

Creating an Opportunity to Learn through Complementary Models of Education

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The challenge of meeting the goals of Education for All focuses on the fact that conventional approaches to primary schooling have little chance of providing a high proportion of out-of-school and/or hard to reach children with an opportunity to learn. Sixteen years after Jomtien, between 77 and 115 million children remain out of school and the challenges of meeting EFA are well documented. The rising costs of educational inputs, which increased the unit costs of conventional approaches to education, make it difficult to reach the rural poor in resource constrained environments. Teacher recruitment and retention impact the ability of Ministries of Education to staff isolated schools and the schools that do exist are often too far from communities for children to attend. The international donor community is beginning to recognize that without changing how educational opportunities are delivered in many developing countries, the goals of Education for All will not be achieved.

In 2004, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Educational Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2) began investigating community-based schools as a mechanism for providing underserved populations with an opportunity to learn. The team identified nine models that successfully organized schooling in regions least served by the formal education system. These nine models work in support of the formal public system, offering students an opportunity to learn by ensuring that teachers are present in the classrooms, communities are engaged in the learning and governance process; that materials are available to help students learn; and that the school is located within a short distance from where students live. Over time, the models have increased rates of attendance, completion, and learning among the populations they serve.

This paper draws on the findings from the nine case studies and its original synthesis paper of successful complementary education programs in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mali, and Zambia. The findings demonstrate why these programs are able to more effectively organize an opportunity to learn for these underserved through adjustments in school size and location, curriculum and language of instruction, school management and governance arrangements, and teaching staff and instructional support services. Detailed findings from each country as well as the results of the cost-effectiveness research are available in the EQUIP2 Meeting EFA Case Studies series.

Keywords: *Complementary education, access, quality*

Introduction

International research on school effectiveness has demonstrated that inputs such as location of school, in-service training, the provision of teaching and learning materials, and student assessment increase student learning outcomes, particularly in developing countries where schools are deprived of the most rudimentary resources (Lochheed and Levin, 1991; Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991; Pennycuick, 1998; Fuller and Clarke, 1994; and Hanushek, 1995). These inputs ensure that a teacher is present, that they have the materials and support to teach, and that students have the time to learn. It is called, an opportunity to learn.

Opportunity to learn (OTL) is often associated with the creation of equitable conditions within the school or classroom that promotes learning for all students (Porter, 1993). The term also refers to absence of barriers that prevent learning (Mereku, 2005). While the views about what creates an opportunity to learn differ from one educational system to another, and no universally accepted definition of OTL exists, we define it as the criteria for, and the basis of assessing the sufficiency or quality of the resources, practices, and conditions necessary at each level of the education system to provide all students with the opportunity to learn the material in national curriculum (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, and Shin, 1995; Mereku, 2005).

In 2006, The EQUIP2 team of Destefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell completed a nine-case analysis of complementary education models¹ that effectively reach and educate underserved populations in developing countries. The research found that the majority of the models were more cost-effective than government schools in delivering education services and its students achieved higher learning gains through adjustments in school size and location, curriculum and language of instruction, school management and governance arrangements, and teaching staff and instructional support services. This paper argues that the complementary models are able to achieve learning gains more effectively because the programs reduce the high costs of training and teacher salaries, ensure that teachers are present in the classroom, and invest the resources in providing teachers with strong in-service support, a simplified curriculum, and more direct instructional support so students learn.

Overview of Case Studies

Complementary education programs provide an opportunity to learn in areas of a country or to specific populations that are not served by the formal public schools. The following table provides an overview of the programs that were included in the original EQUIP2 study.

¹ Complementary education approaches are defined as models that work in support of the formal public system, offering students an alternative route to achieving the same educational outcomes as students in the Government schools. The programs are designed to feed students into the Government system at various entry points and are large enough to exhibit many of the same characteristics as mainstream schools. However, by using similar (though often reduced) curriculum as the Government schools; providing instruction in the student's native language; and ensuring that the teacher and learning materials are present in the classroom, the models more effectively keep children in school and help them learn.

