

Alternative education for undocumented children: An input evaluation

Wirawati Ngui Yi Xe^{1,*}, Vincent Pang², Chiam Sun May³, Rose Patsy Tibok¹,
Crispina Gregory K Han²

¹ Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

² Faculty of Psychology and Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

³ Department of Science and Mathematics, Teacher Training Institute Kent Campus, 89208 Tuaran, Sabah, Malaysia

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received 18 September 2017

Received in revised form 17 November 2017

Accepted 20 November 2017

Available online 30 November 2017

This study evaluated an alternative learning centre which caters to undocumented children in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. The model for evaluation was derived from Stufflebeam's Context Input Process Product (CIPP) model. To evaluate the input of the centre, semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders. The sample included the head of the village, members of the village security development committee, the teachers of the centre, and an officer from the government body responsible for the centre's management. The study collected data related to the strategies and activities (vision and mission, curriculum) and the resources (teaching staff, community support, financial resources, materials, and facilities) of the centre. The study revealed that the centre's primary goal is to provide undocumented children with basic education; however the curriculum was brief, loosely prescribed, with no standardised assessment. Important resources were basic if not limited, and this accordingly restricted the centre from realising its full potential as an education hub. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations to assist future planning and improve the centre were put forward.

Keywords:

Alternative education, alternative learning centre, evaluation, CIPP

Copyright © 2017 PENERBIT AKADEMIABARU - All rights reserved

1. Introduction

Education remains a luxury rather than a necessity in many parts of the world. This is especially true for the undocumented children in Malaysia. Although the Education Act 1996 [2] states that primary education is compulsory for all children, the undocumented ones are not entitled to free and standard schooling opportunities. Hence, these children are provided with the opportunity to attend education albeit through less formal means by concerned individuals, religious bodies, as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations. Nevertheless, there is still much to improve with regard to the type of education befitting these less privileged children in Malaysia. The researchers of this study are therefore motivated to identify issues pertaining to the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: wirawati.ngui@ums.edu.my (Wirawati Ngui Yi Xe)

implementation of an alternative education programme (AEP) for undocumented children, with the hope that the issues may be dealt with accordingly.

2. Objective of the Study

As many as 43,973 undocumented children in Malaysia, ranging from seven to seventeen years old, were reported to be out of school [21]. Since there could be a multitude of reasons for this alarming number, it is imperative to explore the existing ALCs in Malaysia. As of 2015, UNICEF [21] identified a total of twelve ALC's at coastal areas throughout Sabah and the federal Territory of Labuan. Although the ALCs are placed under the supervision of the Malaysian government, they operate individually and therefore there are insufficient means to ascertain all the centres' effectiveness. While some of these centres such as the ALC in Kampung Numbak as well as the ones managed by HUMANA appear to be operating satisfactorily albeit with a number of shortcomings [19,21], little is known about the rest. It is therefore essential to gather as much data possible in order to better comprehend the educational opportunities for undocumented children in Malaysia.

In this study, one of the alternative learning centres (ALC) situated in the state of Sabah, became the focal point for evaluation. The study aims to evaluate the inputs of the education provided by the ALC based on the input dimension of Stufflebeam's [16] Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model. In this research, input evaluation considers the strategies and activities, as well as the resources used by the centre to implement the alternative education programme. It is hoped that the findings of the evaluation study will inform decision makers and other stakeholders on areas of improvement and decision making, especially those pertaining to the input of the alternative education programme. To a certain extent, the findings can be used to inform decision making in other ALCs with a similar context. It will also provide some information to other providers and stakeholders of ALCs in Malaysia, including the government bodies in charge, the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, Humana Child Aid Society (HUMANA), religious organisations, Partners of the Community Trust (PACOS Trust), Good Shepherd, and Dignity for Children Foundation.

3. Background of the study

The state of Sabah had approximately 700,000 immigrants as of the year 2010, and about 250,000 of these immigrants had citizenship issues [20]. This represented a marked proportion, implying the critical citizenship problems in Sabah, and more importantly, it hinted at the problems that the offspring face.

Children with citizenship issues are either non-citizens or undocumented children. The non-citizens comprise refugees, asylum-seekers, legal IMM13 cardholders, temporary or permanent foreign workers, and foreigners staying illegally. Undocumented children include those who are stateless, dependent of foreign workers, foreign children staying illegally; children born from mixed or unregistered marriages, children born soon after marriage, children born of single mothers, and unregistered children from indigenous groups [21].

As a result of their status, these children are not entitled access to the standard national schooling system; however with the help of many concerned and benevolent stakeholders, ALCs have been established across Malaysia to cater to these children's educational needs. The main providers of these ALCs include a government body, Humana Aid Society Sabah (HUMANA), and other faith based organisations.

The ALC being studied is situated in a new settlement in a coastal area in Sabah. Established in the early seventies, it is located approximately 20 kilometres from city. The settlement is accessible through a maze of dusty roads and alleyways. Apart from these roads, the drainage system as well as the huts and houses also appeared to be constructed in an unplanned manner.

This settlement accommodates marginalised groups of migrants. They have no status of nationality and are considered stateless or undocumented. Adults typically depend on part-time jobs to survive, while children tend to spend their days loitering within the settlement area. The offspring of these migrants are not entitled to Malaysian citizenship even if they are born in Malaysia. As of 2015, the population is estimated to be around 10,000 with 900 households (Interview with Village Head).

