

**Initiating activity and resource based learning to make
learners responsible for their own learning.**

Final report

By

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and school management.***

Introduction

This report gives a background to the project and its objectives. It also gives the target group that was used in the study. A detailed description of activities done and who was responsible for them is also given. Achievements of the project have been highlighted and lessons learnt stated. Challenges have also been cited and a way forward stated. The report ends with a conclusion, references and attachment of some pictures of the project.

Background

Learners learn best when they are given an opportunity to explore and make choices for themselves. Rusiita (2006) observed that children learn from one another and learn better when they initiate their own learning activities. They also become creative when given a chance to explore with learning materials.

In most schools in Uganda, the teaching and learning process is basically teacher centered. Learners depend so much on the teacher's knowledge. In cases where the teacher is absent for some reason, learners will not do anything but simply play or make a lot of noise. Studies done such as Increasing Retention through Improved Literacy and Learner Friendly Schools in Uganda (2007-2008), and Improving Educational Quality (1998-1999) indicate that the teaching –learning process in primary schools is mainly teacher centered. Naker (2007) also observed that the current teaching methodology in schools in Uganda limits children's ability to navigate the learning process. The learners are not involved in their own learning.

Secondly, majority of learners are not exposed to adequate teaching/learning materials and therefore there is limited or no use of materials. Learners never get an opportunity to experiment and explore with the materials, yet working with different materials helps learners to create a lot of communication and, develop creative and critical thinking (MS Uganda, 2006). But in this case, learners are deprived of an opportunity to develop their creativity and creative and critical thinking. The few materials available are shared among many pupils. For example, one text book is shared among three or four pupils. This greatly affects the learning and performance of learners. All these can be attributed to a number of factors which include;

- i. Inadequate resources, such as text books

- ii. Large number of pupils in a classroom.
- iii. High teacher/pupil ratio, 1:55 in some cases 1:70-100
- iv. Delay and restrictions in lifting staff ceiling.
- v. Low participation of learners

Since Uganda is one of the countries that ratified Children Rights Convention, its education system should be geared towards the best interests of the child. It was therefore our conviction that the teaching and learning process should be practically learner centered. It should be characterized by a lot of activities that involve learners. Learners should also be exposed to a variety of materials so that they can have their hands on. This would hopefully make them work on their own, especially in the absence of teachers.

Basing on the team members' roles as supervisors who are trained on child rights, it was agreed that a project for change be undertaken so as to make learners take great responsibility and participate in their own learning. It was agreed that an action research be conducted so as to increase pupil/learner participation and learning i.e. making lessons more learner centered.

Objectives

Objectives of the study were:

- i. To increase learners' participation
- ii. To increase learners' ability to work with and handle different types of materials.
- iii. To enable learners to profitably use time
- iv. To enable learners to interact within and among groups.
- v. To increase learners' ability to discover on their own.
- vi. To increase learners' innovativeness and creativity.
- vii. To support classroom learning with practical work.

Target group

This included:

- i. Primary school teachers and pupils.
- ii. Primary teachers' college tutors and students.

Activities done

Team planning meeting was held on the 6th June 2009 to prepare for the activities that were to be done in the respective areas. For the first phase of project implementation, the following was agreed on:

- The team works with Primary five and six classes in selected schools. The selection of these classes was based on the fact that the pupils can confidently speak English. Year one students of the PTC were to be used because they did not have another activity like school practice to interfere with the implementation progress, and also had more time at college to implement the project.
- Mr. Elijah Katamba Kayungiriza works with P.5 pupils and teachers of St Joseph Kiziba R/C primary school. The school was selected because it is within the team member's district and on his way to work.
- Mrs. Olivia Josephine Ddungu Mbogo works with P.5 and P.6 pupils and teachers of St. Joseph's primary school, Nabbingo. This school was selected because it is where the team member works and therefore easy to monitor activities and give support supervision.
- Mrs. Beatrice Nkwenge Kasande Byakutaga works with year 1 students and tutors of Nakaseke Primary Teachers' college. The college was selected because it is also a place of work for the team member and therefore easy to monitor activities and give support supervision.
- To initially work through curriculum subjects that include, Mathematics, Science, SST and English. These subjects were selected because they are core and examinable at primary school. Another reason is that majority of learners both at primary school and P.T.C. level perform relatively poorly in these subjects.

