



Final Report

Classroom Connections Program – Malawi, Uganda, Zambia

University of Ballarat

Institute of Professional and Organisational Learning

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Dec 7, 2009

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Introduction

Improving the survival rates of girls attending primary schools is a high priority for Africa¹. The incidence of abuse and harassment of girls on their journey to and from school and at school contributes to low enrolments, poor retention rates and unsatisfactory learning outcomes, especially in Least Developed Countries². Although children have the right to expect to remain in school, the completion of primary education is far from universal, with the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education (GIRLG) barely rising from a level of around 50%³. The Classroom Connections program targets Gender Equity (Goal 3) and Universal Primary Education (Goal 2) contained within Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In the case of Universal Primary Education (MDG Goal 2), Uganda, Zambia, report being on track and very likely to achieve universal education by 2015; Malawi are reporting Universal Education is possible if some changes are made, While abolishing school fees may have assisted progress towards achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015, further initiatives are required to assist those countries who are at risk of failing to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015. In many of these countries, the girl child is most at risk of dropping out of school. If this situation continues, then a failure to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015 will also have a negative impact on achieving Gender Equity (MDG 3).

The Classroom Connections program represents an educational initiative seeking to assist developing countries progress towards achieving Gender Equity and Universal Primary Education by 2015. Participating teachers learn about establishing caring, inclusive classroom environments that promote cooperative learning and positive interactions through the establishment of sustainable support peer groups of 4-6 students⁴. As active learners' throughout this three day experience they also understand how establishing school – based support networks and promoting the development of social skills among learners helps address both equity and retention issues. A copy of the three day program is provided in Appendix 1.

From October 29th through October 31st, 20 participants completed the three-day workshop held at the Guidance Counselling and Youth Development Centre for Africa (GCYDCA) in Lilongwe Malawi. The same program was delivered to 20 participants in Kampala, Uganda from November 3 to November 5. A third program was delivered to 20 participants in Lusaka, Zambia from November 10 to 12. UNESCO provided 15 K to support the workshop. AN additional 5K was provided by ICET. Dr Kenneth Hamwaka, Dr Thelma Majella from the GCYDCA and ICET Board member Dr James O'Meara (Australia) took leading roles during the workshop.

¹ UNESCO(2000). The Dakar Framework A Framework For Action: Education for all: Meeting our collective agreements. Office of the Assistant Director-General for Education. Paris: France

² UNESCO Education for all in Least Developed Countries: Division for the Coordination of UN Priorities in Education. Paris: France

³ UNESCO Education for all in Least Developed Countries: Division for the Coordination of UN Priorities in Education. Paris: France

⁴ Gibbs, Jeanne (2006). Reaching All by creating Tribes Learning Communities. Center Source Systems. Windsor. Canada.

Performance Against Objectives

The Classroom Connections project aimed to obtain information about:

- your reaction to the training program;
- participant confidence levels linked to applying the skills learned in training program;
- changes in Gross Intake Ratio to the last grade of Primary Education (GIRLG)
- the completion figures in the year following the training
- changes in your classroom behaviours one year after the training.

Reaction to the Classroom Connections Training Program

Participants completing the training program were asked to complete an 11 item survey at the end of day 3. The collective results of the participants from the three countries (n = 56) are presented in the table below.

Classroom Connections - Reaction Evaluation	Score /4	%
I liked and enjoyed the activities I participated in over the last three days	3.72	92.97
The training program was relevant to the needs of my learners	3.66	91.41
Spending three days at this training program was good use of my time	3.72	92.97
I liked the venue where the training was conducted	3.28	82.03
I liked the style of the facilitator delivering the workshop	3.59	89.84
The length of training was appropriate for what was covered	3.16	78.91
I was satisfied with the level of participation that was required of me	3.47	86.72
I found the activities the level of effort required from me to be reasonable	3.59	89.84
I felt comfortable while participating in the activities	3.53	88.28
The activities included in the program were very practical	3.59	89.84
There is a high potential for applying what I have learnt into my class.	3.59	89.84
Average Rating		88.42