Azam (pseudonym) ALC (AALC) was completed in 2007 through a partnership between the settlement and a government body. At AALC, students undergo schooling from Primary 1 to Primary 6 (for a period of six years). The ages of the students however differ from those in national schools where it is mandatory for children to enrol in Primary 1 at the age of 7, and complete Primary 6 at the age of 12. At AALC, the ages for schooling is loosely prescribed, with the youngest being a student who enrolled at the age of 5, and the oldest at the age of 17.

The enrolment at AALC was 248 students at the point of data collection. Actual school attendance of the students is however inconsistent. The dropout rate is relatively high with typically a large number of students enrolled in Year 1, which then tapers off gradually in the following years of schooling. School attendance is dictated by a host of factors, such as the students acquiring part-time or seasonal jobs, gaining full-time employment, or having to help parents to babysit siblings when parents are employed.

4. Literature Review

The International Institute for Education Planning IIEP proposed that alternative education incorporates any education programmes which are not regarded as formal education programmes and which are offered in parallel with the national formal education system. Farrell and Hartwell [1] advocated that an alternative education programme (AEP) should fulfil the goals of Education for All (EFA), namely ensuring the development of children's knowledge, skills and behaviour, and therefore contributing to the children's social well-being. Raywid [12] stated that alternative education comprises full-time schooling for children who choose not to enrol in mainstream education. The programmes offered would also vary depending on the vision and mission of respective schools, as well as the types of students being catered to [11]. Table 1 delineates key aspects which should be included in an AEP.

It is however important to note that the definition of alternative education differs from place to place. In the Asian region, the majority of AEPs implemented reflect the accelerated learning concept. Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP) help marginalised children complete basic education, attain educational qualifications in a shorter time and be reintegrated into the formal education system. According to UNESCO [17], ALPs should advocate flexible pedagogies; provide the opportunity for children to develop essential literacy and numeracy skills, establish an education system which is comparable with formal education levels, provide education opportunities for marginalised and unprivileged children, and mould children to become holistic individuals with the needed skills and knowledge to contribute to society.

Table 1

The area covered by AEP [1]

Area	Details
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children-centred instead of teacher-centred. • Learning-inclined instead of teaching-inclined. • Active learning and peer tutoring is advocated. • Children are assessed according to level of competency with continuous progress learning.
Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapted to local context, as needed. • Strong involvement of different stakeholders i.e. community, teachers in the children's learning and school administration. • Children are actively involved in the governance and administration of the school. • Attention from community on nutrition and health needs of the young children before school age.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-guided learning materials are developed to promote responsibility towards self-learning. • Materials are developed collaboratively between the teacher and the children. • The use of media, such as radio, television and computers, to deliver learning.
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant and intensive in-service training and peer-mentoring for the teachers. • A cyclical monitoring/evaluation/feedback system providing opportunity for the system to organically modify its methodology depending on its experience.

4.1 ALPs (AEPs) in Malaysia

In the Malaysian context, alternative education programmes AEPs are generally designed to cater to undocumented and less privileged children who are not entitled to formal education in government schools. ALCs provide these children with opportunities to access a less formal means of schooling regardless of their background. Although the students would not receive formal acknowledgement for their learning attainments, they would to a certain degree be prepared so that they could contribute as community members in the future.

Numbak Educare Centre (NEC) in Kampung Numbak, Sabah, is an example of such ALCs [21]. Kampung Numbak, a village settlement built on stilts, houses migrants from neighbouring nations such as Indonesia and the Philippines and these migrants are therefore labelled as refugees. As of 2015, the population was approximately 5000, and a total of 3000 have Malaysian citizenship. A majority of this population was comprised of Bajau Ubiangs (60%), followed by Suluks (30%), and a minority of Kagayaan. NEC caters to refugees and undocumented children in Kampung Numbak by providing schooling for these children who are not entitled to mainstream education in Malaysian government schools. The main subjects taught in NEC include literacy and numeracy, civics as well as religious studies. Since its official opening in 2011, the centre has received more than 300 students in 2013.

Another notable AEP in Malaysia is the Humana Child Aid Society's (HCAS) project to provide education for children residing in plantation areas in Sabah [17]. The project commenced in 1991 and a total of 21 plantation companies contributed to the establishment of educational centres thus far. HCAS partners with major plantation companies, namely Sime Darby, IOI, PPB Oil Palms, Genting Plantations, JC Chang and Hap Seng as part of these companies' corporate social responsibility. The target group comprises children of plantation workers and those from neighbouring rural towns, as well as underprivileged children with no access to education. To date, the project involved 200 teachers, and the Indonesian government has extended help by sending an additional 109 teachers. The curriculum covers aspects of literacy, namely reading, writing and

mathematics. The project has aided more than 10,000 children by providing them with access to education.

Apart from the aforementioned centres, there are also centres run by faith-based Non-Government Organisations (NGO) in Sabah. UNICEF [21] was able to identify three of these learning centres in their mapping study, namely Hope Learning Centre and the Bethel Learning Centre in Kota Kinabalu, and Grace Alternative Guidance Centre in Tawau. PKPKM (Persatuan Kebajikan Pendidikan Kanak-Kanak Miskin – Society for Education of Underprivileged Children in Sabah), which is also another Sabah-based NGO, has reached out to the Bajau Laut, Suluks, Visayas, and Bajau refugees. As of June 2015, there were a total of 8 PKPKM learning centres targeted at helping undocumented children from these estranged communities.