After the team planning meeting, the following activities were done:

- i. Meeting with teachers and tutors in the selected primary schools and primary teachers' colleges respectively to brief them on the project.
- ii. Planning of activities in the selected subject areas by the teachers/tutors and the learners.
- iii. Provision of materials and support supervision to teachers and learners.
- iv. Visits and support to the implementing schools and primary teachers' college by team members.
- v. Display of work done in schools and primary teachers' college to ascertain progress and give more support.
- vi. Team review meetings to check progress.
- vii. Main exhibition of work done in schools and primary teachers' college.
- viii. Writing progress report and preparation for a sharing meeting in Indonesia.

After sharing progress reports with other country teams in Indonesia in November 2009, the team members agreed and scaled up the project by bringing more classes on board and including all curriculum subjects.

Mentor's visit, April 2010

Prof. Agneta, the mentor for the Uganda team visited the team's project sites between 10th and 17th April 2010.

At Nakaseke PTC, she had a tour of and observed what the student teachers had displayed in terms of teaching methods, processes and materials. Students explained the processes they followed and materials used to make the displayed products. They also explained the relevance of the methods used and how they can apply them to the teaching and learning process in the primary schools.

At St Joseph's Nabbingo, she observed teachers teaching using learner-centered approaches with plenty of materials to work with. Pupils participated in collection and distribution of teaching/learning materials, group work activities, and class leadership.

At St Joseph's Kiziba P/S, she observed pupils in a P'6 class working on an experiment which was being led by a pupil.

In all the three institutions, Prof .Agneta interacted with the student/pupil leaders and also had discussions with tutors, teachers and members of the school management committees.

Learners also put up performances through music, dance and drama, and games and sports activities. This demonstrated different learners' talents and interests.

Findings of the study / results

When students/pupils were given activities and materials, they divided themselves into groups to work on different projects. The group work helped them to develop social skills because the learners learnt to work together. As Millis (1993) observed, groups offer a diversity of perspectives and facilitate useful interactions. No free riders. Every member's effort is required and indispensable for group success. A group achieves a higher (synergy) level of creating than the sum of the participants separately (Rich, 2007)

Some students or pupils worked in pairs and this further improved their participation. Learners who would never speak in class at least gave a response or contribution to someone this way. Pairing gives an opportunity to all learners to discuss thus increasing participation (Lyman, 1981)

At a glance, these were the observable achievements.

- Learners were happy and actively involved in the learning process
- Learners became more creative in their approach to work and solving problems.
- Most of the learners were able to freely express themselves during activities.
- Learners were able to design activities and work on their own without a teacher.
- Learners worked together as a team.
- Learners were able to explore and use local materials from their environment.

- Learners were able to work with and handle different materials.
- Learners were able to acquire more knowledge and skills.
- Learners developed confidence and self esteem.
- Learners were able to share knowledge and resources.
- Learners developed leadership ability and skills.
- Learners were able to manage time and complete assigned tasks as required.
- There were minimized costs on purchase of instructional materials since local materials were mainly used.
- Learners owned the learning process.
- There was increased interest in learning by learners

Challenges

Much as there were a number of successes, there were challenges as well and these include;

- Lack of / inadequate ICT resources in the primary schools and primary teachers' college which would provide learners with an opportunity of ; exploring and acquiring more knowledge and skills, identifying alternative ways of solving problems, and producing teaching/learning materials .
- Limited knowledge and skills in ICT by tutors, teachers, students and pupils in places where few facilities are available. Lack of this knowledge and skills limits the teachers'/tutors' support to learners, and learners' creativity.
- Reluctance by some teachers / tutors to support the project, thinking it is a short term assignment for the officers who traveled to Sweden.
- Lack of commitment by some teachers and tutors.

