



The Quality Link

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The Newsletter of the Improving Educational Quality Project

Number 2

IEQ Welcomes South Africa!



South Africa joined IEQ in October to collaborate with the South African Basic Education (SABER) Project. SABER is a six-year effort aimed at improving educational quality for disadvantaged South Africans through the implementation of innovative instructional models and the development of policies which promote a new unitary education system. Specifically, SABER supports non-governmental organizations that have well-established programs in at least one of the following areas in pre-primary and primary education: school administration, teacher-training, curriculum development, and the provision of materials and technology.

In South Africa, IEQ is strengthening the SABER grantee monitoring and evaluation capabilities, and initiating a classroom-based research agenda. Currently, fifteen SABER grantees are collaborating with IEQ.

In South Africa, the IEQ mandate is to:

- ◆ Conduct impact assessments of SABER grantee products and services that influence instruction and learning at the school and classroom level;
- ◆ Strengthen the SABER grantees' capacity to establish and maintain monitoring and evaluation systems for individual projects
- ◆ Strengthen SABER grantee staff expertise in educational research and evaluation methodology;
- ◆ Facilitate professional linkages between SABER grantees and the educational research and development community within and outside of South Africa.

In January and February, an IEQ team visited eleven SABER grantees to learn more about the status of grantee monitoring and evaluation systems and how IEQ can strengthen these systems. The team also explored specific research interests and opportunities. The reports of these visits serve as the beginning of a portfolio of IEQ in South Africa and a source of planning for IEQ activities.

Before June, IEQ will: organize and host a seminar of South African researchers engaged in school-based research, focusing particularly on evaluation and assessment issues; provide short-term technical assistance on program evaluation in response to specific grantee requests; prepare a package of resources on program monitoring and evaluation for all grantees; complete the design and preparations for a four-workshop series on the design and implementation of program monitoring for mid-level SABER managers; and draft a design of the impact assessments of the four Educare (pre-primary) grantees.

As in other IEQ collaborating countries, a research team of local educators will manage and implement IEQ in South Africa. The team is headed by Dr. Jonathan Jansen. The office is located in Durban and can be contacted at the following address: IEQ/ South Africa, P.O. Box 5955, Durban 4000.

Jane Schubert & Dena Duerbeck

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Goals of IEQ

1. Understand how and why each country's classroom-based interventions influence pupil performance.
2. Demonstrate a process whereby classroom research on improving educational quality is utilized by the educational system.
3. Create opportunities for dialogue and partnerships among researchers and educators who are seeking to improve educational quality at local, regional, national, and international levels.
4. Maintain an ongoing history of the project to document the rationales for choices made, opportunities and constraints encountered, and lessons learned.

IEQ in Ghana

CRIQPEG has taken the lead in implementing a dynamic and innovative assessment approach as part of its efforts to improve the quality of primary education in Ghana. This approach, known as curriculum-based assessment (CBA), links the assessment process to local instruction by asking pupils to perform tasks drawn from the local curriculum. For example, pupils might be asked to read a passage from their textbook or compute the answers to actual mathematics problems taken from their texts. What distinguishes CBA from informal assessment is that the specific tasks that pupils are asked to perform are selected, administered and scored using standardized procedures. Data derived from

Project Summary: GHANA

In Ghana, the IEQ effort is linked to the Government of Ghana/USAID Primary Education Program (PREP) which, among other activities, is providing instructional materials to Ghanaian classrooms. The first phase of research examined the availability, source, and use of materials in six schools in the Central Region. This research was conducted by the Centre for Research on Improving Quality of Primary Education in Ghana (CRIQPEG), a research organization created through the collaboration of IEQ and the Faculty of Education at the University of Cape Coast and staffed by faculty and graduate students.

Photo not available

A classroom at the Babinso Primary School in Ghana's Central Region.

the assessment can be used to generate individual, classroom, school, and district level profiles of pupil performance. These profiles have implications for instructional planning at all levels of the educational system.