4.2 Input evaluation

Evaluation is a structured process in determining the merit and significance of a programme based on a set of standards or criteria, and the outcomes provide the basis for stakeholders to arrive at decisions on improvements, sustainability, value, and relevance of the programme [6]. On the other hand, evaluation is conducted to solve actual problems based on scientific applications [7]. In this study, the Context Input Process and Product (CIPP) Model [16] was used to evaluate the implementation of the alternative education programme at AALC. The second component of the CIPP model is the input evaluation. The emphasis of input evaluation lies in examining and assessing the personnel, resources and approaches involved in order for the programme outcomes to be achieved [5]. Stufflebeam [16] also stated that input evaluation covers the strategies of a programme and resources used to implement the strategies. Input evaluation is formative in nature by which the intention is to assist in the design of curriculum strategies on top of helping to manage educational resources [8]. This will help the programme's decision makers to plan strategies and activities needed to attain the objectives. Improvements can be made on strategies and resources based on the findings of input evaluation.

Stufflebeam [14] recommended that input evaluation can be accomplished through discussions with experts, studies of other successful innovations, literature review, and evaluation of propositions from the stakeholders. Popham [10] advocated input evaluation should channel information related to resources needed to achieve programme objectives, which were established from context evaluation. Methods to analyse input evaluation therefore consist of examining existing resources such as human capital and materials, planned finances and schedules, followed by recommendation of improved strategies.

The purpose of evaluating an input lies in making informed decisions based on the assessment of inputs for AALC, which is critical in order to connect the available resources to the goals of the learning centre. In this research, input evaluation considered the strategies and resources used by the centre to implement alternative learning activities. Strategy was viewed from the perspective of the mission and vision of AALC as well as the curriculum. The evaluation of resources covers the teaching staff, community support, finance, facilities and materials. As a result of this input evaluation, the research team considers the relevance and effectiveness of the approaches applied and provides best alternatives for the centre's future implementation needs.

4.3 Past Evaluation of Alternative Learning Centres in Malaysia

The Alternative Learning Centre in Kampung Numbak marked a meaningful collaboration for the first time between UNICEF and the Malaysian government (namely the Ministry of Education,

Sabah State Education Department, Federal Special Task Force Sabah and Labuan, Malaysian Teachers' Foundation) in an effort to aid refugees through means of providing stateless children with education.

With the help of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), a programme evaluation was conducted in Numbak Educare Centre (NEC) to determine the strengths, weaknesses, obstacles, and effectiveness of the programme thus far [21]. The study examined the AEP in Kampung Numbak based on five key aspects of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcome, and sustainability as follows:

- The evaluation of relevance looked into the need to set up the education centre as a source of basic education for the stateless children in Kampung Numbak.
- The evaluation of effectiveness explored the centre's success in realising its aims.
- The evaluation of efficiency highlighted the process of implementing the AEP in Kampung Numbak.
- The evaluation of outcome took into account the accomplishment of the people directly related to the programme namely the students, parents, and teachers.
- The evaluation of sustainability examined desires relating to the continuation of the center.

The centre was completed in 2010 and at the time of the study, there was a total of 312 students from the ages of 7 to 14 years old. The comprehensive evaluation enabled invaluable data to be gathered regarding the implementation of the AEP in NEC since its opening in January 2011 to October 2012. Methods of data collection included analysis of programme documents as well as analysis of products or objects as a result of programme activities; interviews which involved parents, villagers, teachers, present and ex-students, and representative from the Ministry of Education (MOE) and UNICEF; observations of programme processes involving teachers and students; survey questionnaires for students; and case study of students who have completed schooling at NEC.

In order to examine the effectiveness of the programme, the research looked into the objectives of the AEP at NEC as postulated in the UNICEF Concept Paper. The objectives are to: (i) establish a centre of education for the undocumented children in Kampung Numbak, (ii) provide resources such as textbooks, reference and library books, and teaching aids to the centre, (iii) overlook the implementation of the programme, (iv) manage a mentor-mentee programme to train potential school graduates or community members to become teachers. As a result of the evaluation of effectiveness (which bears similarities to input evaluation), the researchers believed that the supervision of NEC has potential for improvement, such as empowering the locals to take part in the management of the centre. The lack of professional development for the teachers remains an important issue that needs to be addressed by the stakeholders such as MOE and MTF. Despite the abovementioned shortcomings, the researchers concluded that the AEP and the NEC have positive contributions towards the attainment of project goals. On the whole, Numbak Educare has positive impact on the immediate community. As a result of this study, quality information was gathered, which contributed to a series of recommendations that could help to significantly improve the alternative education centre in Kampung Numbak.

Apart from NEC, there are also alternative learning centres established in plantations by the Humana Child Aid Society, an independent non-profit NGO, in order to cater to undocumented children who live in palm oil plantations and other rural areas in Sabah. As of 2012, there were 116 registered centres managed by HCAS for the refugees in plantations [19]. An assessment was conducted from September 2011 to February 2012 by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) to determine the effectiveness of the Alternative Education Programme provided by the Humana Child Aid Society. Data collection included six case studies of six learning centres, as well as survey

questionnaires administered to the teachers who worked at all 116 learning centres. In the case studies, the researchers analysed the documents and audio-visual materials, observed classroom processes, and conducted interviews with the stakeholders. As a result of the study, significant information was gathered regarding the teachers, the students, as well as the centres. The researchers observed that the teachers were uncertain of Humana's visions, and mostly emphasized on teaching the three aspects of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Although the teachers lacked adequate training and professional qualifications, they were passionate in their teaching. For students of the centres, it was revealed that they acquired 3R's and basic English language proficiency, and that the students demonstrated values of comradeship and participation in social and cultural activities. Nevertheless, the researchers believed that there is disparity and much room for improvement relating to the students' acquisition of functional literacy and mastery of soft skills. The researchers also noted that the students were not highly aware of their cultural identity and heritage. The study found that in aspects related to facilities, resources, curriculum, and staff remuneration, the centres experienced inadequacies. On top of that, it was observed that the objectives of Humana were not aligned the national standard as prescribed by the Ministry of Education with regard to both student learning and teacher qualification. The evaluation on the Humana project concluded that although there were limitations regarding the programme and centres, the students did manage to acquire basic literacy skills as well as subject knowledge related to Science and religion, as well as involvement in sports and cultural activities.

