

Increasing Access to Quality Education for Rural and Marginalised Children in West Africa Impact and Effectiveness of Accelerated Education in Northern Nigeria (Borno State)

I Background

This policy brief aims to synthesize key findings and provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance quality education for vulnerable children and youth in West Africa, particularly within the context of accelerated education programs and girls' empowerment models. The study focuses on assessing the effectiveness, adaptability, and scalability of accelerated education programs and girls' empowerment models in addressing barriers to education and empowering vulnerable children and youth in rural, extreme poverty, and fragile environments.

I Methodology

The Tracer and Effectiveness Study of AEP employed a parallel mixed method approach, with qualitative data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, checklists, and observations, while quantitative data is gathered by administering structured learning assessments to AEP graduates. A total of 3376 AEP graduates were traced and pre-listed, of which 1066 were randomly sampled across 3 Local Government Areas (LGA). CSEA gathered data from Accelerated Education Programs (AEP) beneficiaries who had transitioned to formal education, AEP beneficiaries who had dropped out after transitioning, those who had entered the workforce directly after the AEP, non-AEP students, teachers, parents, and education innovators. The data collection covers various themes, including demographic characteristics, social-emotional learning, empowerment, inclusion, access, participation, retention, completion, transition, learning outcomes, and 'most significant change' stories.

I Key Findings

Overall Effectiveness of Accelerated Education Programs

- AEP equipped the children with adequate foundational literacy and numeracy skills enough for them to transition into and compete well in formal school.
- Apart from foundation literacy and numeracy skills, AEP equipped children in the world of work with practical life skills for daily life and enhanced problem-solving abilities

Condition of learning within the AEP programs in Borno State, Nigeria



• AEP learners observed a better learning situation in the formal school compared to AEP learning centers which sometimes utilize open spaces or under a tree. The formal system provided classrooms with furniture for learners which they found more convenient. However, AEP learners noted a larger class population compared to the AEP. Also, the time flexibility of the AEP classes was noted as a major difference between the formal school and the AEP.

• The facilitation method used in the AEP compared to the formal school is also another area of difference observed by the

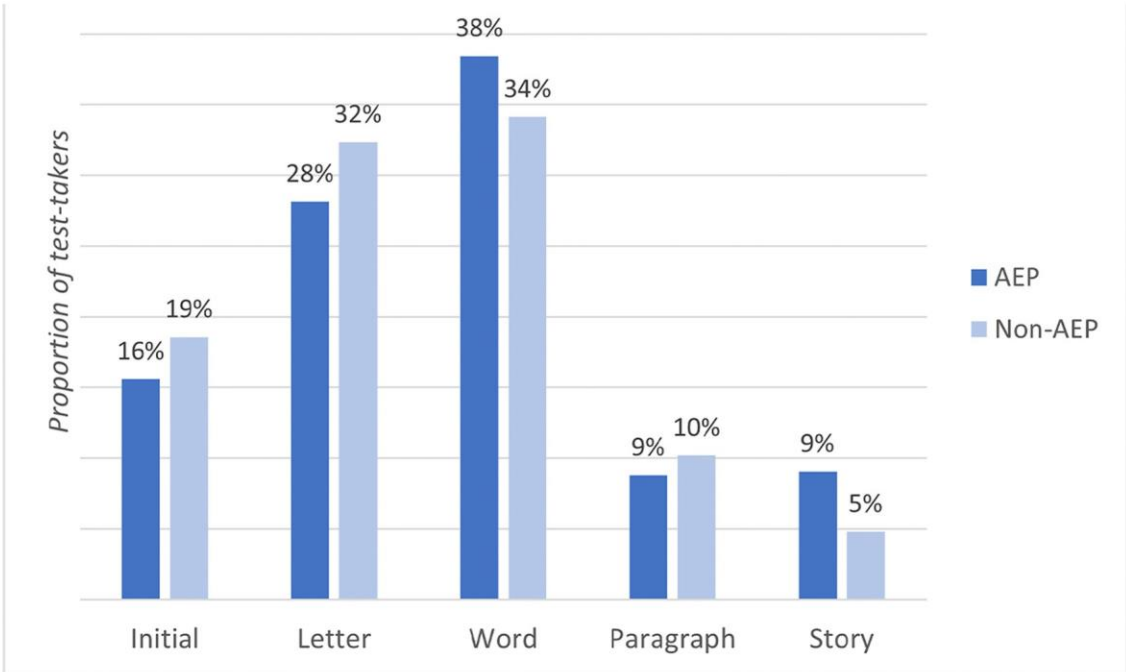
AEP graduates. The facilitation of the AEP programme was preferred to the one in formal school because of the friendly approach, fewer courses taught, and use of both local and English languages. AEP facilitators were also reported to be painstaking in explaining concepts as clearly as possible to the learners.

