AEWG at CIES 2019: Talking evidence and tools

By: Kayla Boisvert, May, 2019

At the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) 2019 Annual Conference in San Francisco, representatives of the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) and partners working in Accelerated Education (AE) presented evidence on the impact of Accelerated Education programmes (AEPs) and reflected on the use of the AEWG tools to support policymakers and practitioners globally.

The AEWG and partners collaborated on two panels:

1. **Building the Evidence Base for Accelerated Education**

   Chaired by Kayla Boisvert of USAID’s Education in Crisis and Conflict Network (ECCN), AEWG partners presented on various evaluation and research studies that examine the effectiveness of AE. This panel aligns with the first broad objective identified in the AEWG’s Learning Agenda, as well as the AEWG’s third strategic focus for 2019 to build the evidence base for AE and begins to fill the gap in knowledge about the effectiveness of AE.

   - **Jessica Oddy** from Save the Children UK, presented findings from their AEP research study (published in December 2018), which explores the perspectives of children, families, teachers and wider educational stakeholders regarding what supports or hinders education transition along their displacement journey. The findings from the children’s workshops enabled the team to gain a rich understanding of the everyday lived experiences of children and young people. Please see the report and executive summary [here](#).
   
   - **Jessica Lowden** from Geneva Global, presented on applied research, focusing on the execution of their flagship education project, Speed School, in Ethiopia and Uganda. The Speed school model accelerates the first three grades of primary school into 10 months. She discussed findings from a six-year longitudinal quasi-experimental study that found that Speed School students attended school more regularly, were more likely to stay enrolled, achieved higher results on literacy and numeracy tests, and had higher educational aspirations than their peers in the formal schools. Please see the full report from the study [here](#).

   - Romain Cardon from Plan International in Burkina Faso, shared good practices and lessons learned, from their AEP, PASS+, including the importance of AE being a legitimate, credible education option for most at risk OOSC, and emphasizing gender equity and alignment with the
national education system. He noted the steps the PASS+ project has taken to foster sustainability and alignment with national education systems at multiple levels, from local to national, and contributing to a successful regional scale-up.

- **Anne Breivik** from Strømme Foundation, presented on a recent Norad-funded impact evaluation of Strømme Foundation’s Speed School programme in West Africa. The evaluation concludes that the programme provides an efficient and cost-effective way to bring out-of-school children back into education. 90% of children enrolled in the period 2014-2017, completed the course, of which 48% were girls. The evaluation also found that the programme provided high value for money, at an average cost per enrolled child of 132 US dollars over a 10-month period. Please find the full evaluation report [here](#).

*Sabrina Hervey* from Educate A Child, a global programme of the Education Above All foundation concluded the presentations. Sabrina provided incisive comments and questions about the importance of building the evidence base for AE, the need for participation of beneficiaries in research and evaluation, gender-sensitive programming and examining gender equity through evidence, and the need for additional studies including exploring value for money.

The panel presentations contribute to the growing evidence base on AE and suggest important future directions to understand the efficacy of AEPs globally. The AEWG and partners continue to build this evidence base, recognizing the need for a greater understanding of what works and why to meet the needs of over-age, out-of-school children and youth.

2. **Principles in Action! Roundtable**

The second session was a roundtable discussion, chaired by **Ash Hartwell** of USAID’s Education in Crisis and Conflict Network. AEWG members and partners presented various ways the AEWG principles and tools have been used globally.

- **Caroline Keenan** from War Child Canada, discussed how stakeholders developed national AE guidelines based on the AEWG 10 Principles for Effective Practice to support harmonization of AEPs across implementers in Uganda. She also explained the process of developing a lower secondary AEP that is aligned with the Ministry strategy in Uganda, collaborating with community members to identify AE centre sites and students and developing and piloting the curriculum. (See summary paper below)

- **Kayla Boisvert** from the Education in Crisis and Conflict Network, presented on work she conducted with USAID Leer y Aprender and the Ministry of Education in Guatemala using the AEWG 10 Principles to enhance provision of alternative education in Guatemala. Her presentation reflected on the process of supporting the development of curriculum, learning materials, placement tests, teacher training, and research and evaluation. She discussed some of the successes and challenges of contextualizing the Principles in the Guatemalan context. (See summary paper below)

- **Claire Stiglmeier, Lauren Gerken, and Alison Doyle** from Teachers College Columbia (TCC) University, presented the development of a much-needed teacher training pack for AE. They
discussed the importance of the collaborative process the AEWG undertook in developing the teacher training materials that were initially drafted by TCC and the AEWG; introduced the content of the training pack, and discussed how it can be adapted to meet the context-specific needs of learners and teachers. The AEWG teacher training pack will be piloted in 2019. (See summary paper below)

