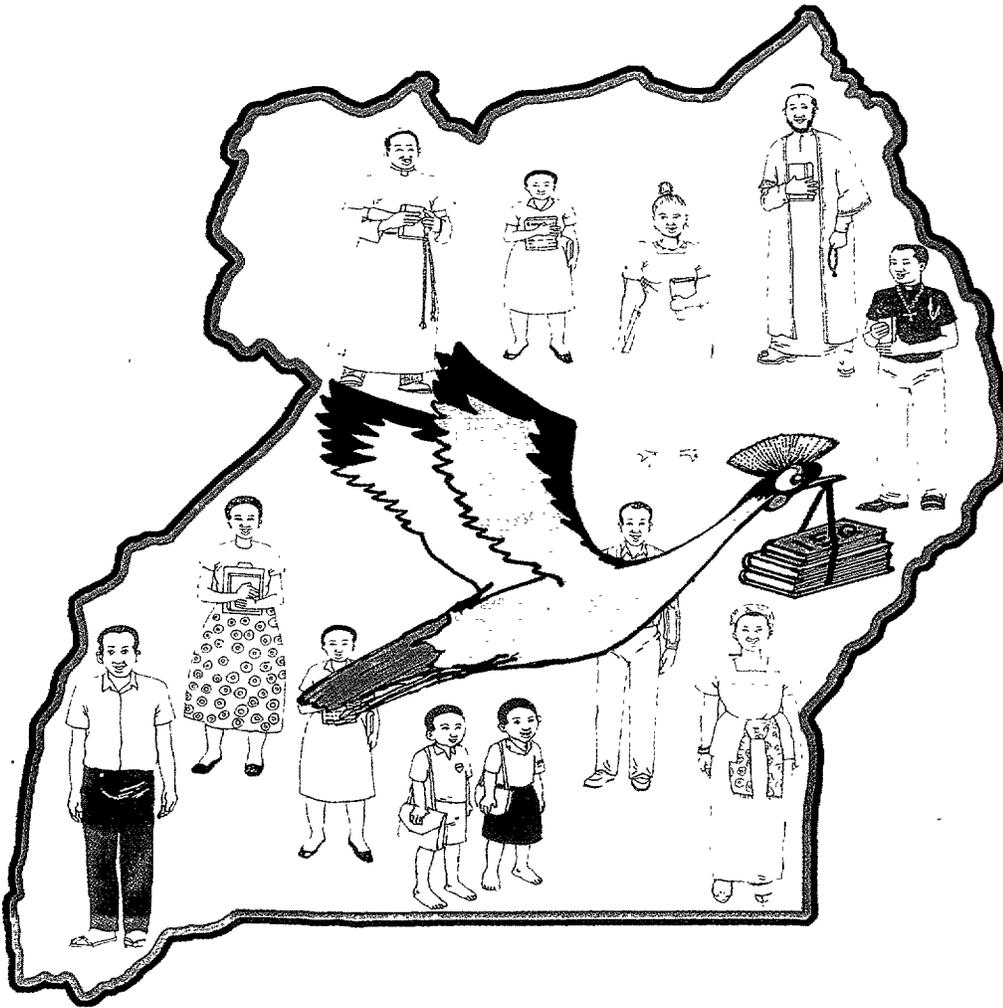


# PARTICIPATION AS A METHOD TO IMPROVE EDUCATION QUALITY : THE PRINCIPLES



Uganda IEQ Core Team

**PARTICIPATION  
AS A METHOD  
TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY:  
THE PRINCIPLES**

by

*Uganda IEQ Core Team*

**September 1999**

## Acknowledgements

The members of the Uganda IEQ Core Team that wrote these guidelines are: Lawrence Kanyike, Modesta Omona, Vincent Birungi, Denis Nuwagaba, Patience Namanya, Imelda Kemeza and Joseph Carasco.

The Uganda IEQ Core Team acknowledges the tremendous collaborative efforts of the pupils, parents, teachers and headteachers of the three IEQ-selected schools in Kazo County, Mbarara District. Without the participants from the three schools, this publication would not have been possible. It is our hope that they continue the participatory work to set an example for others to emulate.

The cooperation of the County Inspector of Schools, Kazo County, Nekemiah Mwesigwa and his successor Michael Tindikira, and the District Education Officer, Mbarara District are also acknowledged.