Focus on Language Learning

In Ghana, most children enter school speaking little or no English. Government policy prescribes that by third grade all instruction must be in English. Pupils are expected to have mastered sufficient English to be able to (1) comprehend lessons taught using oral English, (2) use oral and written English to respond in class, and (3) read from textbooks written in English in areas such as English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

CRIQPEG's preliminary study suggests that many Ghanaian pupils may be experiencing difficulty meeting these expectations and that children may not have had the opportunity to acquire even basic language skills. Classroom observations revealed that children were generally not interacting with the teacher, classmates, or written materials in ways that would promote English language fluency and literacy.

Through discussions with educational leaders and policy makers, CRIQPEG identified a growing consensus. First, language learning is key to improving the quality of education in Ghana. Second, there is a critical need for research on the current improvement. The Phase II research design is responsive to this need.

Assessing Pupil Performance

Initial Phase II research activities have focussed on profiles of the English reading, writing, and oral language proficiency levels of children in grades 2-5. Last fall, CRIQPEG team members collaborated with Abi Harris, Fordham University, and Aida Pasigna, Institute for International Research, to develop and pilot test assessment instruments drawn directly from the Ghanaian syllabi and textbooks. Using curriculum-based assessment techniques, three parallel test forms were created to measure pupil proficiency levels in oral language, reading, and writing.

In each area, the range of skills assessed spans from very basic (e.g., copying his/her name and responding correctly to simple oral questions) to grade level appropriate (e.g., reading a passage of average difficulty from the English textbook with at least 70% accuracy).

In January and February, CRIQPEG teams collected baseline data in 14 schools from several different regions of Ghana. They individually tested pupils in grades 2-5, collected teacher ratings of pupil performance, and compiled all data onto summary sheets for data processing.

Future Plans

In March, teams will return to the schools to conduct classroom observations and collect interview data from teachers, parents, pupils, head teachers, and local level supervisors. The observations and interviews will enable the teams to describe the factors that affect oral and written language learning both inside and outside of the classroom.

As these data are analyzed, CRIQPEG will share the findings with Ghanaian educators. School and regional level feedback for educational leaders will provide a basis for better decision making and planning. These feedback sessions will serve as the springboard for generating strategies for improving language learning and for integrating the on-going research and its findings into the educational system.

Abi Harris

Project Summary: GUATEMALA

In Guatemala, IEQ is working with the Ministry of Education to study the implementation and impact of Nueva Escuela Unitaria (NEU), Guatemala's adaptation of Colombia's Escuela Nueva program. NEU's principle characteristic is multi-grade classrooms, in which children are divided into groups by grade level and participate in peer teaching, use instructional guides, learn in activity centers, and receive individualized instruction from teachers. The NEU program is being implemented in 100 schools. IEQ is studying a 10% sample of schools in two regions, one with a predominantly indigenous population and one with non-indigenous, or ladino, children.

IEQ's first year of research focused on first and second graders in both Nueva Escuela Unitaria (NEU) and traditional Escuela Unitaria (EU) classrooms, and preliminary research results suggest that **several aspects of the NEU program contribute to improved academic achievement**.

In the indigenous region, all significant differences found that measures of reading and mathematics favored the children in the NEU program. Correlating classroom observational data with test results shows significant correlations between small group interactions and test performance among NEU children. No significant correlations between classroom context and academic performance were found among children in the traditional schools.

The following vignettes of bilingual NEU and EU first graders demonstrate the increased involvement and interest of the NEU students. These interactions exemplify the greater contact between teachers and individual students in teacher-directed small groups at NEU schools.