Table 1: Summary of Complementary Education Case Studies Included in the Research²

Program	Target Population	Level of Education	Enrollment at Peak of Program
Afghanistan: CARE community schools (COPE)	Rural children, especially girls	Complete primary cycle through grade 6 with transfer into government schools throughout	45,513
Afghanistan: IRC home-based schools	Rural children, especially girls	Complete primary cycle through grade 6 with transfer into government schools throughout	14,000
Bangladesh: BRAC primary schools	Rural children	Complete primary cycle to grade 5 in four years (then modified to five)	1,000,000
Egypt: UNICEF community schools	Rural children, especially girls	Complete primary cycle to grade 6	4,700
Ghana: School for Life	Rural children	First three years of primary school, with transfer into government schools at grade four	9,000
Guatemala: PRONADE	Rural children	Complete primary cycle to grade 6	455,000
Honduras: Educatodos education centers	Adults who had not completed primary school	Complete primary to grade 6 in three years, and complete lower secondary to grade 8	117,000
Mali: Save the Children community schools	Rural children	Complete primary cycle to grade 6	50,000
Zambia: community schools	Orphaned and vulnerable children	Complete basic education to grade 7	500,000

How an Opportunity to Learn is Achieved: Lessons from Complementary Education

The thinking behind the opportunity to learn begins with the premise that learning is a function of time and effort (Gillies and Quijada, 2006). Without adequate direct instructional time, no learning is possible. This statement is supported by international research, including Benavot and Amadio as cited in Gillies and Quijada, (2006), Mereku, (2005), and Ysseldyke, J, Thurlow, and Shin H (1995).

The concept of “Opportunity to Learn” is not new. Measures of OTL have been applied in the US to address standards of excellence and accountability for results (Gillies and Quijada, 2006). The rationale for OTL standards stems from a desire to ensure fairness in holding students accountable for meeting high academic standards. “Prior to No Child Left Behind, the Goals 2000 legislation in 1994 sought to hold schools and school systems accountable for student outcomes, through voluntary OTL standards that established criteria to assure that the “resources, practices, and conditions”

² Taken from DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz et. al (2006).

necessary for student learning are available.” (Ysseldyke, J, Thurlow, and Shin H 1995 as cited in Gillies and Quijada, 2006). The standards addressed the following areas:

curricula and materials;

teacher capability;

continuous professional development;

alignment of curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments with content standards

safety and security of the learning environment

non-discriminatory policies, curricula and practice;

Other factors that assure students the fair opportunity to achieve knowledge and skills.

While these standards are appropriate and relevant for all countries, the standards do not capture the key factors that are most immediately relevant for developing countries (Gillies and Quijada, 2006). Gillies and Quijada (2006) suggest that a core of six elements constitute the first levels of an opportunity to learn, including: minimal instructional time, teacher present every day, student present every day, available instructional materials, and a manageable student-teacher ration.

For the purposes of this paper, we drew on the the factors presented by Gillies and Quijada (2006) to examine the extent to which complementary education programs ensure that OTL factors are present to improve student performance. In each of the nine cases reviewed in this study, government, donors and non-governmental actors have been able to work with communities to:

Create schools that are located in the villages where families live so that students can easily enroll and attend regularly. The location of the school also ensures that parents and the community can hold teachers accountable for their presence.

Set up community-based management structures that are able to oversee the day-to-day operations of their schools.

Develop a local-language based curriculum that simplifies and focuses the national curriculum. The programs also developed support materials and instructional strategies that relate to the local/regional context and issues

Identify, recruit and hire teachers from within the community and support those teachers either monetarily or through in-kind contributions.

Provide regular support and ongoing training for teachers and community-based school management committees. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell (2006)

The ability of complementary education programs to create an opportunity to learn not only contributes to increased student learning, but also has important implications for how developing countries can ensure an opportunity to learn for their students. Each of the OTL elements relevant to the case studies are elaborated below.

Location and size of school

Most governments develop their education systems with an eye towards maximizing efficiency in the placement of schools. School mapping exercises often try to pinpoint a standard, usually six grade, rural school in an area that can draw from several villages to ensure enrollment of hundreds of children. The belief is often that if a school is built, students will attend. However, the lesson from

the research on complementary models is that distance to school is a significant barrier to access, especially for girls – a finding that is further supported by the World Bank’s World Access Initiative, which found that when the school was located inside a village in Chad, average enrollment was approximately 55%. However, once the school moved just a kilometer from the village, boys enrollment dropped to 30% and girls enrollment dropped to almost 20%.

