



Evaluation of the Education Quality Improvement Through Pedagogy (EQUIP) Project in Shinyanga, Tanzania

Executive Summary

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C. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The five-year Education Through Quality Improvement Through Pedagogy (EQUIP) project has been jointly implemented by the Shinyanga District Authorities, and OXFAM GB, with co-financing support from the European Commission since 2003. In view of the international Education For All (EFA) framework, and the Tanzanian Government's Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP), EQUIP is a highly relevant pilot project to demonstrate quality primary education provision on a district scale.

EQUIP aims to improve classroom practices and learning through child centred pedagogy, and to develop a system of empowering and developing teachers and children. EQUIP has been supporting 172 primary schools, around 1750 teachers, and over 100,000 students. This project has proven to be a learning exercise in practical strategies for improving the education system, not only in Shinyanga, but also in the whole of Tanzania.

The project concentrated on:

- (A) Training of teachers and education sector actors to practice child-centred pedagogy in the classroom;
- (B) Establishing an In-service Teacher Training System for the professional development of teachers, including a school-based teacher mentoring and support system.

The project has almost completed its first five-year cycle (2003 – 2008) and has successfully delivered all the planned training activities, for example for 170 Trainers, 1587 teachers, 172 Head teachers, 332 school-based mentors, 688 school committee members, and other education officials. However, due to the fact that the project followed a phased-approach, only 51 schools of the 172 schools have received a full five-year course of intervention from EQUIP.

Most notably, EQUIP has managed to bring about a significant improvement in 15 – 20 schools where the full course of the EQUIP intervention had been provided. The ability to demonstrate quality child-centred education in 15 – 20 schools is a noteworthy achievement for EQUIP in a five year span. It would be unrealistic to expect a project to bring this degree of change in all schools.

The evaluation clearly recognises the positive contribution EQUIP has made to demonstrate 'child-centred pedagogy' to all the other schools, Head teachers, teachers, educators and policy makers. Teachers and students have developed more of a mutual understanding. Students are more motivated to learn and to participate in school. Students themselves indicated that there is more cooperative learning in schools. Teachers now come regularly and are student-friendly. Teachers also ask more questions to involve their students, and correct their workbooks. Corporal punishment has also significantly decreased within schools.

Although EQUIP's main intervention was teacher training, the project has worked to create a better teaching and learning environment and improved learning resources. EQUIP has provided books to schools, and constructed and renovated Teacher Resource Centres (TRCs) and libraries. It has also trained

teachers to make their own Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) together with their students.

Moreover, EQUIP has supported good school governance by training and mobilising School Committees, Head teachers, Ward Education Coordinators; created a pool of professional mentors; promoted school pupil clubs; and established the Teachers' Network and the Shinyanga Education Network (SEN). EQUIP in also worked with school community to raise awareness on the importance of educating children, HIV/AIDS and gender issues; addressed water and sanitation issues by constructing rainwater harvesting tanks and community shallow and deep wells in some schools; and implemented a successful school feeding programme during a period of severe drought in 2006.

The schools that received most of these elements of the full EQUIP model or 'package', and where interventions to bring school committees and village governments to work in closer cooperation demonstrated the best school environments, and the students were the most assertive. School learning environments have improved, the teachers are more motivated, and the learners' behaviours have also certainly improved. However, the schools with better and committed Head teachers have benefited more while the schools with weaker Head teachers have not taken the advantage of such trainings given to school committees. Head teacher and school committee training are areas that could have been further strengthened, especially as Head teachers are often the most critical factor for the success of schools and could have been used as catalysts to bring about child-centred learning.

Even within the context of great national progress as a result of the Government's Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP), the progress of the Shinyanga Municipal and Rural District Councils between 2003 and 2007 in national STD IV and STD VII examinations have also been remarkable. For example, Shinyanga Municipal schools now even surpass the national average, after being some 30% below it in 2003. In addition, Shinyanga Rural District Council has managed to halve the performance lag it had with the national average from 24% in 2003 to 11% in 2007. Also four of the best EQUIP schools in 2007 clearly indicate a sharp rise in STD VII results between 2003 and 2007. For example, Mwanono Primary School rose from a 10% pass rate in 2003, to a remarkable 100% in 2007. Tinde Primary School rose from 18% to 62% over the same period.