NEU School

9:05 a.m. Filomena is seated in the "cows" group with one classmate. The teacher leaves the "cats" second grade group and comes over to the "cows" saying to Filomena, "Now that you've finished copying the assignment in the guide you have to follow the instructions. Do you understand?" When Filomena doesn't

answer, but only looks at the teacher, the teacher calls the other teacher who explains to Filomena in Q'eqchi' what she has to do. When the second teacher asks in Q'eqchi' if Filomena has finished the guide, the child responds, "Sí." The first teacher then says, "Good, now let's look for letters in this box," and shows the girl a cardboard box on which is written SIGNIFICANT EXPRESSIONS. The teacher says, "Each word that you take out, you will write in your notebook, understand?" Filomena responds, "Yes, ma'am," and the teacher says, "Good, now I'm going to take out a word in the box and you read it for me." The teacher takes out a word and asks Filomena what it says. Filomena responds, "Cow, teacher," and the teacher says, "Very good, now write it in your notebook." 9:10 a.m.

Several aspects of the NEU program are apparent here. Teachers interact interchangeably with the children, integrate expressions that children have identified as important to them into the instruction, and provide immediate feedback on performance to the child.

EU School

The second example illustrates a typical activity in the traditional unitary schools. That is, children spend the day seated at their desks, copying written assignments into their notebooks, and are expected to work alone, consulting the teacher only when help is needed. Children often show very little interest in the repetitious tasks they have been assigned.

8:25 a.m. Berta is standing in front of the teacher's desk with the other first grade children, waiting for the teacher to write syllables in their notebooks to be copied by the children. As the teacher writes the letters in their notebooks, she pronounces each syllable. Berta, however, does not repeat after the teacher. Berta examines her notebook as she returns to her seat. She sits down and begins to work, then turns and looks around the room. She takes out her pencil sharpener and begins to sharpen her pencil. A classmate notices her and says in Q'eqchi', "Please put a point on my pencil." Berta takes the pencil, sharpens it, and returns it to her companion. Both girls then look at the point of the pencil, and Berta touches it, then begins to copy again. She looks up at the same girl as the teacher continues to write the assignment in the notebooks of the other children. Berta bends over her work with her face almost touching the page, then gets up and goes to the desk of a classmate where she whispers something in Q'eqchi' in the girl's ear and returns to her seat. 8:32 a.m.

Greater involvement with academic subject matter in small group contexts also appears to influence educational efficiency. Across all regions included in the IEQ study only 7.6% of NEU students dropped out by the end of the academic cycle compared with 25.4% for EU schools.

Parents are enthusiastic about the active learning process as well. Among the sample parents, 80.7% of those with children in NEU schools saw positive changes in their child's school compared with only 30% of parents with children in EU schools.

The Host Country Research Team in Guatemala is currently completing the integration of the quantitative and qualitative results and preparing a report on the Phase I findings. In Phase II, IEQ will look at third and fourth graders in the pilot classrooms and observe teacher seminars and weekly teacher circles organized by the NEU developers to discuss school activities. Phase III of the research will focus on the expansion of the NEU program and its implications for quality in the classroom.

Tanya Busch and Ray Chesterfield

IEQ in Mali

In Mali, the two cooperating institutions, the Institut Pédagogique National (IPN) and the Institut Supérieur de Formation et de Recherche Appliquée (ISFRA), have worked together to contribute a better understanding between classroom practices and pupil performance in the first years of primary schooling in Mali.

The Phase One field research provides some insight into several aspects of language development in early primary education. Some of the highlights include:

- ◆ Instructional methods that strive for comprehension are more effective in language learning than repetitive, rote memorization exercises. Speaking French is insufficient to teach French if higher order skills are not part of the instruction.
- ◆ While many children can recite poetry and French language passages, they rarely understand what they are saying. Stories and fables drawn from local culture such as “The Thieves and the Donkey” are much better understood (in French) than “imported” ones such as “The Beautiful Little Brother, All Pink and Naked.”
- ◆ The vast majority of high-achieving students have parents who can read and write, while only a small percentage of the low-achievers have literate parents.
- ◆ The use of French at home seems to influence student performance. A likely key to pupil performance is the availability of texts, books, and other materials at home; roughly half of the average and high-achievers have such resources while none of the low-achievers do.
- ◆ The local community’s attitude toward the school is important, but the reasons for this are still unclear: Do villagers support the school financially? Do boarding students easily find satisfactory accommodations in the village? Is there a viable school lunch program for the students?