In an effort to better understand the various centres which presently offer AEPs in Malaysia, UNICEF [20] conducted a mapping study using document analysis, interviews and case studies. The study marked an unprecedented effort to list the different forms of education programmes offered to child refugees and underprivileged children in Malaysia. Different centres identify themselves using different names, such as Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs), and Community Learning Centres (CLC's). The study stated that these centres generally impart the principal subjects of Bahasa Melayu, Mathematics, Science, and English. The mapping study noted that while Peninsular Malaysia houses migrants from Myanmar and other nations, the state of Sabah records a significant number of non-citizens who are namely Filipino refugees, Indonesian plantation workers, and other undocumented migrants. In Sabah, as of 2015, UNICEF identified twelve alternative learning centres which were mainly managed by the National Security Council; plantation schools managed by the Humana Child Aid Society, NGO's and the Indonesian government; learning centres organised by faith-based agencies and other NGO's; and the efforts of Persatuan Kebajikan Pendidikan Kanak-Kanak Miskin (PKPKM) - Society for Education of Underprivileged Children in Sabah who aided migrants from Bajau Laut, Suluks, Visayas, and Bajau.

Apart from listing the various centres which provide AEPs in Malaysia and ascertaining these centres' distinctive qualities, the mapping study also attempted to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and constraints (SWOC) of these centres based on information gathered from field visits and interviews. This served as a concise form of assessment and provided invaluable insight into the implementation of diverse AEPs across Malaysia. With regard to the ALCs managed by the NSC in Sabah, the researchers noted shortcomings such as insufficient space and teaching force, as well as inadequacy related to the allocation of funds to supply resources and materials. As a result, the study recommended implementing two schooling sessions instead of one to accommodate the number of students, starting secondary level education, providing teacher training for the staff, and searching for long term financial support for the sustainability of the centres. On the whole, the mapping study highlighted the pressing concern that the government should legally and fully sanction these alternative learning centres, thereby allowing funding opportunities to improve as well as diminishing the negative perceptions associated with refugees.

The study also suggested the need to draft an all-inclusive policy which would take into account the various alternative learning centres in Malaysia. Last but not least, it was hoped that the government and key stakeholders would be able to collaborate for a way forward for the betterment of alternative education in Malaysia.

5. Data collection methods

The evaluation involved qualitative data collection and analysis methods. The qualitative method included in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. These interviews were facilitated with the use of interview questions developed by the evaluation team through a series of meetings and workshops. Before the interviews, all participants, who were voluntary, were asked to fill in an Informed Consent Form before the interview. The interviews were voice recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Content analysis was performed on the transcriptions to obtain the findings. The evaluation considered and applied voluntary participation, principles of privacy and confidentiality, and informed consent in ensuring that the rights and security of the stakeholders and the children were protected.

Table 2
Qualitative method and respondents involved in interview

Method	Respondent	Number of Respondents
In-depth interview	Government body officer	1
	Head teacher cum village head	1
Focus-group interview	Teachers	3
	Village security development committee	4
Total		9

6. Findings

The findings of this study include the strategies and activities, followed by the resources of the alternative learning centre.

6.1 Strategies and Activities

The various strategies and activities involved throughout the implementation of the AEP at the centre were contributing factors towards the programme's success so far. For this reason, the study took into account the setting of the direction as well as the curriculum of the school.

6.1.1 Vision and Mission

Prior to the learning centre's establishment in 2007, there was a limited amount of opportunity and accessibility to education. The only source for learning was limited to classes conducted by the local Ustaz, which could not cater to every one since the classes were religious and there was limited space available.

Ada kelas-kelas, ada kelas kelas yang dibuka oleh ustaz ustaz tu kan, ramai lah tu yang mau pergi.

(Interview with Teacher B, 22/4/2015)

Tapi dia menjurus kepada keagamaan bah, macam mengaji.

(Interview with Teacher C, 22/4/2015)

Kelas dia terhad memandangkan ruang diaorang lah.

(Interview with Teacher A, 22/4/2015)

With the establishment of the learning centre, hundreds of children were provided with the opportunity to attend formal lessons. The school also has an open policy in which all students were accepted regardless of their age, nationality and current address.

Kau umur 12 tahun pun, kau boleh masuk tahun satu. Sekolah lain, mana dapat. Ah, tiada dokumen pun boleh masuk juga. Kalau luar mana dapat.

(Interview with Teacher B, 22/4/2015)

Masyarakat pelarian tu boleh berkumpul. Kadang-kadang dari Tuaran, dari Luyang datang belajar di sini.

(Interview with Teacher A, 22/4/2015)

The management of the centre is fronted by a government body. The council believed in the notion of spreading peace among the refugees through the dissemination of education. It is hoped that the stateless children will become law-abiding individuals despite their status.

Ya, kita melihat bahawa murid-murid ini adalah dari kalangan masyarakat pelarian yang mana kita mahu melihat satu hari nanti supaya anak-anak mereka ini tahu apa undang-undang negara. Jadi itu akan memberi efek dan kesan kepada keselamatan di negeri Sabah. Jadi sebab itu pendidikan adalah satu cara yang paling berkesanlah kita mahu didik mereka daripada kecil supaya mereka tahu uh apa yang sepatutnya dibuat mengikut undang-undang, apa yang tidak boleh. Jadi mereka akan tahu, bila dia orang besar mereka akan patuh kepada peraturan di negeri di negara kitalah. Jadi kita pun uh rasa perkara ini penting, keselamatan dari sudut inilah melalui pendidikan.

