

NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION AS AN APPROACH TO IMPROVING LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS

Author: Ayeta Wangusa and Monsiapile Kajimbwa

Country: Tanzania

Sector: Education

This is the first milestone of a rolling case study, which illustrates how the Newspapers in Education (NiE) initiative is proving to be a suitable intervention for improving functional literacy of pupils in primary schools in Tanzania. By bringing newspapers to the classroom, you bring the world to the child. This triggers series of learning outcomes including cognitive processes, opens up creativity and innovativeness of the child, develops basic skills, attitude and behaviour and ultimately increase capacity of the child to read and write, which is currently dwindling in Tanzania.

The case study also demonstrates that NiE as an approach can equip teachers with learning materials to facilitate student-centred teaching methodology¹, in order to enhance a paradigm shift from transmission education (teacher to student) to knowledge and skills development.

The case study argues for policy support from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) in institutionalising NiE in the curriculum. To achieve this objective, policy advocacy work through Tanzania Education Network/Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania (TEN/MET), a national-level civil society network, is vital if the government of Tanzania is to mainstream the best practices from NiE programme.

CHALLENGE

The current focus in primary education trend in the United Republic of Tanzania mainly focuses on expansion in access (quantity issues) with the quality and coherence aspects remaining unattended (PEDP 2005). An analysis of the most recent trends in primary education shows that after the abolition of school fees, good progress has been made in increasing the enrolment in primary education. Available data (BEST, 2007) indicate that the main result has been increased access to primary education in terms of enrolments (98%); indicating Tanzania is achieving Millennium Development Goals in terms of access. But the basic question remains: are our children learning? The number of students per teacher and per classroom has increased, while access to textbooks and other education facilities and the quality of education has deteriorated although that is difficult to extract from the official figures as the examination standards have gone down as well. It is therefore not exceptional that a child, after completing seven full years in primary school, is still not able to read or write. MKUKUTA II acknowledged that the issue of poor learning outcomes at the primary education level manifested itself by high pupil/teacher ratios (52:1 in 2006 and 54:1 in 2009); the percentage of pupils passing the primary school-leaving examination (PSLE) (70.5% in 2006 and 52.7% in 2008). Available data indicate that learning achievements (3Rs) in primary education in Tanzania stand at 56% Reading rate, 48 % wRiting rate and 17% numeRacy rate.

A baseline survey carried out by SNV in Kahama district in March 2008 indicated that frequent changes of syllabus, without prior preparations of teachers, lead to ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the education. Such changes include the introduction of Information Communication Technology to the Syllabus. The survey also discovered that lack of extra curricula activities such as sports also

¹ Wikipedia, Student-centered learning (also called child-centered learning) is an approach to [education](#) focusing on the needs of the [students](#), rather than those of others involved in the [educational](#) process, such as teachers and administrators. This approach has many implications for the design of curriculum, course content, and interactivity of courses.

contribute to low learning achievements. Learning achievements targets have been narrowed to purely academic results, henceforth stifling creativity.

While the Ministry of Education and Vocation Training (MoEVT), through its National Policy on teacher training (1995) takes cognizance of the new demands from the job market that requires teacher training to facilitate the identification and development of special talents, implementation by district councils still remains a challenge. The teacher instruction methodology remains the medium of instruction, which stifles the creativity of the teacher leading to a negative impact on the learner. For example, once a student is asked to write a story related to the issues happening from their community, the replication of themes such as 'HIV', 'the environment' and 'school-dropout' across schools, is indicative of the role of teacher in steering student to replicating themes that are 'politically correct' – what is considered normative within the formal setting of the school. A case in point is when one teacher in Chamwino district did not think that a cartoon drawn by a student illustrating how schools were being inconsiderate for sending students back home to demand their parents to contribute a fee to the World Food Programme School Feeding Programme, or another cartoon that reflected how disabled children missed out of school were interesting and worth publishing in the Mwananchi newspaper.

CLIENTS

Since the introduction of NiE in Tanzania in 2009, the clients who have been involved in the NiE assignment are Mwananchi Communications Limited (MCL) and seven district councils (Bahi, Chawino, Ilemela Kahama, Maswa, Mvomero and Nyamagana). SNV Tanzania engaged MCL (also part of the Nation Media Group) as client to pilot and develop the NiE concept in the districts of Maswa and Kahama in 16 primary schools using a Kiswahili newspaper. SNV also engaged a consultant from Uganda to orientate DELIRA (Local Capacity Builder), the 32 teachers and the education departments of Maswa and Kahama districts on the NiE concept. Thereafter SNV engaged DELIRA to coach teachers on practical strategies / lesson plans for integrating the newspaper across the curriculum subjects. DELIRA also supported the District Education departments in Maswa and Kahama, in organizing school and district competitions linked to content from newspaper features the following categories (Reading, Writing, Cartoons and Drama), in which the winning students in the categories won prizes from MCL.