The location and size of school made a difference in Guatemala, Northern Ghana, Upper Egypt, Bangladesh, Zambia, Mali, and Afghanistan. Study findings indicated that rural populations under-enroll in regular public schools because children –especially girls– who live more than a kilometer walking distance from school, will simply not attend.³ (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006)

The Egypt case provides an example to illustrate the importance of location. During the mid-1990s, girls’ enrollment in the rural hamlets of Upper Egypt was estimated to be as low as 15%. When asked why their daughters were not enrolled in school, families cited the distance they would have to walk to the nearest school as the primary reason for non-enrollment. The UNICEF community school project was designed to target small hamlets with at least 50 out of school children. The school was located in the hamlet and would enroll a multi-age cohort of students together – limiting class size to 30 students. Specially trained facilitators organized learning activities according to the different levels and ages of the 30 children. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006)

In the Bangladesh BRAC program, villages with at least 25 out of school children are targeted for support (Moore and Chabott, 2005). Each BRAC Primary School (BPS) consists of one class of 25-33⁴ students and one teacher who live in the community. The process of establishing a BPS school when Regional Managers identify an area that is underserved by the government system. A survey is undertaken by the PO that identifies community demand; availability of eligible students and qualified teacher candidates (married persons, preferably female, residing in the community, with at least a 10 years of formal education, disposed to teach on a part-time basis, for a small honorarium); and proximity to a cluster of other villages with BPS (so that the schools can be easily monitored by a nearby team office and teachers do not have to travel long distances to attend refresher courses). Up to 33 children, 70% of them girls, are selected to join the community school, which will be located within 1-2 kilometers of their home. (Chabott and Moore, 2005). The process of setting up a BPS school takes approximately 6 months.

The complementary programs reviewed in the original study focused on re-conceiving schools as village-based institutions. The programs focused on creating smaller schools, which were often designed to recruit and retain cohorts of out of school children and move them through the primary grades. Through the establishment of these smaller schools, the models were able to have smaller class sizes, and place the school in the heart of the community, which allows teachers to better support students to learn. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006)

Language of instruction and curriculum

A second component of opportunity to learn is ensuring that students learn in a language they can speak and understand and that the curriculum delivers focused content. Language of instruction and content of the curriculum matter. Many of the programs examined through our case studies make use

³ For example, research by the World Bank’s Rural Access Initiative in West and Central Africa revealed that enrollment drops off considerably when a child’s distance to school exceeds 1 kilometer.

⁴ Second or third cycle schools, or those located in remote communities, might take less than 30 students.

of local language instruction and a modified or simplified version of the national curriculum as strategies for creating an opportunity to learn (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006). Ghana, Guatemala, Mali and Zambia all use local language to deliver instruction in the early primary grades. The other programs use the regional languages of their countries which are more widely spoken. Designing the complementary programs around use of the local language also enables program staff to use locally recruited teachers. These teachers, who typically have less formal education, can be trained and supported to deliver instruction in a language which they already speak more readily than if they were required to learn the national language. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006)

The use of local language does necessitate the adaptation of curriculum and materials to the local language. Programs in Ghana, Mali and Egypt have not only adapted the materials, but the programs have also been modified to reduce the number of subjects teachers are required to teach and to incorporate relevant subject matter for the local population. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006)

In the Egypt community schools, the curriculum was modified to accommodate a decidedly different view of the learning relationship between teachers and students and to enable multiage teaching. Typical community school classrooms in Upper Egypt focus a significant part of the student day working individually or in small groups on project-based learning. The classrooms are organized into “learning corners”, which are designed with a variety of learning materials – pictures, books, puzzles, games, picture cards, materials from the village, displays of the children’s own work, and learning challenge tasks developed by the facilitators.

In Ghana and Honduras, the curricula are modified to make shorten the primary cycle. The Ghana School for Life covers grades 1-3 in a nine month program, and Educatoros completes grades 1-6 in three years and grades 7-9 in 1.5 years. The Zambian Skills, Participation and Access to Relevant Knowledge (SPARK) project was developed as an alternative curriculum to ensure accelerated learning. The program condenses seven grades of basic education into four years. A similar evolution took place in Mali as community schools as parents pushed the program to link more directly to the national curriculum, so that their children would transition into the public education system to pursue additional education. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006)

Another example of curriculum modification can be found in the case of the home-based schools supported by the International Rescue Committee in Afghanistan. Many Afghan teachers and students have experienced violent conflict and all are now living with the social, economic and political uncertainties of the transition to peace. Research showed that in these environments, school attendance not only assists children to read and write, but it also provides a safe environment where students can learn the attitudes and skills necessary to live peacefully with one another. An important dimension of the home-based schools curriculum is promoting the psychosocial well-being of students and the teaching methods and activities are designed to support this objective.

