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PAL Project

Pedagogy and Leadership Project in Tanzanian Primary Schools:

Four primary schools in Manzese Ward in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania participated in a collaborative research initiative. PAL is an intensive multiple-case study approach focusing on the teaching of English in primary schools, with the aim of seeking sustainable and cost-effective ways to improve the quality of teaching, learning and leadership throughout the schools.



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Background

In Tanzania the pedagogical instruction is primarily teacher centered with very little interaction with pupils. This 'chalk and talk' approach is the norm. However, rather than succumb to this pervasive deficit approach, the aim of the research was to document the current pedagogical realities and to use these as a basis for development and capacity building and to seek pedagogical improvements that could be built on existing foundations rather than impose Western solutions to local challenges.

Tanzania is unique in East Africa because the medium of instruction in primary schools is Kiswahili and English is taught only as a subject. In theory all qualified primary school teachers should be able to teach English; however, in reality very few do. The teaching of English is challenging for teachers and the learning of English is challenging for pupils. Statistical data show that English is one of the most difficult subjects, and performance in examinations is poor. Therefore, this research initiative sought to gather evidence based data on the reality of teaching, learning and leading in urban classrooms from a whole school perspective. This has generated a lot of interest in the Ministry of Education and with educational stakeholders.

Initiatives

This intervention programme was based initially in a 'typical' urban primary school in a high density, multi-cultural community with high levels of poverty and unemployment in Manzese Ward, Dar es Salaam. The intensive multiple-case study focused on the teaching of English in Standards 1-7 with the aim of improving the quality of teaching, learning and leading throughout the school. In a collaborative partnership with the School of Education, University of Dar es Salaam, the research has expanded to three more primary schools in the ward.

The focus of this project and development initiative is to work in collaboration with these schools and the partner university to reflect on current pedagogical practice, to identify and solve teachers' professional problems and challenges and to devise ways to improve teaching and learning in a cost-effective and sustainable way.



PAL: Phase I (2009-2011)

An intensive two-year research study was undertaken with Ukombozi School in Manzese Ward, in Dar es Salaam. The study engaged in a research and development initiative with a 'typical' urban primary school where the teacher-pupil ratio is roughly 100:1 with a distinct lack of teaching and learning resources. The school is situated within a high density and heterogeneous community that faces many challenges, particularly poverty and high unemployment. The main focus of the study was on the teaching of English, while the overall purpose was to improve the quality of teaching, learning and leading throughout the school. The research documented the pedagogical practices and the role of school leadership from a whole school perspective.

PAL: Phase II (20011-2012)

The second phase of the project involves expansion of the work to include all four primary schools in the ward. In the new academic school year starting in January 2012, the expansion of the research and development initiative is now being implemented in four schools: Ukombozi, Manzese, Kilimani and Uzuri. Under the leadership of the Head teacher and the appointment of two professional development leaders (from within the school) a school development plan was implemented to improve the quality of English throughout the school. The aims of these initiatives are not only to improve the quality of learning English for the pupils but also for the teachers throughout the school.

A series of professional development training workshop were held in October 2011 and January 2012. These participatory workshops engaged all teachers and were held to initiate a 'reflective conversation' in which views of pedagogy and the approaches to the teaching of English in contemporary urban settings were explored. Although the focus was on the teaching of English, it was important to gather their opinions combined with constructive criticism of positive and negative aspects of teaching.

Dissemination

The dissemination of our findings has been communicated through book chapters, peer-reviewed journals, articles, national and international conference presentations, and our website. For more detailed information, go to PAL website (Centre for Commonwealth Education):

<http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/cce/initiatives/projects/pedagogy/index.html>

Future Directions

By the end of this year we envisage the consolidation and dissemination of the findings from the pedagogy and leadership initiative to be applied to other schools throughout Tanzania and to share our findings of 'best practice' and 'lessons learned' with other key educational stakeholders. It is hoped that we will be able to scale up the project to include other regions in East Africa through continuing education initiatives for teachers.



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For further information on the PAL team, visit:
<http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/cce/initiatives/projects/pedagogy/index.html>

Collaborative Partnership

The collaborative partnership between the CCE and the School of Education, University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania has been established and developed. Dr H. Dachi, Director of the Centre for Educational Research and Professional Development and Dean of the School of Education; Dr Aneth Komba, project manager.

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