After, Maswa and Kahama districts showing positive interest in NiE, SNV Tanzania's Lake Zone Portfolio also introduced the concept to Plan International who are supporting the implementation of NiE to Ilemela and Nyamagana districts (Mwanza region) in 10 schools, with support from a local capacity builder supported by SNV.

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

The Initiative:



Newspapers in Education (NiE) was conceptualized by the New York Times in 1930s, when New York City schools social studies teachers submitted an idea to The New York Times to deliver to their schools newspapers in bundles, so that students would learn about news events from the most current textbook. While the New York Times still runs the NiE initiative, now code-named New York Times in Education, teachers can select either the print or electronic version of the newspaper to be used in the classroom.

NiE has become a worldwide initiative that promotes student literacy and social awareness by providing young readers with information, analysis and opinion about current affairs. Curriculum-linked topics ensure the newspaper pages are useful for teachers and the activities are user-friendly for students. In Africa NiE is implemented

in South Africa, Ghana, Liberia, Uganda and most recently Kenya.

OUTCOME

SNV Tanzania's Lake Zone portfolio was introduced to the NiE concept by SNV Uganda. Since 2007, SNV Uganda has been supporting Monitor Publications Limited (part of the Nation Media Group), to implement NiE. SNV Uganda provides capacity support (alternative approaches for teaching and learning product) aimed at strengthening the Monitor's young reader development program that provides affordable reading materials in the classroom to 100 schools. An independent evaluation conducted in 2008 clearly showed the positive impact on children's reading behaviour. As a result more private sector and NGO partners were attracted to the NiE model in Uganda and the Monitor newspaper has increased its circulation in rural Uganda. SNV Tanzania decided to adopt this child-centred learning methodology using the newspaper and pilot it in SNV's Lake Zone portfolio.

The school and district competitions, which have served as a qualitative monitoring tool for learning outcomes through using the newspaper to stimulate reading, writing and social awareness has been embraced by seven district councils, with Maswa District Council competitions being exemplary. The teachers from the different schools per district came up with a judging criterion and worked as a team to select winners. The Maswa District Council, spearheaded by Mr. Joseph Lugenyi (left), has claimed ownership of competitions, which has motivated both teachers and students to participate in activities leading to the competitions.

Articles from NiE participating schools have been published in the Mwananchi newspaper, which has been a motivator for both teachers and students. Inset is a sample article written by a student. Other articles that have been written by students touch on themes such as child rights and poor environmental management. The articles are part of the qualitative monitoring tool for NiE.

The NiE intervention has also decreased truancy for standard 5&6 of NiE implementing schools by 100%. This is because on Wednesdays, when the Tuesday paper is distributed to the students, students find lessons in class more interesting than when teachers use textbooks only for instruction.

SNV Tanzania in collaboration with MCL organized a NiE learning meeting for SNV (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania) and Nation Media Group (The Monitor (Ug), Daily Nation) and Mwananchi (tz) held on 26th February 2010, at Nation House in Nairobi. The main output of this meeting was that the three countries were able to learn about the different NiE implementation approaches within East African region and adapt best practices. SNV Tanzania was able to develop a training guide for LCBs based on teacher training guide used by the Monitor newspaper in Uganda.

A baseline on literacy has been carried in districts of Bahi, Chamwino, Maswa and Mvomero using the UWEZO Tanzania Learning Achievements Assessment tool. The data is being analysed at the moment. This data will be used as the baseline for the schools implementing NiE, so that in the next segment of this rolling case study, SNV Tanzania will be able to provide an quantitative analysis of the

NI AIBU KUIBA MISAADA INAYOTOLEWA

Natoa pole sana kwa waathirika mbagara na kukemea sana swala la kuwa dhulumu misaada inayotolewa kwa wahusika hivyo inaonyesha ni jinsi gani ubinafsi , uchoyo, unavyo tawala katika viongozi wetu tunaomba mtilie mkazo swala lingekuwa limekupata wewe au ndugu yako je? Ungelifumbia macho?

Kwakweli viongozi wetu tunaomba mtilie mkazo swala hili kwani hili nijanga la nchi yetu ajabu, ulafi wa watu wachache umewafanya watu walioathirika wazidi kuathirika . Ninachoomba naiomba serikali yetu ifatilie sana swala hili la udanganyifu.

Translation:

It is shameful to steal funding from the needy

I would like to pass on my condolences to the victims of bomb explosions in Mbagala. I'm more saddened by the fact that some heartless and selfish people steal support meant for help these victims.