Lessons learnt

There were a number of lessons learnt from this study and these include;

- Active participation of learners in their learning arouses interest, curiosity and desire more learning.
- Providing learners with a variety of instructional materials boosts their creative ability and critical thinking.
- Providing learners with a variety of learning activities promotes responsibility as they try to work on their own and complete tasks on time.

Way forward

The following way forward is suggested

- To effectively programme the use of available resources and also lobby for provision from other stakeholders.
- To identify resource persons to help the students and tutors on how to use ICT facilities.
- To continue guiding and counseling the teachers/tutors on involvement in project work and the benefits of involving learners in their learning.
- To continue project work in other classes and all subjects.

Conclusion

The teaching methodology we employ, and the relationship within which we employ it, must intentionally encourage learners to acquire and develop the cognitive skills they need. (Naker, 2007). In the case of this study, the students'/pupils' had to engage the three domains of cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Participation in the project gave them confidence and enthusiasm to continue working on their own and explore more.

The change agents together with their staff will continue to provide guidance and support supervision to the students / pupils so that they continue to do more project work in all subject areas thus develop their abilities and competences to the full. The fact that other stakeholders such as parents, board of governors, members of school management committees and members of foundation bodies were invited to the displays, the project was applauded and the stakeholders pledged to give all the necessary support.

The team members would like to acknowledge the tremendous support given by SIDA / LUND University and for introducing them to the project idea. Prof. Agneta Flinck, the team mentor, is highly appreciated for all the guidance and support that she gave. The co-operation of staff and students / pupils of Nakaseke PTC, St. Joseph Nabbingo and St. Joseph Kiziba, is also highly appreciated. Our employers / supervisors (Ministry of Education & Sports, Nakaseke and Wakiso Local Governments) are also appreciated for their support and letting us participate in the SIDA programme. To all our teachers in Lund, a big thank you.

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At Noah's Ark



At the PTC



At the PTC



At the PTC



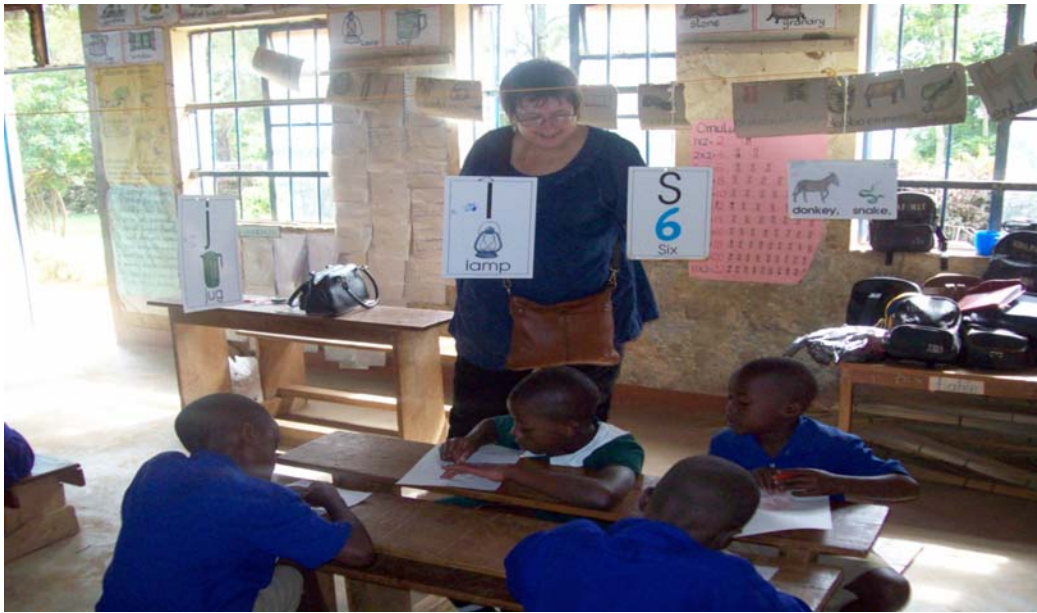
At St Joseph Kiziba



At the PTC



At St Joseph Kiziba



At St Joseph Nabbingo