While it is difficult to assess whether EQUIP can be fully attributed to these climbing results, as some schools have received support from different agencies, especially the six 'best' Shinyanga schools, EQUIP's interventions directly targeted improving academic teaching and learning which very likely contributed significantly to achieving better examination results.

However, it is worth noting that while the passing rates for both girls and boys have increased by 2007, the gender disparity between boys and girls has also risen. Much greater attention must be played to addressing gender disparities within the classroom and the school culture in the future.

EQUIP's schools have recorded a higher rate of transition to secondary schools than the Shinyanga Region for both girls and boys. In 2003, Shinyanga Rural was

the lowest performing district in the region, now it is the third best, and the Municipal Council maintained its position of recording the highest level, and this has further accelerated.

EQUIP also has accomplished the introduction of a viable, feasible and sustainable teacher In-service Training System in Shinyanga and made another successful illustration of how professional development could be delivered to all primary school teachers in Tanzania. The Model has filled a long felt gap in Shinyanga, and also in Tanzania. Policy makers and educators should learn to recognise the effectiveness, efficiency and the viability of this low-cost INSET Model, that can demonstrate results even in schools that suffer from overcrowding, a lack of teachers, inflexible furniture, limited learning materials, and a lack of basic utilities such as water, electricity and toilets. The EQUIP INSET model is very much in line with the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) and the Teacher Development Management Strategy (TDMS) of Tanzania. Its impact is well recognised by the user, the Local Government Authorities of Shinyanga, and it has committed to sustain and institutionalise it. This again is a rare incident where a government has readily and willingly accepted a donor project to be absorbed. The mainstreaming of EQUIP interventions was possible because the Local Government of Shinyanga districts were fully involved in the implementation of the project and they owned the step-by-step growth and success of this project. This is a lesson whereby OXFAM has demonstrated that it is important to keep the Government in the driving seat of implementing any project in order to sustain it.

The project does have its shortcomings however. Better monitoring and evaluation (M&E), focused on outcomes rather than on outputs, could have made the project more successful and visible. OXFAM's Project Officers could have been more efficiently deployed, particularly to the more remote schools. The lower primary education cycle also could have received a different approach from the other classes as their needs are more specific which could have increased the project's impact. Change management and monitoring mechanisms, could have been introduced at school and ward level, in order to support the introduction of child-centred processes in school culture, and to shift further away from authoritarian practices. These micro-management interventions could have been introduced much earlier with the involvement of the Ward Education Coordinators. Such an approach would require stronger macro District level monitoring together with the District Education Officers and Inspectorate.

Finally, the in-service training system also has a few gaps. However, with a few alterations it could stand as a replicable model at national level, incorporating new incentives and a fulfilling career path for all primary school teachers in the country. This evaluation provides recommendations for OXFAM, Shinyanga District Authorities, and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) on areas of refinement to improve efficiency and impact.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the change that EQUIP is striving to achieve is not easy. Capacity building requires time and continuous mentoring and monitoring, even beyond what EQUIP has provided. Teachers certainly appreciate the intervention and the impact it has brought on their teaching and student learning. However, it is too early for OXFAM/EC to stop supporting Shinyanga's teachers and students. It is strongly felt that EQUIP has initiated a

positive change and many schools have only just received the full course of EQUIP's trainings. This evaluation recommends that with some adjustments, EQUIP should continue to support the change for a few more years and ensure its taking root in schools and classrooms. OXFAM's involvement in day-to-day management needs to be carefully handed over to the Local Government Authorities, although OXFAM should continue to provide technical assistance on capacity building, and support addressing the adverse factors that affect teacher performance. In view of the National TDMS, it seems that EQUIP could even consider further expansion of EQUIP to other Shinyanga districts and potentially other regions in Tanzania, rather than exit now.

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