Title: Alternative Education and Return Pathways for Out-of-School Youth in sub-Saharan Africa
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1. Out-of-school youth and concepts

> *'Education is not a way to escape poverty, it is a way of fighting it'* - Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the late president of the Republic of Tanzania.

Africa's share of the global youth population is expected to increase from one-fifth in 2012 to one-third by 2050 (AfDB, 2016), a phenomenon described by demographers as 'youth bulge'. This youthful population is critical for sustainable development. According to Natama (2014), slightly over 70% of individuals in Africa living on less than $1.25 a day are young persons aged 15 – 24 years. This is an indication of the vulnerability facing young people in the current global social and economic dispensation. Providing education and training to the youth is one way to mitigate this vulnerability. In 2014, the out-of-school youth (OOSY) in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) made up 35% of the world's out-of-school children and youth (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2017; The World Bank Group, 2018). There were 25.7 million out-of-school adolescents of lower secondary school age, and 34.4 million of upper secondary school age in SSA (UIS, 2017). This translates to out-of-school rates of 34% for the 12-14 years age group, and 58% for the 15-17 years age group, with 3 in every 5 girls in SSA being out-of-school. There are three categories of out-of-school youth: those who have never attended school; those who have dropped out before completion of at least 12 years of schooling; and, those who are out-of-school after completing secondary school (Jimenez, Kiso, & Ridao-Cano, 2007). OOSY are more likely to come from poorer households with fewer working or educated adults, live in rural areas and female (Inoue et al., 2015). In this paper, we synthesize theoretical and empirical information on: (i) Selected status of OOSY and reasons for being out-of-school; (ii) Existing models for alternative provision of education and training for OOSY; and, (iii) Pathways for out-of-school youth to return to formal education - especially lower and upper secondary.

2. Data and research methods

The study is a desk review conducted in 2018 and relied on secondary data, to organize and synthesize available information on OOSY. Academic databases and grey literature were accessed to find information on as many OOSY models as possible. The literature was synthesized into key features of OOSY. Overall, the search focused mainly on seven online databases known to provide access to quality education materials. Keywords used in the search included "alternative education", "alternative approaches to education", "out-of-school youth", "second chance education models", and "pathways to learning". A total of 190 articles that met the set criteria were retrieved and 66 of these were included in the review. Among the inclusion criteria for retrieved reviews were the date of publication (less than 15 years to be included), area of focus (out-of-school children and youth of lower and upper secondary school age), as well as the region (sub-Saharan Africa). The paper also utilized secondary data analysis of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) for three phases – namely IV, V and VI – from 23 SSA countries was used.

3. Findings

3.1 Status of OOSY in SSA

(a)   *Who are they and where are they?:* Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali have the highest proportion of OOSY (more than 60%), while Uganda, Liberia and Nigeria have the lowest proportion, with less than 40% (UIS and GEMR, 2016). In terms of typologies, low-income countries in Francophone Africa, and countries with a history of conflict tend to have a higher proportion of youth who have never attended, or who have dropped out of school than countries in the lower- and upper-middle income brackets, in Anglophone and Lusophone Africa, and those without a history of conflict (Inoue et al., 2015).

(b)   *Magnitude:* Using the household schedule data from DHS, we constructed a variable to capture OOSY aged between 15 and 24 years, currently not enrolled in school, and the highest education attained as incomplete secondary education and below. The data are weighted and this provides an opportunity to estimate the country and regional prevalence of OOSY. Table 1 presents the proportion of youth who were out-of-school at various phases of the DSS data collection. Overall, the proportion of OOSY increases with age.

(c)

Table 1: Proportion of OOSY by selected background characteristics

Variable and DHS Phase		Age Group (years)		
		15-17	18-20	21-24
1997-2003	**Phase IV**			
	Overall	0.51	0.72	0.81
Gender	Male	0.45	0.63	0.75
	Female	0.57	0.79	0.86
Residence	Urban	0.38	0.57	0.66
	Rural	0.56	0.78	0.88
2003-2008	**Phase V**			
	Overall	0.35	0.58	0.71
Gender	Male	0.30	0.48	0.62
	Female	0.39	0.68	0.78
Residence	Urban	0.26	0.45	0.56
	Rural	0.39	0.65	0.80
2008-2014	**Phase VI**			
	Overall	0.34	0.58	0.68
Gender	Male	0.31	0.48	0.60
	Female	0.37	0.65	0.74
Residence	Urban	0.23	0.42	0.51
	Rural	0.40	0.67	0.79

Data Source: Various DHS data sets, 1997-2014.