The Core Team was supported by the Project Coordinator, Primo Okelowange and the Office Administrator, Godfrey Batarangaya.

During the research, a constructive partnership was built with the Research Advisor, Nancy Clair and the technical assistance from Martin Pittman and Elizabeth Miller Pittman is also appreciated.

We would also like to thank the reviewers who included teachers, Coordinating Centre - Tutors and Education Officers, illustrators and all the others, too many to mention by name, who assisted us in making this guidebook a reality.

The Uganda IEQ Project is sponsored by USAID-Uganda and is implemented by UNEB in partnership with the American Institutes for Research.

*Joseph Carasco*  
**Principal Researcher**

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## Acronyms

CCT	Coordinating Centre Tutor
CIS	Country Inspector of Schools
DEO	District Education Officer
IEQ	Improving Educational Quality project
LC	Local Council
MoES	Ministry of Education & Sports
NTC	National Teachers College
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PLE	Primary Leaving Examinations
PTA	Parents Teachers' Association
PTC	Primary Teachers College
SMC	School Management Committee
TDMS	Teacher Development and Management System
UNEB	Uganda National Examinations Board
UPE	Universal Primary Education programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# **PARTICIPATION AS A METHOD TO IMPROVE EDUCATION QUALITY: THE PRINCIPLES**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Objectives**

Great progress has been made in access to education especially with the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme which began in 1997. Thus, at least in primary schools, the issue of quantity has been addressed to a large extent. What the public is now demanding, and the policy makers are responding to, is the issue of improving the quality of education.

This publication attempts to contribute guidelines towards the improvement of the quality of learning in the country. The Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) project which began in Uganda in 1995, is an effort which emphasizes learning in the classroom using effective methods. One such method that has proved effective is the application of a participatory process to formal education. IEQ wishes to share some of its experiences in improving quality learning in primary schools with all interested stakeholders in education.

The following are the specific objectives:

- To explain and stimulate discussion on how basic participatory principles of IEQ work to improve quality learning.

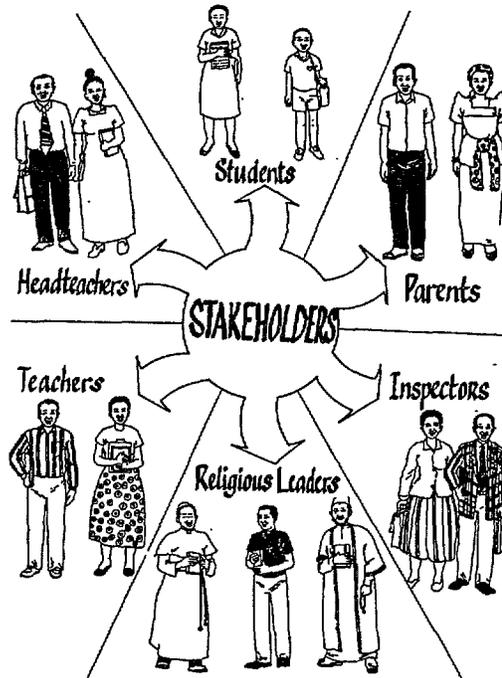
- To encourage the practice of participatory principles by all stakeholder groups in education.

The term “stakeholders” in education has been mentioned. Who are these stakeholders?

## **1.2 Stakeholder Groups**

Stakeholders are defined as those people who have a direct or indirect interest and benefit in public or private issues. If stakeholders have an interest, say in education, then these stakeholders stand to gain or lose depending on the way the education and school systems performs. One person can be a stakeholder; similarly a number of people can belong to a stakeholder group. In these guidelines, the emphasis is on stakeholder groups, as the IEQ experience has found that groups have more of an impact by acting collectively on education and learning in schools than individuals acting on their own.

Stakeholder groups in education can include parents, teachers, pupils or students headteachers, School Management Committees (SMCs), Parents’ and Teachers Associations (PTAs), Local Councils (LCs), opinion leaders, religious leaders, district officials like County Inspectors of Schools (CIS) and District Education Officers, teacher trainers in colleges and universities, as well as Ministry of Education officials at headquarters and in the field (e.g. Coordinating Centre Tutors (CCTs), curriculum developers and others.



