzania to cater to primary school-aged children and youth who are out of school. As mentioned earlier, over 2.5 million school-aged children did not have the opportunity to enrol in primary schools for various reasons. There was also a large number of children who, for one reason or another, dropped out of school before completing the seven-year cycle.

The COBET programme was designed in two versions for two age groups: Cohort I (11–13-year-olds) and Cohort II (14–18-year-olds). The programme is flexible in that it permits multiple entries and exits to other openings depending on the learner's abilities. It was also designed to meet the needs of out-of-school children in both rural and urban settings. Thus it is an intervention also intended to complement primary education.

COBET is built on a primary school curriculum with some modifications to meet the needs of out-of-school children, as well as to provide learners with eligibility to sit for primary school leaving examinations and gain equivalency. The COBET curriculum com-

prises of five subjects: communication skills, mathematics, general knowledge, vocational skills and personality development.

The duration of the programme is three years for both age cohorts. The programme for Cohort I takes students to Grade 5 after they have passed the Grade 4 National Examination, while the programme for Cohort II opens the doors of other forms of education, such as distance learning, vocational training and secondary education for those who pass the Primary School Leaving Examination.

COBET is one of the government's priority programmes for contributing to the achievement of EFA goals. To date, some 466,018 learners have been reached through this programme. Among these, 233,932—including 122,482 (52%) boys and 111,450 (48%) girls—are over-age children enrolled in Cohort I. On the other hand, 232,086 learners are youth enrolled in Cohort II. Of these, 116,081 (47%) are boys and 110,081 (53%) are girls (MOEC 2005b).



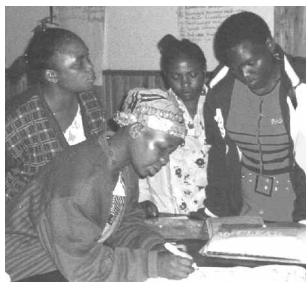
Human resource enhancement and development is crucial for the delivery of quality education to youth and adults. Above is group facilitators who participated in training at Makambako, Iringa Region.

Learners in COBET are being taught by 15,534 facilitators who have received two weeks of training in skills facilitation. Of these, 7,587 are professional teachers who also teach in primary schools, while 7,947 are volunteers. Both type of facilitators are paid a monthly honorarium of about US\$20 as compensation for their work. The money helps to sustain the motivation of the facilitators.



Similar training was conducted at Uyole in the Mbeya Region.

Teaching and learning materials for the COBET programme have been developed by the Tanzania Institute of Education, which also develops materials for formal education institutions providing basic education.



Female facilitators are not left out; they are trained together with their male counterparts.

An evaluation of the results of COBET after three years of implementation has revealed that learners in COBET achieve the same results as their counterparts who study for seven years in the formal primary school system. Up to 2003, for instance, a total of 46 (out of 282 learners) COBET Cohort II-learners from four pilot areas passed the Primary School Leaving Examinations and joined government secondary schools.

To ensure that children are accorded their right to education, the financing of the COBET programme is linked to a sector-wide financing mechanism whereby the government and development partners discuss and agree on the amount of money to be allocated for the different components of the education sector. This system has helped to ensure that adult and non-formal education receive a reasonable amount of funds with which to implement its programmes.

Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE)

The Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE) programme is designed to provide basic education and life skills to adults and youth. The ICBAE model was designed to redress the shortcomings of the previous adult education programmes and is more responsive to the adult learners' needs. The model aims to enable youth and adults to acquire permanent literacy and vocational and life skills in order to improve their living standards. Specifically, it promotes and strengthens the participation of the direct beneficiaries at the grass-roots level with specific attention to existing gender imbalances and

attitudes. It empowers youth and adults to make decisions on what to do, how to do it, why and when to do it for their own benefit.

Development of relevant curricula

With the help of their facilitators, learners themselves develop the ICBAE curricula. This is done at the beginning of the course, when learners discuss with their facilitator the issues they would like to learn about. The MOEC has trained professional leaders of adult education in the country's 114 councils/districts, providing them with the skills needed to train adult education facilitators on curriculum development. The MOEC has also developed a curriculum guide and copies of facilitator manuals to assist the facilitators in developing curricula appropriate and relevant to the target groups' needs and interests, as well as to local conditions. These manuals are on agriculture and micro-economics, health, REFLECT guidelines, simple bookkeeping and socio-political studies.



Facilitators of adult learners undergoing training on curriculum development at Sumbawanga, Rukwa Region.

Income-generating projects are meant to serve as participants' entry points and as necessary ingredients of literacy. Literacy skills training is therefore an integral part of the projects and targets those who have never learned to read and write (Bugeke 1997).

Studies done in the areas where the model is being piloted (Mbunda 1996; Mushi 1998; Swai 1999) have indicated that community members have responded well to the ICBAE programme. The 1997 evaluation showed that illiteracy rate in the pilot areas dropped from 25% when the programme started in 1995 to approximately 12%. The evaluation also indicated that the socio-economic situation of poor communities had improved and that there had been spill-over effects to the beneficiaries, such as the establishment of self-help income-generation projects (including fish ponds, poultry keeping,

piggery, agricultural and gardening projects, environmental conservation, construction of modern houses and rehabilitation).

To ensure its effective implementation, ICBAE is linked with other forms of education, such as distance learning, and also is supported by literacy programmes, such worker education, radio education and rural newspapers, which are often available at Community and Teachers' Resource Centres. Also 1,600 facilitator manuals have been developed, printed and distributed to the ICBAE centres.



An old man from Kiwira Village, Rungwe district in the Mbeya Region, trying very hard to educate the younger generation by means of oral literacy.

Conclusion

The two educational innovations, ICBAE and COBET, have responded to some extent to the problems facing the adult education and non-formal education sub-sector in Tanzania. At the time of writing this chapter, a great deal of energy is being exerted to revamp adult education in the country. The current efforts are linked with the national strategy for poverty reduction. Capacity-building workshops for adult education leaders have been conducted. And a nationwide programme of training for learning centre facilitators has been implemented. The government hopes to have soon re-established the aforementioned programmes throughout the country. If this ambition is to be realised, the participation of other stakeholders—the communities themselves, development partners, NGOs and UN agencies—cannot be overemphasised. Everyone needs to play a part if Tanzania's objectives in this area are to be achieved.

Adult and lifelong learning can take place anywhere and at any time. Anyone can assume the role of facilitator at one time and that of a learner at another. The most important aspect of adult learning is respecting other people's point of views and local knowledge.

According to Mnjagila (2004) one of the challenges for initiatives in adult education is to sustain and maintain the vision that adult education is an instrument of empowerment. At the national level, support for this vision implies recognition of the long and wide scope and nature of adult basic education provision. At the local level, it implies working in partnership with all the agencies or organisations that deal with adults, whether they are the providers of learning or not. The greatest challenge that this new vision faces is in demonstrating the outcomes of the learning, or the difference that adult basic education provision has made to individuals and communities.

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