(d)   *Education attainment of OOSY:* Figure 1 shows progress in terms of the education attainment of the OOSY. For instance, those with no education significantly reduced from 43% in phase IV to about 31% in phase VI. At the same time, the proportion with incomplete secondary education significantly increased by 11 percentage points.
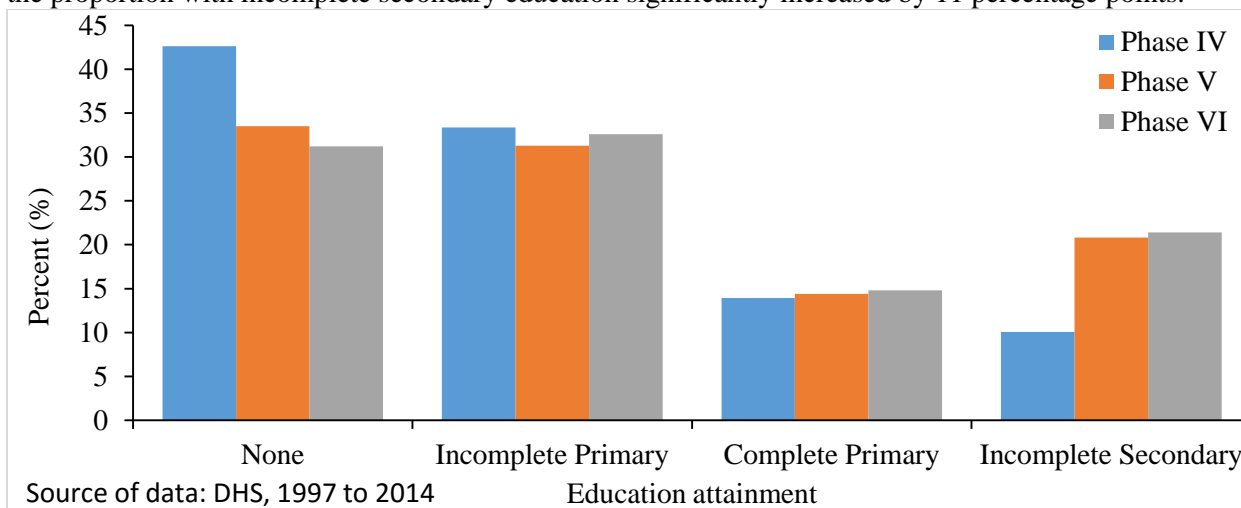

Source of data: DHS, 1997 to 2014

**Figure 1: Education Attainment of OOSY over time**

From Table 2, a large proportion of those aged between 15 and 17 years have no education in comparison to those aged between 21 and 24. This is an important statistic, as it is an indication that with time, some of the youth do eventually rejoin school or training.

Table 2: Education attainment of the OOSY by age group and DHS phase

Phase/age	No education	Incomplete Primary	Complete Primary	Incomplete Secondary
Phase IV				
15-17	0.51	0.33	0.11	0.04
18-20	0.43	0.33	0.14	0.09
21-24	0.36	0.33	0.16	0.14
Phase V				
15-17	0.43	0.33	0.14	0.10
18-20	0.35	0.30	0.14	0.20
21-24	0.27	0.31	0.15	0.26
Phase VI				
15-17	0.39	0.36	0.14	0.11
18-20	0.32	0.32	0.15	0.21
21-24	0.27	0.31	0.15	0.27

Data Source: DHS, 1997 to 2014

(e)   *Differences in needs of OOSY by gender:* Overall, the differentials (females minus males) are significant and exist across the age groups and over time. In 2000, 54% of the 378 million out-of-school children globally, were adolescents and female youth (UNESCO, 2018). Since the year 2000, the situation has improved such that the female share of the global out-of-school population reduced to 50% by 2016. While the principle of equality in education is implemented through legal and policy frameworks alongside initiatives in different jurisdictions, in SSA, levels of achievement vary across the countries, and in most cases fall short of the goal with a major bias against girls.
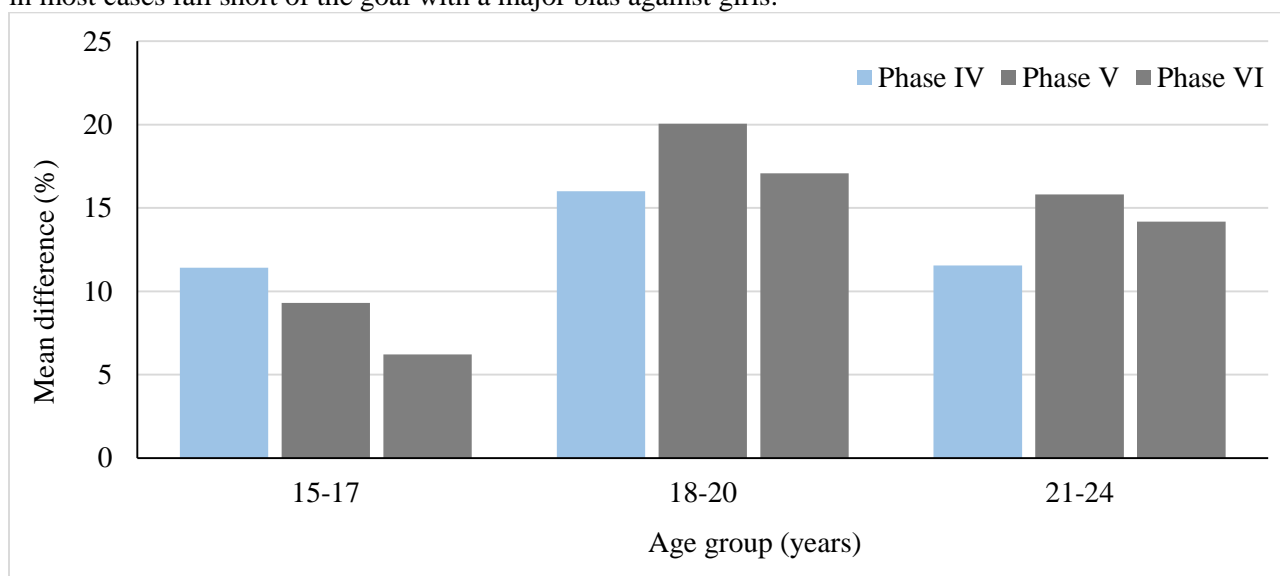
Data Source: DHS, 1997 to 2014
Figure 2: Mean gender differences in the proportion of OOSY