• Noted also was the difference in the area of teaching-learning materials. This was observed to be available and adequate on the AEP while the formal system lacks it.

Impact 1: AEP on learning outcomes

AEP graduates portray better competence in English literacy compared to their non-AEP counterparts.

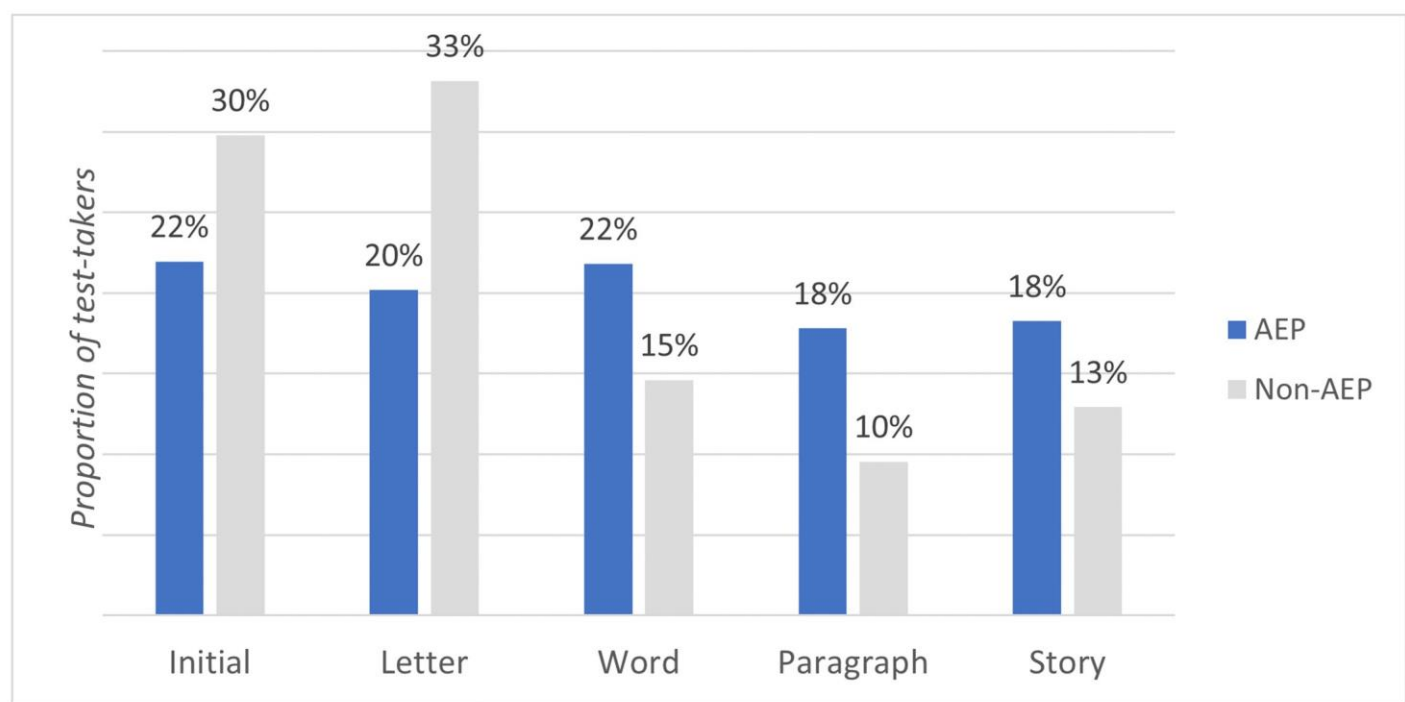
Figure 1: Comparison of English literacy by AEP intervention status



Source: Assessment data, Tracer & Effectiveness study, 2022

Figure 1 shows the English literacy learning outcomes. Most of the test takers demonstrated proficiency at the word level with more AEP graduates demonstrating this than non-AEP graduates. Although more non-AEP learners, 10% demonstrate paragraph reading proficiency than AEP graduates (8%), this difference is not so significant. A significant difference is seen in the proportion of children at the story level proficiency with more AEP graduates, about 9% demonstrating this proficiency level as compared to the non-AEPs, about 4%. Fewer AEP graduates, about 15% than their non-AEP counterparts, about 19% were found to be at the initial level.