(Interview with government body officer, 21/4/2015)

6.1.2 Curriculum

The school started out with an aim to reduce illiteracy among the children. Therefore the curriculum included six main subjects with a focus on aspects of literacy and numeracy.

budak2 yg belajar di sini adalah daripada err.. anak2 masyarakat pelarian yg memegang dokumen IMM13 yang tidak dapat memasuki sekolah kerajaan. Jadi kita masa itu erm erm.. cari anu lah proaktif supaya budak2 ni diberikan pendidikan asas lah supaya mereka ini ni satu hari nanti tdk buta huruf dan mereka tahu ttg pelajaran dan mebina dia punya jati diri supaya nanti dia besar nanti dia tidak la terpesong daripada nilai2 yg tidak baik.

(Interview with government body officer, 21/4/2015)

Saya nampak ini sekolah dulu, sekolah 3M kan, objektif dia tu lah, mengira , membaca, mengeja. Ah itulah objektif utama dia tu, membimbing budak-budak yang buta huruf kepada yang celik, celik huruf lah.

(Interview with Teacher B, 22/4/2015)

Overall, the main subjects taught were Bahasa Malaysia, English Language, Mathematics, Science, Civics, and Religious Studies (Islamic Knowledge). For Primary 1, only four subjects namely Bahasa Malaysia, English Language, Mathematics, and Islamic Knowledge were taught. For Primary 2 and Primary 3, the Science subject was added to the curriculum. From Primary 4 to Primary 6, the Civics subject was added to the list, making up a total of six subjects in the Alternative Learning Programme at Skim Penempatan Azam.

From Primary 1 to Primary 6, the textbooks differed for each level. As part of their co-curricular activities, the school organised clubs such as the Cultural Club and Malay Language Club. Sports activities such as soccer, badminton and volleyball were also conducted from time to time by the teachers. The school also organised excursions to several places such as the Crocodile Farm, Lok Kawi Zoo, and the museum. Apart from that, the teachers organised additional activities such as planting flowers and conducting handicraft classes.

In the interview with the students, they explained that they learned to draw, were taught to weave baskets, and had acting projects. When questioned about what they had gained from the programme, the majority of the students interviewed said that they had learned letters of the alphabet, basic literacy and numeracy, as well as the knowledge of civics and citizenship, religion and the reciting of prayers.

6.2 Resources

Resources are an indispensable part of all educational programmes. They inevitably contribute to the development of programmes and therefore it is imperative to analyse the accessibility of educational resources as part of the programme's implementation. In the context of this study, resources were categorised into several parts, which were deemed as key inputs for the implementation of AEP, namely the human capital such as the teaching staff and the community support, as well as the financial resources, materials and facilities.

6.2.1 Teaching staff

The learning centre consisted of four teachers, one of whom was the Head Teacher and also the head of the village. Except for the Head Teacher, the other three teachers were female, two of whom were employed to work at the school in the year 2007, and one who joined the team in 2014. These three female teachers' highest qualifications were Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), also known as the Malaysian Certificate of Education. Prior to being employed as teachers, two of the female teachers worked in restaurants, while one was a full time housewife. During the interview with these three teachers dated 22nd April 2015, they stated their belief that their qualifications were insufficient for teaching in the school.

From time to time, the teachers attended courses related to teaching and learning. Two of the teachers attended the courses four times, while one attended once since she was relatively new to the school. These courses were conducted annually for a duration of one week. The teachers explained that the courses were, to a certain extent, useful towards their teaching and learning.

Some of the organisations which contributed to the training of these teachers were UNICEF and Pusat Penataran Ilmu dan Bahasa (PPIB), UMS.

Setakat ni yang nampak...UNICEF uh UNICEF ada juga dari segi latihan perguruan pula. Dia macam dulu dia bagi peruntukan untuk uh buat latihan perguruanlah.

Kita collaborate sama PPIB dengan Cik Minah (pseudonym). So kita kena rangka satu modul yang berbeza-beza la.

(Interview with government body officer, 21/4/2015)

6.2.2 Community support

In general, the local community appeared to be supportive of the school and happy that their children could receive some form of education. The Parents' and Teachers' Association was to a certain extent active, but contributions may have been limited to a certain extent due to their socio-economic status.

Sini saya rasa ada kali, mungkin PIBG. Yuran kita benarkan lah. Ah ada kutip yuran lah untuk ah tabungan sekolah diorang, untuk mungkin diorang boleh beli something ka.

Kutipan takda masalah, boleh bayar. Ahh... Ada pun yang tidak bayar pun, kita tutup mata lah. Mungkin... tapi sebenarnya murah ja kan, RM3 kan.

Susah mahu cakap ya sebab mungkin kalau ibu bapa mahu bantu pun melalui PIBG tu mungkin terhad lah dari segi kewangan jadi kita kena juga lah bantu sikit-sikit.

(Interview with government body officer, 21/4/2015)

However, a small number of villagers shunned the school due to personal reasons within the village community. Due to the fact that the head of the village (who was also the Head Teacher) was not the leader of their choice, a small number of villagers decided not to send their children to the school.

Tapi ada juga tu ibu bapa di kampung ini tidak suka ini sekolah, tidak ... Ah apala itu sekolah tu, begitu-begitu saja.