The Phase I study is a first step toward identifying opportunities to improve language development in primary school pupils. Other educators in Mali are interested in and are currently addressing issues related to language teaching and learning. IPN and ISFRA will jointly host a colloquium 26–28 April in Bamako to share their observations with a broader constituency, invite participation from this wider community, and brainstorm ways to strengthen teaching and learning language.

Douglas Lehman

Photo not available

Students in a primary school classroom in Mali.

Project Summary: MALI

During Phase I, the Institut Pédagogique National (IPN) and the Institut Supérieur de Formation et de Recherche Appliquée (ISFRA) conducted field research on the learning process in the first two years of primary education. IPN’s task was to study classroom practices as they affect reading and language learning in grades one and two. They observed these practices in performing and non-performing schools. ISFRA’s research complemented IPN’s work by looking at the characteristics of primary school children including basic health and nutritional condition, motor skills, social skills, and cognitive skills. The two institutions produced a joint preliminary report of Phase I activities.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

Knowledge building is the responsibility of all participants in the IEQ project. The subcontract with the University of Pittsburgh gives that institution special obligations to document classroom research in the participating countries and evaluate efforts to link research with improvements in practice. In fulfilling this function the Pitt team responds to technical information requests from the field, prepares working papers (examples are identified in the box on this page) and bibliographies, develops documentation processes, helps define and prepare a range of project documents. The University of Pittsburgh is also involved in designing and delivering training for members of the Host Country Research Teams.

The building of knowledge takes place through careful documentation of the major activities of the project: designing classroom studies; collecting data, analyzing data, discussing findings with teachers and school and district level administration; and planning and implementing changes in practices designed to improve educational quality. Documentation of the activities of IEQ/Washington and its interactions with AID/Washington is also necessary. Because of the design of IEQ, cross-country comparisons are integral to knowledge building. Cross country analyses particularly focus on the classroom research processes, the linking of research to the initiation of improvements in quality, and the interinstitutional relationships within and between the core countries.

Current knowledge building activities include preparations for IEQ participation in the 38th Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) and a series of workshops for IEQ members at the University of Pittsburgh. IEQ will present two 1 1/2 hour sessions on the CIES program. The presentations will include: a general introduction to IEQ, a display of IEQ documents, videos of classrooms where IEQ research is taking place, and papers on research in progress in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali. IEQ staff including Dr. Jane Schubert, Director of IEQ; Dr. Beatrice Okyere and Mr. Francis Amedahe from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; Dr. Yetilu de Baessa from

Publications

The following publications are available now from the Improving Educational Quality Project headquarters:

Defining Educational Quality, *IEQ Publication #1: Biennial Report*
Don Adams, University of Pittsburgh, January 1993

This paper draws distinctions between quality and some of the other related educational concepts.

Ghanaian Research Reports: Phase I Study, *IEQ Occasional Paper #1*
University of Cape Coast, June 1993

This paper documents the classroom observation findings from the Phase 1 study of schools in Ghana's Central Region.

Guide to Information Sources, *IEQ Technical Report #1*
Leo Klopfer, University of Pittsburgh

The Guide is designed to provide a list of sources for international colleagues who do not have easy access to information about existing educational research and practice.

Please contact **Dena Duerbeck** for copies of these publications at the following address: Institute for International Research, 1815 North Fort Myer, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22209 USA.

IN PRESS:

Series on Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA)

Abi Harris, Fordham University, and Aida Pasigna, IIR: 1) Description of CBA and the Value of the Information Produced by CBA for Policy-makers; 2) The Use of CBA in Ghana: Assessment ➡ Feedback ➡ Improvement; 3) Manual for CBA Application in Other Countries.