Teachers, teacher training and support

Teachers are widely viewed as the group that most directly affects student achievement. They help ensure students learn content and control the classroom activities most related to learning (Chapman, Snyder and Burchfield, 1993 as cited in Terway, Pugliese and Moore, 2007). As a result, teacher training is often the most widely used strategy use to improve educational quality based on the

presumption that better trained teachers will lead to increased levels of student learning (Terway, Pugliese, and Moore, 2007).

All of the complementary education programs rely on the premise that every community has individuals capable of teaching primary school and that if provided with initial training, and regular support, they effectively deliver instruction. Community-based teachers have distinct advantages:

They live in the communities where the schools are located;

They know the children and families and are selected by the communities because they are known and trusted;

They are hired directly accountable to community with whom they have pre-existing relationships;

They often recognize their limitations and are more receptive to the training and support offered by the complementary education programs; and

They are willing to work for less compensation, and in some cases are volunteers. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006)

Table 2 below delineates the average level of education, the nature of the teachers' employment, and their official category (i.e. official status as teachers).

To ensure students receive the best education possible, complementary education programs ensure that all teachers, once recruited are supported. Teachers in these programs:

Receive an initial training, usually of a few weeks duration prior to the start of school

Are visited regularly –in many cases weekly– by field staff or by a more senior teacher

Participate in meetings with other teachers to reflect on their practice

Are enrolled in follow up training during the year and/or at the end of the school year

Are provided with direct instructional support on a consistent basis.

Table 2: Complementary Education Program Teachers⁵

Program	Level of Education	Nature of Employment	Official Status
Afghanistan: COPE	grade 12	paid by community	No
Afghanistan: IRC	some secondary	paid by community	No
BRAC	some secondary	paid by community	No
Egypt	some secondary	paid by government	Yes
Ghana	elementary, some secondary	Volunteer (with small stipend)	No

⁵ Adapted from Terway, Pugliese, and Moore, 2007.

Guatemala	Licensed primary and pre-primary teachers	Paid by the ministry	Yes
Honduras	some secondary (usually graduates of <i>Educadores</i>)	Volunteer (with some compensation)	No
Mali	elementary, some secondary	Paid by community (paid by government during a few year period)	No
Zambia	some secondary	Volunteer (with some in-kind compensation)	No

The following examples demonstrate the type and quality of the support provided to teachers in the complementary education models.

Facilitators in the Egypt community schools participate in a series of daily meetings with the teachers and weekly meetings with the community school supervisors from the district. The meetings allow teachers to focus and discuss classroom practice and exchange ideas for to help them improve the delivery of instruction. Every two weeks, the facilitators in each school meet with the local school committee to provide them with regular feedback from the parents and community regarding their work, and to discuss how to address any challenges or issues come to fore. The community school program also provides school facilitators and teachers refresher training every other year. Targeted supervision also helps ensure the quality and continuous improvement of instruction. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006; and Terway, Pugliese, and Moore, 2007)

In the Afghanistan International Rescue Committee (IRC) home-based schools, regular, in-service training is an important component to ensuring teachers provide students with quality instruction. Teachers participate in three training workshops, totalling approximately 13 days a every year. Since many home-based teachers are isolated and do not have regular opportunities to share experience with their colleagues (especially women), IRC initiated monthly meetings for teachers as part of the regular school supervision program. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006); and Terway, Pugliese, and Moore, 2007). The meetings allowed teachers to come together and share their experiences and learn from each other in ways that reflected in their instruction.

Facilitators in both the Honduras *Educadores* and Ghana SfL programs also invest in strong instructional supervision. In Honduras, support and leadership comes from government promoters in place of a principal or head teacher (Moore, 2006). Supervisors in Ghana visit every SfL weekly and provide professional guidance to the facilitators (Hartwell, 2006).

Complementary education programs recruit less qualified teachers who often have lower levels of education so, it is tempting to dismiss the education offered in these community-based schools as inferior in quality (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006). However, results from the cost-effectiveness analysis (see DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006) showed that these schools are able to produce educational outcomes equal to or better than government schools.