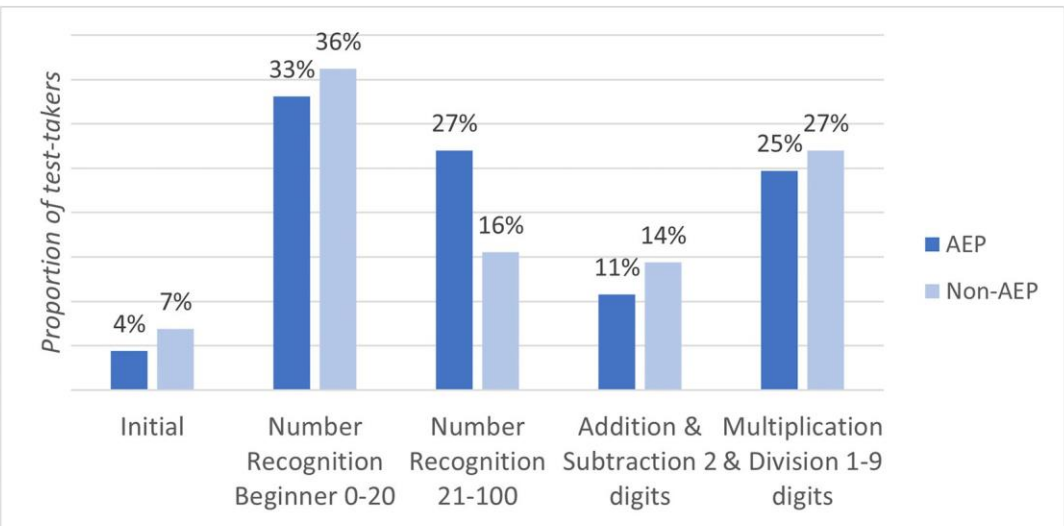
Figure 2: Hausa literacy by AEP intervention status



Source: Assessment data, Tracer & Effectiveness study, 2022

As seen in Figure 2, a higher proportion of AEP graduates demonstrated better competencies in Hausa literacy at the Story (22%), Paragraph (18%) and Word level (18%) compared to their non-AEP counterpart fewer of whom achieved this level of competency. In other words, AEP graduates are better able to read words, paragraphs and stories than their non-AEP counterparts.

Figure 3: Numeracy outcomes by Intervention status



Source: Assessment data, Tracer & Effectiveness study, 2022

This numeracy result is also disaggregated by intervention status. Figure 3 shows the result of this disaggregation. While there is not much difference in proportions in the level of numeracy between AEP and non-AEP groups, a significant difference is observed in number recognition 20 -100. In general, AEP graduates compete well with their non-AEP counterparts in numeracy.

Impact 2: AEP on transition to the world of work

The implementation of AEP has significantly impacted the lives of AEP beneficiaries in the world of work, equipping them with valuable knowledge and skills that have proven beneficial in their transition to the world of work.

Practical skills for daily life: AEP beneficiaries have learned practical skills for personal hygiene and maintaining a clean environment. These skills not only contribute to their overall well-being but also inspire them to strive for higher educational levels and better opportunities in life.

Functional literacy and communication skills: The AEP program has enabled learners to acquire functional literacy skills, allowing them to read, send and receive text messages. This newfound ability has proven to be invaluable in the world of work, where effective communication is vital for various job roles.

Enhanced problem-solving abilities: AEP beneficiaries have developed problem-solving abilities, particularly in rural areas where they often encounter unique challenges. These problem-solving skills are essential for adaptability and resourcefulness in various work settings.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that government should champion the course of AEP in Nigeria to amplify the gains it makes in terms of getting children back to school while providing the necessary facilities and infrastructure for the schools.
- School heads should create an accommodating atmosphere for incoming AEP graduates for them to integrate well and be retained in school.
- Education innovators should support the government with their programming experience in delivering government-led AEP. Communities should continue the collaboration with implementers, the school, and other stakeholders to sustain AEP

Conclusion

The conditions of learning in schools fall below standard. AEP graduates post learning outcomes that compete well with that of their non-AEP counterparts who have joined the school from inception. The AEP graduates in the world of work still maintain the skills they learned on the AEP, both academic and vocational which now prove immensely useful to their work life. However, children who dropped out after AEP still blame it on different kinds of combined demand and supply barriers.