*Various stakeholder groups are involved in education  
e.g. students, parents, teachers, inspectors, etc.*

### 1.3 Suggested Uses

*For Whom?:* These guidelines are written for anyone within a stakeholder group who is interested in **actively** improving education quality. To be effective, it is recommended that individuals committed to education organize themselves as a group to start participatory work.

*Facilitators:* In order to start a participatory process to improve education quality, it may be necessary to select a facilitator or some facilitators. In the beginning these should be those who are committed to the work, rather than who have a lot of knowledge of participatory methodology. The knowledge from these guidelines is a useful starting point for those with limited knowledge of participatory methodology.

Facilitators may come from any of the stakeholder groups and may wish to work with their own group or another stakeholder group. For example, a facilitator may be a community member and may wish to work with fellow community members. Or a CCT may work with fellow CCTs or a group of teachers in a school.

*Role of Facilitators:* There are two major roles:

- 1) Motivate by explaining with interesting and relevant reasons and encourage the concerned stakeholders within the group to start and continue the research.
- 2) Assist members of the stakeholder group to apply suitable research tools brought to their attention by the facilitators or developed by the stakeholder group themselves.



*A good facilitator assists people who are interested to reach their goal.*

*Treatment of Guidelines:* It may help members of a group to treat the principles described in Section 3 as a package. That is participatory work and research could

achieve results if these principles are applied together rather than attempting to apply say some of the principles first and the rest later.

In Section 3, the reader may find that there is an overlap between one principle and another. That is because the overlap exists in theory and in practice. Therefore, the overlap should be regarded as reinforcing each principle rather than weakening any of them.

*Limitations of Guidelines:* The major content of these guidelines are the principles which assisted work in the schools IEQ has been associated with. However, it is important to note that besides these principles, the participatory process also includes tools, techniques, procedures, structures, systems and a design. Therefore, while these guidelines are useful in starting a participatory process, two limitations should be noted:

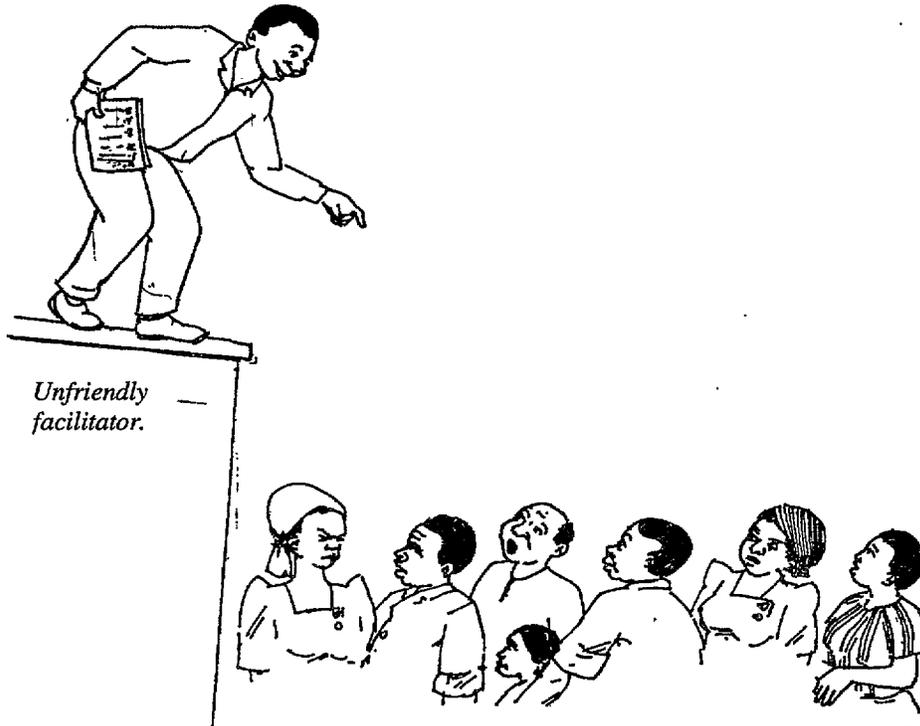
- 1) The entire participatory process has not been described.
- 2) These principles should serve only as a guide and should not be followed as a “total recipe.”