Table 1: *Participant Reaction Scores*

The results indicate a positive reaction to the programs. From a program perspective the average participant enjoyed the activities (92.97% satisfaction), considered the program relevant to their learner's needs (91.41% satisfaction) considered the training a good use of their time (92.97% satisfaction), considered the program very practical (89.84% satisfaction) and believed there was a high potential for applying what they learnt to their classroom (89.84% satisfaction)

Participant Confidence Levels Linked to Applying the Skills Learned In Training Program

A 13 item Teacher Learning tool was completed by the participants prior to the training and upon completion of the training to measure any growth in the confidence of the participants with respect to using the 'Classroom Connections' skills .

Participant Learning Pre-Workshop	Score /4
select heterogenous groups	3.20
select an appropriate problem that teams will need to process	3.10
select a cooperative strategy to promote learner engagement	2.95
design a rubric/criteria that will assess the desired social outcome	3.05
monitor the group/individual social skills while they work in teams	3.25
serve as a facilitator during the learning experience	3.55
promote caring and respectful relationships among children and staff	3.70
help children identify and pursue their own interests and goals	3.30
involve children in decision making	3.30
involve children in problem solving	3.50
involve children in setting group rules	3.50
acknowledge achievements and success	3.65
offer support and constructive feedback	3.35

Participant Learning Post-Workshop	Difference	
select heterogenous groups	3.62	0.42
select an appropriate problem that teams will need to process	3.44	0.34
select a cooperative strategy to promote learner engagement	3.62	0.67
design a rubric/criteria that will assess the desired social outcome	3.21	0.16
monitor the group/individual social skills while they work in teams	3.56	0.31
serve as a facilitator during the learning experience	3.91	0.36
promote caring and respectful relationships among children and staff	3.79	0.09
help children identify and pursue their own interests and goals	3.62	0.32
involve children in decision making	3.68	0.38
involve children in problem solving	3.56	0.06
involve children in setting group rules	3.50	0.00
acknowledge achievements and success	3.62	-0.03
offer support and constructive feedback	3.74	0.39
Average % Improvement in Confidence Levels Pre v Post		5.4%

Table 2: *Comparison of Pre and Post Workshop Learning*

The average scores of the participants indicated growth in all but one area of learning (acknowledging achievements and success -0.03). Some of the areas where reports of greatest learning occurring included selecting cooperative strategies for promoting learner engagement (+0.67), selecting heterogeneous groups (+0.42), and offering support /constructive feedback (+0.39). While the average % growth was 5.4 %, it is worth noting that the group did contain leading teachers from the respective countries who indicated a high level of confidence in their ability to demonstrate the workshop skills prior to the commencement of the workshop.

Monitoring the Implementation of Classroom Connections

Changes in Gross Intake Ratio to the last grade of Primary Education (GIRLG)

Data was not collected by any of the Ministries in 2008/2009

Pupil Completion Figures in the Year Following the Training

Data was not collected by any of the Ministries in 2008/2009

Changes one year on from the training

Each of the Ministries instituted two common dissemination strategies. The Peer Education Club combines sport with education as a way to strengthen peer involvement and promote Classroom Connections. The Mental Health club seeks to achieve a similar aim of strengthening peer involvement and promote Classroom Connections through group discussions. In March 2009, Dr Hamwaka, Director of the GCYDCA travelled to the University of Ballarat to present the feedback from the Ministries of Education participating in the pilot.