(f) *Reasons for not being in school*
Macro-level factors - factors at the country level include: the adequacy and equity in the allocation of resources to the education sector; population growth, and existing policy and legislation frameworks on education; lack of sufficient, adaptable and flexible systems of education especially for marginalized populations such as those who live in remote, rural and hard-to reach areas; and, lack of tailored education opportunities particularly for dropouts, girls and children with disabilities.

Micro-level factors - factors at the individual or household level include: Interest in school; age - over-age children are more likely to drop out; sex and gender-related issues such as early marriages and menstruation management, and, access to schooling; cost of schooling and low quality of education which determine access at micro-level; socio-economic status - where

households may face economic barriers with regards to ability to pay school fees, as well as the 'hidden costs' of education and opportunity costs of sending their children to school; education level of parents; number of school-going age siblings; household place of residence as well as other factors such as food security and early childhood development; and, issues linked to religious beliefs are part of the challenges affecting education for OOSY.

3.2. Existing models for alternative provision of education and training for OOSY
(a) General characterization of non-formal OOSY programs in West and Central Africa
An analysis of the models of non-formal education programs for OOSY in West and Central Africa (WCA[1]) reveals several approaches. These include: (i) substituting for lack of formal schools; (ii) targeting disadvantaged and vulnerable youth; (iii) providing education and training to disabled children and youth; and, (iv) targeting of illiterate young adults aged over 15 with literacy programs.

Eastern Africa
In SSA, the need for alternative education programs in each country are usually initiated to achieve the education rights of out-of-school youth (Baxter & Bethke, 2009). Malawi, for instance, acknowledged the need for alternative approaches to basic education in order to cater for OOSY by introducing the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) program. The CBE program was initially promoted and supported significantly by donor agencies, but it has since been fully integrated into the country's current National Education Sector Plan (NESP). Alternative education programs take different forms in different countries, but they can be generally classified into the following three broad categories:
  i. Bridging programs
  ii. Complementary education programs (CEP)
  iii. Non-formal education (NFE) programs

3.3 Pathways for out-of-school youth to return to formal education
The re-entry programs enable individuals to complete general primary or secondary education, either by substituting for formal education or by offering "bridges" to return to the formal education system (Mattero 2010). The two principal types of second-chance programs **mainly** found in the Eastern and Southern Africa region are: (i) Accelerated learning programs (ALPs) or catch-up programs; and, (ii) Equivalency education programs.

(b) Existing education and training models in Southern Africa for OOSY
The second chance OOSY programs play a vital role in providing secondary education to youths in the Southern Africa region. Literature shows that the number of OOSY being reached through the second chance education model is steadily increasing. In 2011, such education models had enrolled a total of 12,879 youths spread in 64 schools in Malawi (MoEST, 2011), but since then the number of schools have increased to 323 by 2016 (MoEST, 2016). Unfortunately, the number of OOSY enrolled in the ODSS is not available, but the increase in number of schools suggests a large number of OOSY enrolled. In 2012, similar schools in Zimbabwe enrolled 12,226 youths representing 11.4% of youths in non-formal education (African Union, 2013).

5. Way forward and recommendations for improving the status of OOSY
To harness Africa's population for sustainable development and achievement of SDG4, there is need for a systematic integration of different models of alternative provision of education and training for OOSY into the mainstream education and training systems. This could be done through: (i) Engaging with African policy-makers on their understanding of the contribution that OOSY programs on alternative education and training, and re-entry to formal education are making in reaching those that have been left out or dropped out from the formal education and training processes; (ii) At the technical level, there is a need to have a much better understanding of the critical success factors within OOSY programs for their promotion and utilization in formal education and training; (iii) There is a need to map out the categories of youth with their specific needs as well as the non-state actors involved in educational and training activities to support them; and, (iv) Further research, such as longitudinal studies and robust impact evaluations on OOSY programs, including cost-effectiveness, are needed to determine the impact of different models of OOSY programs on individuals, the community and economy.

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[1] Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

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