- **Mona Younes** presented work she has done with the Carey Institute, describing an online introductory training to AE based on the AEWG 10 Principles. She reviewed the process of offering the training online to global audiences and suggested implications for future trainings using ICT. (See summary paper below)

Ash Hartwell then facilitated a group discussion reflecting on the issues related to teacher training for AE, the practical implications of secondary AE, and the critical importance of advocacy and policy-level partnership and collaboration. Participants were highly engaged in this roundtable, which highlighted some of the key issues faced by those implementing AE and connected those working in AE to facilitate ongoing dialogue about the use and contextualization of the AEWG tools in a variety of contexts.

**Who are the Accelerated Education Working Group?**

The [Accelerated Education Working Group](#) is led by UNHCR, with representatives from education partners supporting and/or funding AEPs. The AEWG aims to improve the quality of AE through developing guidance and tools to support a more harmonised, standardised approach to AE. Since inception, the AEWG has also committed to engaging and advocating for AE within national policy, donor strategies, and programmatic responses to address the issue of out of school, over-aged learners. The AEWG defines Accelerated Education as:

> “a flexible, age-appropriate programme, run in an accelerated timeframe, which aims to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and youth. This may include those who missed out on or had their education interrupted due to poverty, marginalization, conflict and crisis. The goal of Accelerated Education Programmes is to provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education using effective teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity.”

To date, significant investment and efforts have been made by the AEWG in developing and disseminating tools and guidance. These include the foundational [10 Principles for Effective Practice for Accelerated Education](#), which aim to clarify the essential components of an effective AEP, an accompanying [Guide to the Accelerated Education Principles](#), an ambitious [Learning Agenda](#), as well as other tools to support policymakers and practitioners, such as a programme checklist, teacher professional development package (under development), and a MEAL framework (under development). These are all available in four languages on the [INEE site](#).

**Future Directions of the AEWG**
In addition to aggregating evidence for the effectiveness of AE and disseminating and supporting the use of the tools and guidance, the AEWG is focusing on three key actions:

1. **Policy and Advocacy**: In 2019 to 2020, the AEWG is stepping up its efforts to influence policy at the global and national levels. This includes conducting workshops, developing a policy paper, and collaborating with governments to increase understanding of and capacity for AE.

2. **Teacher Professional Development**: In 2018, the AEWG drafted a week-long teacher professional development course for Accelerated Education teachers. This course is being revised and finalized and will be piloted through 2019 and into 2020.

3. **MEAL Framework**: In 2018 and early 2019, the AEWG drafted a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning framework for AE which can be adapted by organizations. The MEAL Framework is being finalized and will be piloted through 2019 and into 2020.

For more information about the work of the AEWG please see the INEE site [here](https://www.inee.org). You can also keep up to date on our AEWG twitter account: [https://twitter.com/AEWG_News](https://twitter.com/AEWG_News).

For more information, please contact the AEWG Chair, **Martha Hewison** at [hewison@unhcr.org](mailto:hewison@unhcr.org).
Development of National Guidelines for Accelerated Education in Uganda

Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) have been used to increase access to education for both overage out-of-school national and refugee children and adolescents in Uganda since the mid-1990’s. The 2008 Education Act 2008 recognises the role of Accelerated Education (AE) and it has also been included in the recently-approved Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda. Despite its long history there was previously no approved AE curriculum and no national guidelines for AE. With the influx of South Sudanese refugees in the wake of the crisis there was a proliferation of AEPs operating in the camps but without any guiding framework to ensure quality and support systematic government oversight these AEPs varied widely in terms of quality and standards across different partners.

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) recently awarded a grant to a consortium led by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) with Save the Children International (SCI) as a partner to tackle some of these issues. The overall goal of the project is to contribute to ensuring that displacement-affected children and youth realize the right to inclusive quality education and achieve their full potential. The expected outcome is increased provision and improved quality of AEP across all partners in Uganda’s refugee response through a harmonized approach. The ECW project places an emphasis on the harmonisation of AEPs based on the Accelerated Education Working Groups (AEWG) 10 Principles for Effective Practice, thereby ensuring that the AEPS in Uganda are reflective of globally agreed good practice. At a national level workshop in 2018 it was agreed that primary-level AEP Guidelines for Uganda would be developed using the AEWG 10 Principles for Effective Practice as a foundation. Initially the AE Guidelines were specifically for the refugee response but a consensus was agreed that these should be national guidelines under the MoES, Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education and come under the umbrella of non-formal education.