This shows the selfish some of our leaders are. Imagine if you were one of the victims, or your relative was one of the victims, would you behave in the same way? Would you turn a blind eye and steal from your own relative?

I call upon our leaders to take this matter that has attracted national attention seriously. It is just a few people who have taken advantage of the needy. I call upon the government to take keen interest in this issue so that justice can be attained.

IMPACT

NiE intervention using Kiswahili subject in the 2011 & 2012 PLE results for NiE participating classes, who are currently in Standard 5&6. This is because if students can read and write Kiswahili, then it will have a ripple effect for improvement in other subjects (Social Studies and Science).

The NiE concept has been piloted, developed and adopted by another SNV Tanzania involving 10 schools in Bahi and Chamwino (Dodoma region) and Mvomero districts (Morogoro region) and is being supported by two LCBs HMT media and Community Perspective Limited (CPL) respectively.

SNV has also supported Mwananchi newspaper to develop NiE as a product. This has included advising the MCL management to allocate two pages in the newspaper dedicated to NiE and making the resource brokering link to TWaweza, a new citizen-centered initiative, focusing on large-scale change in East Africa. SNV is in the process of supporting MCL to develop a proposal for funding from TWaweza to expand the newspaper's reach to all 110 districts of Tanzania, so that all primary schools of Tanzania can access both the Tuesday newspaper that contains the NiE pullout, as well as the returns (old newspapers). While the NiE initiative is designed to reach only students in Standard 5 and 6, the returns will also reach lower classes to sustain their interest in reading.

LESSONS LEARNED

- While the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) recommends a paradigm shift from transmission education (teacher to student) to knowledge and skills development, the Ministry has not made any breakthroughs in addressing this issue. Focus has been on addressing Vocational and Skills Development, but not on addressing the pedagogical issues related to child-learning. This presents an opportunity to share the best practices from NiE districts to national education stakeholders, who can jointly engage in policy advocacy for mainstreaming with MoEVT.
- Oxfam GB's Education Quality Improvement through Pedagogy (EQUIP) programme in Tanzania that has been piloted for 5 yrs in Shinyanga Municipality and Shinyanga Rural districts is the only other innovation in Tanzania that is promoting centre-centred learning. An entry point to national policy advocacy would be to partner with Oxfam to lobby for the national scale-up of child-centred teaching approaches and interactive pedagogy, through forums such as Tanzania Education Network/Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania (TEN/MET).
- Some parents of students involved in the NiE have shown interest in reading the free newspaper that they get on weekly basis. This shows that there is need to subsidize the cost of production and distribution of the newspaper so that it can be accessed in rural Tanzania. This has presented an opportunity also for the newspaper to serve as a tool for stimulating civic agency starting with the student and parents of students about issues that affect them in their school, community, district and country.

NEXT STEPS

- SNV will support MCL to organize a multistakeholder meeting which will involve the Director Primary Education of MoEVT, who will provide guidance related to the use of the newspaper as an instructional tool in primary schools
- SNV will share this NiE case study with Oxfam and TEN/MET as a initial step towards engaging in policy advocacy discussions for promoting child-centred teaching approaches within the public education system so as to improve learning achievement in primary schools.
- SNV intends to support MCL organize a learning workshop involving national education stakeholders in Dar es Salaam. This can be done in consultation with TEN/MET. MCL will invite Nation Media Group representatives from the Daily Nation and The Monitor, who also implementing NiE in Kenya and Uganda respectively and corporate organizations, while TEN/MET can invite its member organizations as well as representatives from government.

- SNV will continue providing advisory support to MCL to terms of resource brokering, so that it can improve its funding base to be able to support all primary schools in Tanzania through the NiE programme In a sustainable way
- SNV advisory support to MCL will also focus on designing of NiE initiative to be able to address accountability issues at local level. This will involve brokering link between MCL and OXFAM, who are supporting School Barazas, (students/pupils governance mechanisms) so that their issues are published in the Mwananchi newspaper.
- SNV will design a monitoring tool that will borrow from the UWEZO's Learning Achievement Assessment tool (measures reading and arithmetic abilities of students), as well as critical thinking of students through current affairs.
- In terms of scale-up, NiE is now being implemented in the three East African countries of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. This presents an opportunity for SNV to broker linkage between the NMG newspapers (The Monitor, Daily Nation and Mwananchi newspapers), with government e-learning initiatives. SNV Kenya has already facilitated the establishment of an e-learning consortium in the North Rift Portfolio, and could broker the link to Nation newspaper's NiE programme, for the electronic edition of the newspaper to facilitate e-learning. In Tanzania, SNV Tanzania could broker linkages between MCL and the MoEVT so as to initiate discussions about how NiE could be integrated in the Ministry's *Elimu kwa Teknolojia* ("Education through Technology).