Direct Instructional Time

Research has found that the more time students are engaging in learning activities, the more they learn, even when teaching is weak (Karweit, 1982). Direct instructional time is related to the number

of instructional days and hours per year as well as the allocation of instructional time within each class period (Terway, Pugliese, and Moore, 2007). When teachers spend more time on learning activities and less time on classroom management and discipline, learning increases.

Table 3 shows that the complementary models do not necessarily have a longer school year or days. In fact, the data showed that in most cases, complementary schools follow the same regulations as government schools regarding the number of days of schooling per year (Terway, Pugliese, and Moore, 2007). However, evidence from the programs suggest that within each school day, students in the complementary schools spent more time in direct instruction and learning activities – due in part to less absenteeism from both the student and teacher. For example, BRAC student had a 96 percent student attendance rate in 2001 compared to a 61 percent attendance rate in government schools (Chabbott and Moore, 2006) and spent approximately 4,046 hours of instructional time during the primary cycle. Other factors such as the availability of instructional materials and a more flexible that “fit” into the daily lives of the students also contribute to the increased time on task.

In Ghana, the schedule is adjusted so that students can attend classes in the afternoons, six days a week and the schedule is determined by the local governance committee (Hartwell, 2004). The Educadodos program in Honduras, ensures that students receive 10 hours of instruction per week, but the day and time is decided in each community based on the needs of students and facilitators. For the classes that are held in the workplace, work schedules also influence when classes are held for students. While time-use is an issue more research and observation is needed, it seems likely that the better results may be due to an increased focus on learning tasks during the school day. (Terway, Pugliese, and Moore, 2007)

Table 3: Comparison of Direct Instructional Time in Government Schools and Complementary Education program across Five Countries

Direct Instructional Time⁶	Government Schools	Complementary Schools
Honduras	200 days a year with 175 teaching days. In 1992, in rural areas students missed about 30 days of class, and teachers missed 15 days	10 hours per week.
Ghana	197 days a year, 4.2 hours a day = 872 hours a year. But observation shows total of 49 actual days of instruction = 206 hours a year	9 months, 5 days a week. 2.5 hours a day = Approximately 450 hours a year.
Egypt	880 hours of instruction	6 hours a day, 5 days a week = (1080 hours if they operate for 9 months)
Afghanistan	9 months with 3-3.5 hours a day, 5 days a week = (540-630 hours)	9 months with 3.25 hours a day 6 days a week (702 hours)
Bangladesh	Average 4,046 contact hours per primary cycle. Teacher absenteeism is a major problem.	Average 4,094 contact hours per primary cycle. Very little teacher absenteeism and only 2 percent dropout rate. Student attendance is higher than public schools.

⁶ Adapted from Terway, Pugliese and Moore, 2006.

Governance and decision-making

For years governments have struggled with how to mandate, entice or facilitate increased community participation in public schools. Many countries require schools to have parent associations or insist that communities contribute to the construction of a government school. The complementary education programs reviewed in this have successfully discovered how to enlist community support for and establish their own schools. The local management and ownership of communities further facilitates these programs in creating an opportunity to learn for their students.

Through the work of local and international NGOs, communities are provided the necessary guidance to establish a school (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, et. al). Together, communities and NGOs establish specific criteria for developing the local program such as,

The community has to set up a management committee;

The community has to participate in an exercise to identify likely students and potential teachers; and

The community has to offer a place where the school can meet, or contribute to the construction of a new building. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, et. al)

NGOs also provide training and support to the school management committees in setting up systems for enrolling students, reaching decisions about when school should meet, monitoring student and teacher attendance, determining fees or in-kind contributions to generate resources to pay teachers and provide other resources (DeStefano, Moore, and Balwanz, 2006). Not all community-based management committees function well, but complementary programs have shown that with ongoing support and training, communities can be helped to set up effective school-based decision-making (DeStefano, Moore, and Balwanz, 2006).

In Mali, Save the Children or one of its partner local NGOs would identify villages that did not have public schools and that expressed an interest in starting a community school. The village leaders were asked to designate a five-member school management committee, which was required to compile a list of children to enroll, set and collect the school fees, identify and recruit teacher candidates, and enroll an equal number of boys and girls. One of the NGOs would then provide training for the school management committee and support the processes of teacher and student identification, as well as facilitate the formal relationship between the community school and the local education authority. The community school would become official when it submitted a declaration of opening to the local authorities, following guidelines developed jointly by NGOs and the Ministry of Education. (DeStefano, Moore, and Balwanz, 2006).