The process of developing the Guidelines was carried out through a series of workshops and consultations as outlined below:

The resulting agreed-upon Guidelines include 7 areas:

- **Area 1:** Learner Identification, Enrolment, Retention and Support
- **Area 2:** Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment
- **Area 3:** Teaching and Learning Environment

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2 The ECW project targets refugee-hosting districts in West Nile region: Adjumani, Arua, Moyo and Yumbe.
Area 4: Teacher Recruitment, Professional Development, Support and Remuneration
Area 5: Management and Community Participation and Ownership
Area 6: Monitoring and Evaluation, Research and Evidence
Area 7: Policy and Funding

The work in Uganda is significant as it utilizes the AEWG tools and guidance, primarily the Principles, to develop National Guidelines. Since that time, however, there are a proliferation of ways and places where the AEWG tools and guidance are being used and applied.

- **Mali**: are developing a National Strategy for Accelerated Education to harmonize programming and measure key performance indicators
- **South Sudan**: Oxfam Ibis recently used the Principles in an evaluation of an AEP, please see [here](#)
- **Nigeria**: an AE action plan to unify curriculum, harmonise programing at the national and state level utilises the AEWG tools and guidance
- **Mali**: EDC used the Principles to evaluate the Education Recovery Support Activity Programme, please see [here](#)
- **Burkina Faso**: have just completed an AE workshop using the AEWG tools and guidance
- **Liberia**: an action plan has been developed around the need for specific AE teacher training and dissemination of the 10 Principles with the MoE

**Guiding Questions for Discussion:**

1. Based on your knowledge and understanding of the AEP 10 Principles, what are strategic ways that they can be used to support access to education for overage out-of-school children and youth?

2. What do you see as some of the strengths and weaknesses of an AEP model? Do these change in a crisis context?
Guatemala: Teaching and Learning in Accelerated Education

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In Guatemala, 1.6 million youths ages 15 to 24\(^4\) and 41.3\% of adolescents ages 13 to 18\(^5\) are out of school without basic or technical competencies to pursue livelihoods. The Ministry of Education, under its Alternative Education Department (DIGEEEX), implements three accelerated programs to meet the needs of out-of-school children and youth:

1. National Alternative Education Program (PRONEA)—distance-learning accelerated education program for primary and secondary levels
2. Adult Education Equivalency Program (PEAC)—accelerated education program to complete primary education in two years
3. Flexible Modalities for Secondary Education—blended learning accelerated education program to complete five years of secondary in four years

Current Issues:
- Developing placement exams for alternative education programs
- Developing modular curriculum for Flexible Modalities program
- Assessing and revising teacher training program for alternative education based in the national university, University of San Carlos
- Recently developed an EMIS system for alternative education

How are they using the Accelerated Education Principles?
- Conducted a series of presentations, workshops, and webinars for MOE staff at the national and regional levels, university faculty and students, and other stakeholders to orient them to the Principles and the materials.
- Used the checklist with regional MOE staff to reflect on their local contexts, identify priorities and needs, and identify the resources and supports needed. Some of the priorities included: the need for contextualization of the programs, development of teaching and learning materials, teacher training, development and validation of assessments for AE. Some concerns included limitations related to budget, legislation, and coordination and capacity of NGOs and government entities for AE.
- Held meetings with MOE departments for assessments/evaluation and curriculum to discuss coordination with the department for alternative education, reflecting on the AE principles as a starting point for ongoing collaboration.

What’s interesting about this case?
- Secondary accelerated education: Guatemala, like many countries of Latin America, has nearly achieved universal primary education, but there are still significant gaps at the secondary level. However, there are significant challenges with secondary AE, and the efficacy and implementation of secondary AE is not well understood.
- Integration in the national system: Guatemala is able to integrate its AE programs within a larger alternative education system, rather than having them implemented by NGOs. This is important for facilitating alignment of the programs with the national system, as well as supporting certification and transition pathways.

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\(^5\) Instituto Nacional de Estadística Guatemala (2016)
- “Buy-in” for accelerated education: Within the MOE, there is significant resistance to and misunderstanding about accelerated education. AE is “stigmatized” in that it is perceived as inferior, even within departments of the MOE, which DIGEEX is working to overcome.
Bringing Accelerated Education to life: Leveraging dynamic online opportunities to improve practice

From Hatay, Turkey to Kigoma region, Tanzania to Florida, U.S. to Damascus, Syria to Laos—learners from around the world registered for the ‘Accelerated Education in Crisis Context Introductory Course’ in the fall of 2018. The online course was offered for free, with facilitation, for just four weeks by the Center for Learning in Practice at the Carey Institute for Global Good. A diverse audience enrolled with these purposes in mind: to increase knowledge in AE, connect with others engaged in that field, access resources to support educators’ work, develop skills and gather materials that could be used immediately, reflect on current work and improve outcomes.