Ada juga yang tidak terima itu, apa lah, diorang setakat begini sahaja mau ajar. Bukan semua boleh terima. Di sana kalau yang di hujung block sana, satu orang pun budak diorang tiada pergi sini tu. Diorang aim (anti) di sini.

(Interview with Teacher B, 22/4/2015)

Diorang anti lah ketua. Diorang anti ketua.

(Interview with Teacher A, 22/4/2015)

6.2.3 Financial resources

The school depended mainly on the contributions from a government body, the Ministry of Education, as well as other Non-Government Organisations (NGO) which were willing to support in any manner. Sime Darby was noted for sponsoring tables and chairs to the school.

Cabaran paling besar ialah anu lah apa ni sustainability lah kalau dari segi sekiranya kalau mcm kita tidak lagi bagi peruntukan untuk membayar imbuhan jadi kita kena cari jalan lain lah alternatif mungkin melalui NGO uh yang boleh menyumbangkan dari segi kewangan ataupun material untuk pembangunan infrastruktur sekolah. Uh itu yang cabaran dia untuk kita mahu susun dalam jangka masa panjanglah.

So memang kita bagi sedikit peruntukan untuk membayar imbuhan kepada para guru ini lah sebagai satu anu lah.

Selain dari yayasan Sime Darby...uhm...ada juga daripada iyalah biasalah daripada MOE itu.

(Interview with government body officer, 21/4/2015)

The role of the government body was especially essential since contributions towards the centre were mainly managed by them. The council also contributed to the centre by providing the wages to the teaching staff.

Cerita dia begini...sebab benda ni sebenarnya dia tidak ada yuran sebab ditaja dikendalikan oleh pasukan task force (government body).

(Interview with Village Head, 28/4/2015)

In fact, there was a high dependency on the government body regarding matters of supervision and administration within the centre as voiced by the locals.

Ya... Untuk dapat bantuan itu... Tapi kalau itu tiada itu task force itu bantu, mana ada... (Laughs) dia orang ini bergantung semua bah kerajaan.

Jadi kebanyakan daripada mana? Bantu sekolah disini kebanyakan task force lah.

(Interview with village security development committee, 28/4/2015)

6.2.4 Materials

Textbooks were contributed by the Ministry of Education. The books were used ones which were donated by the Sabah Education Department.

Buku teks kita semua yang terpakai punya daripada daripada jabatan pelajaran kita minta daripada Cik Sara (pseudonym) bahagian MOE yang dia yang akan contact dengan mana-mana pejabat pendidikan di Sabah ini la yang masih simpan buku teks terpakai tu lah so kita pakai yg itu.

(Interview with government body officer, 21/4/2015)

6.2.5 Facilities

The school was established in 2007. Tables and chairs were sponsored by Sime Darby and as a result the students no longer had to sit on the floor during lessons.

Tambah-tambah lagi kami ada peruntukan dari Sime Darby untuk kerusi meja, Tambah diorang bersemangat mau pergi sekolah. Dulu diorang duduk di bawah ni, sekarang ramai suda yang datang ada meja ada kerusi.

(Interview with Teacher C, 22/4/2015)

The school had the following components in its premises: four classrooms, a staffroom-cum-office, and two toilets. The four classrooms were fully utilised for teaching and learning; the classes being equipped with tables, chairs and a whiteboard. Ceiling fans were not found in any of the classrooms. The staff room only consisted of tables and chair. However, the centre did not have a canteen to provide refreshments and snacks for the teachers or students. They only had one small stall near the staff room. The total number of registered students was 248 with two schooling sessions when this study was conducted.

7. Perceived Deficiency of Inputs

The aforementioned findings consist of the key input in this evaluation. Nevertheless, as part of this study, the respondents occasionally provided thoughts and opinions which were greatly relevant towards the betterment of the programme. This section highlights the personal feedback and recommendations offered by these respondents.

7.1 Human capital

The Head Teacher explained that the number of teachers in the school was insufficient, and hoped that the number will be increased in the near future.

Rasa tidak cukup. Ini ada juga tapi sudah lama, task force tanya juga. Kita nak tambah? Hari tu sambil kita tersenyum, sambil kita ketawa, task force tanya kamu nak berapa? Saya kata nak sepuluh. Tapi ini sebenarnya perkara ni kita memerlukan dana sebab kita tahu guru ni memerlukan gaji. Mungkin task force mereka akan cari dana lagi dan mereka juga mungkin berusaha dan saya rasa mereka berusaha. Berusaha macam mana guru akan ditambah lagi.

(Interview with Village Head, 28/4/2015)

7.2 Materials

The teaching staff also hoped to see some improvements in terms of equipment such as computers and printers.

Kalau dari segi penambahbaikan sekolah, mungkin boleh bagi kami apa yang kurang contohnya, apa yang kami sekarang tiada computer, ah tiada, tiada mesin pencetak, tiada mesin photostate. Semua benda-benda macam tu menjadi, macam menjadi satu beban kepada kami lah.

Setiap kali ada laporan tu, kami kena pergi Azam print, satu surat tu RM3. Photostate lagi, memang jadi beban.

(Interview with Teacher C, 22/4/2015)

The teachers would like to have educational resources such as laboratory and sports equipment. They also hoped for help in terms of textbooks.

Kami perlukan, kalau ada yang...uhm.. apa ni, teknik, alat bantu mengajar begitu. Bilik makmal terutamanya. Peralatan sukan.

Buku-buku teks pun kami cari sendiri.

(Interview with Teacher A, 22/4/2015)

7.3 Facilities

Another concern in the school was a lack of electricity and water supply. The teachers hoped that the school would be supplied with these necessities in the future.