Malawi

- 7/10 of the participating schools reported
 - positive student behaviours
 - Improved academic performance
 - Improved teacher punctuality
 - Community involvement and appreciation

Uganda

The key messages from the Ministry of Education

- Reduced Absenteeism
- The introduction of a Peer Education Club
- The securing of high level Ministerial support for the expansion of the program

Zambia

- Improved school attendance
- Improved participation in Peer Education programs
- Evidence of community involvement in the program

In November 2009, a second series of workshops was conducted in Malawi through the support of the Australian government. During the workshop one of the original participants from Chinsapo Secondary School, with the assistance of a group of 20 of her students , reported on the changes in the school one year after the training. These included:

1. Good relationships between teachers and pupils
2. Respect from both sides (teachers and pupils)
3. Understanding each other
4. Punctuality of both teachers and students
5. Making goals and choosing good careers
6. Encouragement from parents or guardians
7. Security provided by the school
8. Some students act as good role models for others
9. Jokes from some teachers makes students be active

A raised awareness of the positive outcomes linked to the introduction of Classroom Connections facilitated the identification of issues that still need addressing to improve learning outcomes. These included:

1. Noisy students
2. Teachers answering mobile phones during class
3. Teachers who still come late for class
4. Silly comments by teachers
5. Lack of teachers for certain subjects
6. Poor explanations by teachers
7. Sudden change of change of teachers
8. Love affairs among students and teachers
9. Very full classes
10. Improper dressing by both students and teachers
11. Over teaching
12. Disobedient students, disrespecting monitors and teachers.
13. Challenges linked to meeting community and educational expectations

Within the list are contained several ideas for future teacher development programs for the cohort. These include classroom management; teacher professionalism and accountability; teaching strategies for diverse classrooms; peer education; and responsive education.

Lessons Learned

Travel Allowances, Out of Pocket Funds

The coordination of the administration of the Travel Allowances and Out of Pocket expenses was an area of concern for this project. A lack of facilities accepting visa cards created the additional challenge of accessing and carrying significant amounts of cash. There was also the issue of issues travel allowances. Participant were requesting complete payments on day one, this was avoided to reduce the risk of poor attendance once payments had been made. In the follow up project, most of these issues have now been addressed. A remaining issue involves payments in USD, a currency in rare supply in Malawi. This issue should be resolved with a longer lead-time on planning the workshops.

Hotel Based Training

The Uganda workshop involved the used of a Hotel based delivery strategy. This was made possible from funding provided by the Ministry of Sport and Education, to support the accommodation and meal costs of the delegates. The major benefit of this strategy was the potential to expand training beyond the traditional working day, reduce the risk of participant non-attendance and reduce lost time linked to commuting. With the exception of Malawi, where there is a requirement to use the GCYDCA, this strategy will be adopted for all future training.

Transfer of Responsibility

Between 2008- 2009 a variety of strategies to transfer responsibility to the local leaders have been trailed. The training in 2008 focused on in-service training, however, this group did not have the support of Ministry level officials. In 2009 Ministry level officials were trained, however, they have little time to conduct training sessions. The proposed strategy for 2010 will involve partnering with universities to train teach her educators to train pre-service teachers.



Appendix

Appendix 1: Workshop Plan

Day 1- Understanding Ourselves

- Introduction
- Changing Colours
- Overview and Structure of the Classrooms Connections Program
- Structure of Each Session
- Establishing Agreements
- MY Team Member Profile
- Putting My Cards on the Table
- Forming a Heterogeneous Group in Your Classroom
- Identifying My Needs and Expectations
- Identifying the Needs and Expectations of Others
- What is Your Definition of Trust?
- Choosing Trustworthy Friends
- Setting a Friendship Goal
- Managing Our Emotions
- How Do You Express and Respond to Emotions
- Situational I Statements
- Celebration Circle

Day 2 Understanding Others

- Appreciating Others
- Walking in the Shoes of Your Learners
- Getting Inside the World of Your Learners
- Listening Others
- Listening with You Ears, Eyes and Heart
- Paraphrasing for Progress
- How to REACH agreements through mediation
- Prepare To Avoid the Need to Repair.
- Connecting and Growing
- Connecting Through Compliments

Day 3 Developing Support Networks

- Managing Conflict
- What Will Be My END?
- Is this a SAIFBET?
- Negotiating a connection?
- School-Based Conflict Plan
- Protecting Your Emotional and Physical Health
- Promoting Social Health.
- 4 W's , 1 H Strategy.
- Celebrating and Graduating