In Guatemala, the government relies on local education committees called COEDUCs to organize and operate schools. A department within the Ministry of Education distributes a per pupil allocation to the local committee that handles all school operations. A study conducted in 2001-2002 of 330 PRONADE schools found that the administrative structure of PRONADE was one of the most important features in increasing parental involvement in school management and directly influencing increased enrollment and retention in the schools, when compared to the rural public schools. (DeStefano, Moore, and Balwanz, 2006).

The Impact on Student Learning

This paper is premised on the idea that complementary education programs more effectively organize an opportunity to learn for the students they serve. The Table 4 presents the learning outcomes data that students are completing and learning at high rates than their government school counterparts.

In Honduras, a study conducted in October and November, 2001 by university researchers measured student learning in the *Educadores* pilot centers, expansion centers, and in the government school system. A pre-test was applied to students in the grade 7 pilot centers at the beginning of the year, and post tests were applied to students in the pilot centers, expansion centers, and government schools. Results from the indicated that 67 percent of grade 7 participants in *Educadores* achieved full mastery of the Spanish language competencies corresponding to grade 4 competencies; 46 percent achieved mastery of grade 6 competencies; and 22 percent achieved full mastery of the skills associated with grade 7. In mathematics, the results were slightly lower: 53 percent of students in the pilot centers achieved full mastery of the grade 4 competencies (Moore, 2006). When *Educadores* students and their government school counterparts were compared at the basic competency level, *Educadores* students performed slightly better – 63% reaching a basic competency compared to 62% in the government schools.

In Ghana, there is no means of directly comparing learning of School for Life students with students in public schools, since there is no standardized national test at Grade 3 (Hartwell, 2004). However, the Criterion Referenced Test (CRT), given to a 10 percent national sample of students at grade 6 each year, provides a benchmark of learning performance in primary schools in language and mathematics. On that test only 8.7 percent of the 6th grade students achieved minimum competency level in English Language. Although the CRT is not a test of literacy, the results imply that as many as 90 percent of the students in Grade 6 do not perform at the minimum level of reading (in English). This result is in contrast to the 81 percent of the School for Life pupils in grade 3 who are able to read (in their own language) with comprehension (Hartwell, 2006). Additionally, 66 percent of Sfl grade 3 students transition into the government system to initiated grade 4. (Hartwell, 2004; Terway, Pugliese, and Moore, 2007)

Table 4: Completion and Learning: A Comparison of Complementary models and Government Schools in Nine Countries⁷

Program	Completion	Learning
Afghanistan: COPE ⁸	COPE: 50% Public: 32%	% passing end of year COPE: 94% Gov't: na
Afghanistan: IRC	IRC: 68% Public: 32%	% passing end of year IRC: 99% Gov't: na
Bangladesh	BRAC: 94% Public: 67%	% passing basic competencies BRAC: 70% Gov't: 27%
Egypt	CS: 92% Public: 90%	% passing 5 th grade exam CS: 94% Gov't: 73%

⁷ Table adapted from DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006

⁸ In both programs in Afghanistan data are not available for regular public schools. The end of year exams reported for the complementary programs are teacher administered tests. While these are not good objective measures of student performance, they do provide some indication of how students are doing in those schools.

Ghana ⁹	SFL: 91% Public: 59%	% meeting minimum standards SFL: 81% Gov't: na
Guatemala	PRONADE: 98% Public: 62%	NA
Honduras ¹⁰	Educados: 61% Public: 68%	% passing basic competency Educados: 63% Gov't: 62%
Mali	CS: 67% Public: 56%	% passing CEP exam CS: 51% Gov't: 43%
Zambia ¹¹	CS: 72% Public: 72%	% meeting minimum standard CS: 40% Gov't: 35%

In 1992, BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division developed the Assessment of Basic Competencies (ABC) tool, to rapidly assess basic literacy and numeracy.¹² The ABC measures general knowledge competencies, but not necessarily those in the official primary school curriculum. The results show that when this test was repeated in 1999, BRAC primary school students performed better in all categories (70 percent vs. 27 percent on average) (Chabbott and Moore, 2006).