Guatemalan Research Reports: Phase I Study, *IEQ Occasional Paper #2*

Malian Research Reports: Phase I Study, *IEQ Occasional Paper #3*

New Directions in Language Teaching

Richard Donato, University of Pittsburgh

Collaborative Action Research: An introduction with examples from the international literature, *Thomas Clayton, University of Pittsburgh*

Guatemala; and Mr. Sekou Diarra and Mr. Brehima Tounkara from Mali will be presenting at the meeting. Dr. Don Adams will serve as facilitator, while Dr. C. Wesley Snyder from Ohio University and Dr. Stephen Heyneman from the World Bank will act as discussants.

Following the CIES Conference, the University of Pittsburgh will host a week-long series of workshops for the visitors from the IEQ Host Country Research Teams. The workshops will focus on issues requested by the field, including interpretive/qualitative research methods, linking classroom research and practice, language teaching/learning, and documentation of the project. During that week, Host Country Research Team members will visit local schools in the Pittsburgh area to observe at the classroom level the application of research strategies and techniques discussed in the workshops. The week in Pittsburgh will close with a session reflecting on the CIES conference and the workshop experience.

Don Adams

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA: Dr. Jonathan Jansen

Photo not available

Pupils in a Soweto primary school reading a book provided by READ, a SABER grantee.

The famed 1955 Freedom Charter of the African National Congress (ANC) states that in a democratic South Africa, "the doors of culture and learning shall be opened." Several years ago, while I was attending Stanford University, an exiled colleague wrote from Lusaka, Zambia, with a question which has haunted me since: "When the doors of culture and learning are finally opened, what will we find inside?" The IEQ project arrives in South Africa at a dramatic moment in the history of the country. Problems of access to education are less serious than problems of education *quality*.

Yet most of what we know about the status of education quality for the seven million students in South African schools is anecdotal, fragmented and poorly-researched. Furthermore, the focus of many policy initiatives in the country are on large-scale-systems change, rather than on classroom-level processes such as teaching, learning and testing. As a former high school science teacher, I developed an early commitment to understanding education from the perspective of the practitioner. Against this background the advent of the IEQ project in South Africa was a source of great personal excitement and suggested many opportunities for influencing the country's first non-racial education system in three centuries. In addition, South African education researchers and policy analysts are very excited about the *comparative* focus IEQ work -- the opportunity to learn from our colleagues in Ghana, Mali and Guatemala, from whom we were isolated during the dark days of apartheid.

IEQ PARTNER:

Juárez and Associates, Inc. , Sub-Contractor

Juárez and Associates is a sub-contractor to the Institute for International Research (IIR) on the IEQ Project. Founded in 1971, Juárez and Associates is a minority-owned consulting firm which provides research and management services to both the public and private sectors throughout the United States and Latin America. Thus, the experience gained in meeting the needs of a Latino consumer market and international businesses in Latin America can be translated into involving the private sector in publicly funded projects. Juárez and Associates' areas of expertise include: education and training, population, health, applied research and evaluation, and management support services.

In addition to IEQ, Juárez and Associates is involved in numerous projects that address issues of culturally appropriate education strategies for minority populations. The following projects illustrate our current project work in education:

- ❖ Juárez and Associates is working in Jamaica on the **Primary Education Assistance Project II (PEAP)** to upgrade the delivery of primary school mathematics instruction through the development of instructional materials, teacher training, assessment and formative evaluation.
- ❖ In Honduras, Juárez and Associates is working on the **Primary Education Efficiency Project (PEEP)**. Initially, emphasis will be placed on assessing the status of

existing research on primary education and on identifying the utility of databases to facilitate research. Results from these studies will serve as a foundation for future studies to be conducted in the PEEP project.