Kalau diorang sponser kami, kadang-kadang, yang macam kita suda rasa kemarin kan diorang ajar-ajar sana budak-budak berpeluh-beluh suda. Kalau ada karen, macam ada kipas.

(Interview with Teacher B, 22/4/2015)

Tandas lah tandas. Masalah air. Kalau beberapa tahun ini, 3 tahun ka 4 tahun bulan satu sampai bulan tiga, kemarau.

(Interview with Teacher A, 22/4/2015)

The teachers believed that the lack of fences around the school compound caused the students to enter and leave the school as they pleased. Therefore, they would like to see the school properly fenced up in the future.

Kalau kena pagar sini kan, kita boleh pantau budak-budak. Ini diorang suka-suka saja keluar, keluar masuk kalau ada pagar sini.

(Interview with Teacher B, 22/4/2015)

7.4 Professional Development

The teachers believed that with professional development, they can improve their teaching practice.

Itulah yang kami mau ada, macam yang, boleh mendidik kami lagi ka, yang boleh menambah kami punya kemahiran.

(Interview with Teacher B, 22/4/2015)

More specifically, they would like to have professional help to develop and improve their teaching skills.

Memandangkan saya orang baru kan, pertama saya mau minta kalau ada orang mau sumbangkan ilmu untuk kami ni, kasi penambah baik lagi kami punya ilmu untuk mendidik budak-budak sini.

(Interview with Teacher B, 22/4/2015)

Kami ni sebagai pendidik, tiba-tiba ja, tiada pengalaman contohnya dari saya ini, dari suri rumah tu, tiba-tiba jadi cikgu. Tanpa apa-apa kursus, direct mengajar. Jadi teknik yang kami mengajar itu, tidak sama dengan sekolah luar.

(Interview with Teacher C, 22/4/2015)

They expressed that they needed help in imparting writing skills and motivating the students to learn.

Dalam latihan guru tu, saya rasa...uhh... murid-murid tu kepada penulisan lah.

(Interview with Teacher C, 22/4/2015)

Kalau mahu saya, macam mana cara mudah mendekati anak itu, diorang cepat tangkap apa yang kita ajar.

(Interview with Teacher A, 22/4/2015)

7.5 Sustainability

With regard to sustainability, the locals voiced the community's hopes for the schooling years to be extended so that the students can acquire a higher level of qualification.

Itulah diorang mau ada, kesinambungan sekolah ini. Ke peringkat yang tinggi lah.

(Interview with Teacher A, 22/4/2015)

Selepas tamat ini, 6 tahun ini diaorang tiada peluang naik atas la.. Sebab itu, dulu kita pernah cadang la kalau ada yang murid-murid yang cemerlang sini mungkin kementerian boleh bantu la untuk bagi diaorang exam upsr ka kan?

Atau beri peluang dia masuk nanti atau sudah berumur 17 tahun bagi dia peluang masuk kolej-kolej apa nama yg berurusan kemahiran MARA lah.

(Interview with government body officer, 21/4/2015)

Bukan sahaja saya, tapi harapan orang kampung, orang-orang sini terutama sekali yang dinamakan pelarian ni, mereka mengharapkan anak-anak mereka ni supaya akan pergi lebih jauh lagi. Dan mereka juga selalu bertanya bahawa apakah kesudahan sekolah lain selepas darjah enam? Jadi makna dia kalau bagi saya, pandangan mereka tu seolah-olah mereka ingin ada sekolah yang lebih tinggi daripada ni. Itu, saya sebagai...mungkin boleh dikatakan wakil kepada kampung ni, pun mengharapkan juga lah kepada (inaudible) Malaysia supaya sekolah ini akan kekal dan ada selepas ni yang lebih tinggi lagi.

(Interview with Village Head, 28/4/2015)

In the interview with the village security development committee, the four local men stated that even with education, the children would not go far due to a lack of documentation, which would complicate their lives. As a result, the men proposed for the government to look into the matter to help these children.

Ini baik juga ada sekolah... Dulu tiada sekolah... Ini budak- budak kita pun... Tidak duduk di atas didikan... Jadi sekarang itulah, masalah dia, mereka sudah ada pendidikan... Tapi masalah dia itu dokumen... Dokumen itu masalah dia... Bukan sahaja dokumen dia sekolah... Dia sudah sekolah... Dia boleh cari makan sendiri...lepas itu, perlu jugalah, kau ada itu bantuan, pertolongan daripada pihak kerajaan... Dapat menyelesaikan masalah tentang dokumen.

(Interview with village security development committee, 28/4/2015)

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

As a result of the input evaluation of strategies and activities, it can be concluded that the main purpose of the centre was to educate refugees especially with regard to the three skills of reading, writing and counting. Similarly, other nations such as Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines have also implemented alternative education programmes for out-of-school adolescents so that they would master the basics of literacy and numeracy [18]. The centre, wholly managed by a government body, enabled children who would otherwise be illiterate to have some form of basic education. Having said that, the education provided was loosely based on the national curriculum with a lack of standardised assessment. The subjects taught were few, therefore limiting the students from acquiring further knowledge and skills and from fulfilling their potential. It is advised that a standardised structure with general guidelines be introduced for both alternative and formal schools especially pertaining to the primary level [18]. Although the centre's policy for accepting students of all ages is commendable, the lack of regulations may not necessarily contribute to the realisation of the centre's objectives. There was also no form of continuity for children who wished to continue onto the next stage of learning following their stint in the centre. According to UNESCO [18], AEPs are most effective if assimilated into the national structure, as it enables students to obtain meaningful jobs or resume their education in standard schools.