Policy Implications

While some of the complementary education programs included in this study exhibit educational outcomes that meet or exceed those obtained in regular public schools in each of their respective countries, none of the programs would be held up as examples of educational excellence (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006). These programs simply assure a minimum standard of quality to populations who would otherwise be poorly served or, not served at all. A longer-term consideration has to be how the quality of these schools can be improved over time – and how that quality is measured. (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, and Hartwell, 2006). The following are some long-term implications of community-based approaches to organizing and funding primary schools.

First, the government's approach to planning for growth in provision of services should explicitly include formal arrangements for working with non-governmental actors and communities to establish primary schools. To better serve remote populations, government policy should accommodate small schools, within limited catchments or communities as a way to ensure at least access to lower primary for otherwise underserved populations. Cases such as Guatemala, Honduras, and the Egypt Community schools provide solid examples of how government policy and funding have supported smaller scale, community-based schools.

Second, governments should promote greater flexibility in the organization of the school day and calendar so that in the most basic way the opportunity to learn – school is open and teachers and students are present – can be increased. Community-based approaches rely on local decision-makers

⁹ For Ghana, data concern grades 1-3.

¹⁰ For Honduras, the completion data are for grades 1-6, learning data are for grades 7-9.

¹¹ In Zambia, a national completion rate of 72% is reported, which includes both government and community schools. Since it was not possible to disaggregate the contributions of government and community schools, 72% is used for both.

¹² The "competencies" referred to in the ABC are functional literacy, numeracy and life skills. These should not be confused with the 53 much more complex competencies incorporated in the official curriculum introduced in GPS in 1992. See Section 3.2.1 "Curriculum" for a fuller discussion of the 53 competencies.

to determine what school schedule best meets the needs of the community's students and families, thereby increasing the likelihood that school will be open when its supposed to be, and teachers and students will be present. Central authorities can still establish basic parameters (e.g. the minimum number of hours/days of school) but allow local authorities in consultation with communities to determine how best to ensure that school is actually open the required number of days or hours.

Third, focus instruction in the lower primary grades more explicitly on literacy acquisition and basic math skills, with instruction in local language. Too many of the days and hours of school are squandered because instruction does not focus on the acquisition of literacy. More hours need to be devoted to the fundamentals of learning to read, which children do best in a language that they, their teachers and their community actually speaks. The requirement to speak the local language could increase the likelihood that teachers will need to be recruited locally. This implies a decentralized approach to teacher management and, more importantly, a robust system of ongoing support and development. The complementary models in this study demonstrate that field-based NGOs are able to provide regular support to schools and communities in ways that government systems often fail to. Therefore, systems for providing local communities the support they need to assure school quality and manage teachers should draw on the capacities of field-based NGOs where possible.

Governments need to consider how to develop policies that enable NGOs or other non-state actors to collaborate with local education authorities to ensure regular provision of school support services.

Those services should be targeted to instruction -- highest priority to literacy acquisition -- and should make use of something like OTL to monitor school operations.

Finally, sector financing and aid strategies (SWAPs, FTI, etc) should include provisions for funneling budgetary resources to NGOs and communities to set up and support primary schools. Programs such as the Punjab Education Foundation, PRONADE, or grants in aid to non-state schools (as in India or formerly in Africa) should be considered as ways to make resources available to non-state providers with a system of accountability for school quality. Opportunity to Learn indicators could provide a basis for measuring school quality and for holding different actors accountable for more than just enrollment numbers and basic inputs.

Ensuring an opportunity to learn for underserved populations – or any student population cannot be realized unless education systems are better able to meet the OTL standards discussed in this paper. Models like those analyzed here show how education can better organize schooling, and show how different approaches to school organization can lead to greater effectiveness – in terms of the amount of completion and learning the schools are able to generate. Any attempt to more broadly promote or adopt complementary programs needs to consider how best to assure these (and any other) conditions will increase the likelihood of success of the program. It is not enough to try and simply replicate the idea of community-based schools. Governments and their partners must invest the financial and institutional resources necessary to ensure that the conditions most favorable to success of those schools can be assembled and sustained. This implies drawing capacity from where it can best be found – asking government institutions to do what they do well, relying on NGO partners to do what they do best, allowing communities to assume responsibility for what they can best manage, and measure the OTL using the standards presented in this paper.

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