- ❖ Domestically, Juárez and Associates is involved in the **Head Start Bilingual and Multicultural Program Services**. The program will provide information on children and families from different linguistic and cultural groups. The information will play a role in shaping future policy and programs to improve effectiveness of education in bilingual and multicultural settings.

GHANA, University of Cape Coast: **Dr. Beatrice Okyere**

I developed an interest in the field of education during my undergraduate training as a teacher. This interest intensified when I was a research assistant in a number of educational research studies carried out by my professors in the College of Education at the University of Cape Coast. The areas of research were mainly Educational Psychology and Sociology of Education; specific topics included child-rearing practices and community involvement in the formal education of children. This exposure to research stimulated me so much that I began conducting my own research as soon as my teaching career began. In one study, I

Photo not available

Dr. Beatrice Okyere and Dr. Jane Schubert, IEQ Director, at the First International Exchange on Educational Quality,

identified children who were experiencing learning and behavior problems in the primary schools in the town where I was teaching. The findings from this study influenced my decision to pursue graduate studies in the field of Special Education.

Before joining the IEQ team, I was conducting a study on parental involvement in the education of handicapped children in Ghana and also reviewing programmes in special education for the University College of Education at Winneba as an External Examiner for the College.

Generally, my involvement in the IEQ project has been exciting, but the most interesting experience I have had has been the opportunity to interact with primary school teachers and learn first-hand the problems they and their pupils encounter in the teaching and learning process. Also, the interest some of the teachers show in improving their teaching skills has been very encouraging. I look forward to working with them to achieve the goal of improving the quality of primary education in Ghana.

Dena Duerbeck

MALI, Institut Supérieur de Formation et de Recherche Appliquée (ISFRA): **Dr. Urbain Dembélé**

I am called Urbain Dembélé. In reality my name is Nagognime--happiness, prosperity and the protection of Nago, a great divine spirit from our tradition. I don't know when or where I was born. In school they took a look at my mouth, eyes and size and decided that I was born around 1939.

I became a teacher because I didn't like my first teacher who led me to avoid school for four years. Fortunately for me, and unfortunately for him, I eventually became a school inspector, and he was afraid of me then. He would even go so far as to feign illness on the day I was to inspect him, so that he could escape the devastating evaluation that he knew would be waiting for him.

As a result of my bad elementary school experience, I am very sensitive to teaching practices which reduce the pupil from a thinking and intelligent being to an object. I have come to the conclusion that our social and economic problems are the result of an educational system which dares let the futures of several dozen children in the hands of a schoolteacher, even when he is universally known for his incompetence.

In my mind IEQ should be a vehicle for correcting some of these wrongs. We must acknowledge that the teacher is just one component of a wide array of educational resources which work together for the child's good. For effective learning to take place, the way teachers and learners interact needs to change. IEQ helps us better understand the challenges facing the child in the rural milieu and thus contributes to a more humane approach to the learning process.

IEQ is the niche that I've found for creative expression of this philosophy

of learning. I'm glad to be part of the IEQ process and greatly appreciate the international exchanges the project fosters.

Photo not available

Dr. Urbain Dembélé while on an IEQ study tour to the United States.

Gretchen Hummer

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 1994

Guatemala and Mali:

- ❖ Phase I Research Reports Completed

South Africa:

- ❖ Seminar on Effective Schools

U.S.:

- ❖ IEQ Presentation at the Comparative and International Education Society Conference
- ❖ IEQ Seminar at the University of Pittsburgh

APRIL 1994

Ghana:

- ❖ School Observations and Community Interviews

Mali:

- ❖ IEQ Colloquium on Teaching and Learning Languages in Primary School

South Africa:

- ❖ Elections

Uganda:

- ❖ Further Discussion on AID/Kampala Buy-in

MAY 1994

Ghana:

- ❖ CRIQPEG Seminar on Analysis of Interview and Observation Data

IEQ Funding Agency & Partners

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