Being an introductory course, it focused only on the basics, drawing from the AEWG document, 10 Principles for Effective Practice for Accelerated Education. There is a need to expand the content, provide the online course in different languages and on a wider scale. Challenges include funding and providing access for learners with low (and no) connectivity.

Two lessons learnt from offering this online course in the field: the vitality to design professional development in a fashion that caters for both contextualization and reflection. Contextualization is realized when learners are provided with ample opportunities to apply new concepts, knowledge, and skills in their own context; understanding what works, what will be challenging and how to find solutions. Reflection develops critical thinking skills and improves future performance by analysing learners’ experience, moving the learning process from surface understanding of concepts to a much deeper level of learning and, ultimately, to transformation of practice.

There is a definite need for professional development in that niche. Using ICT and online tools in particular to build courses and communities of practice is still an underdeveloped solution that needs to be looked at in a very needs-oriented manner.
## Accelerated Education: An Introductory Training Pack

### What gap does Accelerated Education (AE) fill?

Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) offer condensed educational programmes, so learners, who may not have otherwise had the opportunity, can develop key literacy and numeracy skills. As such, AE programs strive to meet the following Sustainable Development Goals:

- **4.5**: Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.
- **4.6**: Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

### What challenges do AE teachers face?

AE teachers’ classes typically include learners with mixed-ages and abilities. AE teachers typically are working in crisis contexts, however, and thus often lack access to relevant teacher training and professional development opportunities.

### What role can Accelerated Education: An Introductory Training Pack play?

The training pack aims to provide a flexible and adaptable training programme to support AE teachers working in humanitarian and development contexts. The training focuses on developing skills teachers need specifically for working in AEPs.

The training pack has been developed by the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) and a team from Teachers’ College, Columbia University, in collaboration with experts in the field of education in emergencies.

### AE Teacher: Miss Zeina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has...</th>
<th>Feels...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- been displaced</td>
<td>- passionate about teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- experienced conflict</td>
<td>- under-prepared for her job</td>
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<tr>
<td>- completed secondary school but no teacher training</td>
<td>- worried about the future</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is responsible for...</th>
<th>Hopes to...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- teaching in a 2nd school</td>
<td>- get teacher training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- taking care of her children</td>
<td>- have a stable income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- completing household chores</td>
<td>- impact learners</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### AE Learner: Abdul

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has...</th>
<th>Hopes to...</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- been displaced</td>
<td>- get formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- experienced conflict</td>
<td>- get a good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- never been to school</td>
<td>- help rebuild his country</td>
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<tr>
<td>- valuable life experience</td>
<td>- support his family</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is responsible for...</th>
<th>Feels...</th>
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<tr>
<td>- caring for his parents and siblings</td>
<td>- excited to be back in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- completing household chores</td>
<td>- self-conscious about his age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- working as a vendor</td>
<td>- tired from his additional responsibilities</td>
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For more information, see: [http://www.inesite.org/en/accelerated-education](http://www.inesite.org/en/accelerated-education)
AEWG’s Accelerated Education Teacher Competencies:

**AE LEARNERS:**
1. Has accurate knowledge of the AEP
2. Able to use a condensed and integrated curriculum
3. Integrates literacy, numeracy and life skills
4. Able to identify AE learner needs and assets
5. Interacts positively with all learners
6. Creates a safe, supportive AE learning environment

**TEACHERS:**
7. Follows child protection and Code of Conduct standards
8. Is a positive role model
9. Uses lesson plans
10. Uses age appropriate teaching strategies
11. Manages time efficiently
12. Uses assessments
13. Participates in continuous professional development

**PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY:**
14. Demonstrates leadership
15. Maintains accurate AE documentation
16. Communicates effectively

**ALIGNMENT WITH MOE AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS:**
17. Promotes AE learner pathways to further education

**AE CENTER MANAGEMENT:**
18. Manages AE centres effectively

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**
- How could we create a balance between specificity and general usability when developing a global set of materials (ensuring that a resource is general enough to be used globally but specific enough to be appropriate for a particular context)?
- What guidance would be useful for implementing partners to contextualize the materials?
- How can we avoid placing the burden of contextualisation on the facilitator/teacher?