The input evaluation of resources found that the teaching staff were insufficient; and lacked expertise in the field of teaching and learning, so much so that the teaching team felt they would gain more from further training and assistance in this aspect. While community support was in general positive, the locals were unable to contribute much to the centre due to their low to medium socio-economic status. Additional resources such as teaching and learning materials, and general facilities were undoubtedly basic if not inadequate; and the centre depended heavily on funds and contributions from a government body, as well as Sime Darby Foundation. It is obvious that without the aid of the government, the centre would be unable to self-sustain. UNESCO [18] phrased the issue of sustainability as the "ten-year question", which appealed for a reflection of alternative education programmes' purpose and long term resources. It can be concluded that as a result of the above mentioned inadequacies, the centre has yet to provide significant inputs which is needed for a more successful alternative education.

This study therefore proposes several key recommendations in relation to the aforementioned findings. With regard to the centre's strategies and activities, the centre could plan to impart more

than just the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as the six main subjects. Proposals to expand the number of topics being taught at the centre and concurrently increase the level of difficulty could benefit the learners especially those who wish to further their studies. Ultimately, the education provided should enable the learners to be incorporated into the national system in terms of learning content and career pathways. Therefore, the centre could benefit from a curriculum or syllabus restructuring, which could potentially focus on expanding the centre's education focus to make it more relevant to today's world, enabling the graduates to contribute to the workforce in Malaysia. UNESCO [18] stated that the goal of AEPs is not unlike the one in formal education systems, which is to produce a workforce capable of adapting and surviving; with regard to this, the skills of critical thinking and independent learning are critical in AEPs. In terms of resources, there is insufficiency in almost all the critical aspects relating to the teaching staff, financial resources, materials as well as facilities. It is perhaps more critical to highlight the issue pertaining to the teaching staff since it dictates the quality of the centre. The centre could benefit from having more trained teachers apart from ensuring the current ones receive regular professional development. UNESCO [18] also highlighted the need to provide adequate remuneration and career progression opportunities for teachers of alternative learning centres. In addition to this, other resources should also be upgraded so that the centre resembles a proper institution for learning. These include basic equipment for clerical work, a generous source of materials particularly textbooks, and a steady supply of power and water. All the above mentioned suggestions will benefit Azam Alternative Learning Centre tremendously towards establishing itself as a more effective institution for alternative education. Similar sentiments were echoed by UNESCO [18], stating that AEPs which are nationally recognised and equal to standard schools can help to achieve the goal of Education for All (EFA) on the long run. Providing access to education for marginalised children is of utmost importance as these children essentially belong to the society and can thereafter make meaningful contributions to it [21].

References

- [1] Farrell, Joseph P., and Ash Hartwell. *Planning for successful alternative schooling: A possible route to Education for All*. UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning, 2008.
- [2] Government of Malaysia. (2006). *Laws of Malaysia, Act 550*. Kuala Lumpur: The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia.
- [3] International Institute for Educational Planning. (2006). *Non-formal education. Guidebook for planning education emergencies and reconstruction*, 12. Paris: UNESCO.
- [4] International Institute for Educational Planning. (2009). *Policy brief alternative education: Filing the gap in emergency and post-conflict situations*. Paris: UNESCO.
- [5] Lane, C. (1996). *Evaluation summary of teams 1992-96*. (ERIC Database No. ED394505).
- [6] McDavid, J.C. & Hawthorn, L. (2006). *Program Evaluation & Performance Measurement: An Introduction to Practice*. Sage Publications Inc.
- [7] Mertens, D.M. 2015. *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*. 4th edition. Thousand Oaks. CA;Sage Publication, Inc.
- [8] Ohara, Takeshi, and Kenneth Pickard. "Computerized evaluation simulator based on the CIPP model." In *Proceedings of the 17th conference on Winter simulation*, pp. 159-169. ACM, 1985.
- [9] Long Beach, CA: California State University.
- [10] Popham, W. James. *Educational evaluation*. Allyn & Bacon, 1993.
- [11] Raywid, M. A. (1990). *Alternative education: The definition problem*. *Changing Schools*, November, pp. 25-33.
- [12] Raywid, Mary Anne. "Alternative schools: The state of the art." *Educational Leadership* 52, no. 1 (1995): 26-31.
- [14] Stufflebeam, D. L. (1984, September 2-5). *Improvement oriented evaluation*. Paper presented at the Evaluation of Educational and Training Programs Workshop, Canberra, Australia.
- [15] Stufflebeam, Daniel L., and Anthony J. Shinkfield. "Stufflebeam's improvement-oriented evaluation." In *Systematic evaluation*, pp. 151-207. Springer, Dordrecht, 1985.

-
- [16] Stufflebeam, Daniel L., George F. Madaus, and Thomas Kellaghan, eds. *Evaluation models: Viewpoints on educational and human services evaluation*. Vol. 49. Springer Science & Business Media, 2000.
 - [17] UNESCO. (2012). *Alternative learning/schooling programmes in the Asia Pacific Region*. Asia Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) by UNESCO Bangkok. Unpublished seminar slides, United Nations, 2000.
 - [18] UNESCO. (2013). *Flexible learning strategies: Country case report*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok.
 - [19] UNICEF. (2012). *Education for children in plantations: An assessment of HCAS education programme in Sabah*. Tanjung Malim: UPSI.
 - [20] UNICEF. (2015a). *Mapping alternative learning approaches, programmes and stakeholders in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: UNICEF Malaysia.
 - [21] UNICEF. (2015b). *Reaching the unreached: an assessment of the alternative education programme for refugee and undocumented children in Kampung Numbak, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah*. Kuala Lumpur: UNICEF Malaysia.