Having said the above, no reader should feel that they are not adequately prepared to start the participatory process in a school or community. Even the authors of these guidelines started the participatory work without claiming to be “fully prepared”.

The approach IEQ uses does not rely on any specific series of activities or inputs, but is responsive to the changing and specific conditions of a community or school. This is not “normal” practice in our education system so there is a need to have a change of thinking and of doing things.



*A facilitator is friendly by words and action.*



*Unfriendly  
facilitator.*

## 2 OVERVIEW OF THE UGANDA IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY PROJECT

The Uganda IEQ Project was launched on January 31, 1995 by the Minister of Education, Honourable Amanywa Mushega, at a workshop held at the Crested Crane Hotel, Jinja.

### 2.1 Objectives of the Uganda Improving Educational Quality Project

The Uganda Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project is a research project with two principal goals:

- 1) Strengthening Ugandans' skills for carrying out research to improve the quality of learning of primary school pupils.
- 2) Developing ways for making the research findings available to stakeholders in primary education, so that they can apply these findings to improving the quality of learning of primary school pupils.

### 2.2 Completed Studies

Since it started, the project has completed two studies. For both, researchers appointed by UNEB collected and analysed the data. The first, entitled *Factors Influencing Effectiveness in Primary Schools: A Baseline Study* was completed in 1996, after researchers had selected eight schools from each of three representative districts. The second study, entitled *Teachers' Work Experience, and Pupils' Schooling Experience as Determinants of Achievement in Primary Schools* was completed in 1997, after the researchers had selected four school in each of nine representative districts. The

Uganda IEQ Project has distributed the two research reports throughout the country and held several workshops to make the findings available to policy makers and other stakeholders in primary education.

### **2.3 Impact and Limitation of the Two Studies**

The two research reports have had some positive impact on policy. They have, for example, impacted areas such as the incentive grants scheme for the promotion of girls' education, minimum standards for primary schools, and care and use of textbooks in primary schools. Such policy improvements are definitely welcome. However, policy improvements in themselves do not necessarily improve the *quality of learning*. The Uganda IEQ Project therefore realized one major limitation of the two reports; they were not directly usable by stakeholders at the grassroots level, the primary schools themselves, to improve the pupils' quality of learning.

### **2.4 The Decision to Change to Participatory Action Research**

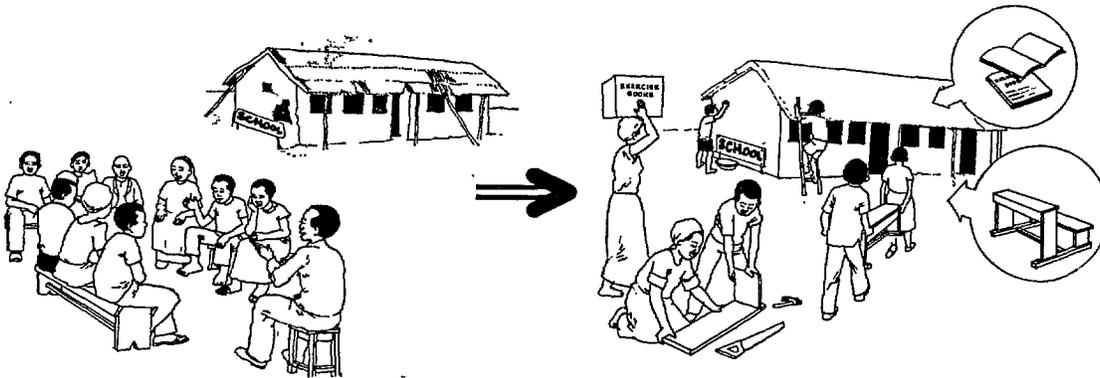
Having recognized the limitation of the first two studies, the Uganda IEQ Project decided that the next phase of the research should be directly usable by the stakeholder groups at school level. The research also needed to be valuable to the stakeholders at the higher levels, for example, national and district policymakers and administrators. To decide the appropriate methodology, the Uganda IEQ Project consulted a wide range of stakeholders in primary education at a workshop held at the Crested Crane Hotel, Jinja, in January, 1998. Subsequently, consensus was reached that the research methodology would be Participatory Action Research (PAR).

## 2.5 Differences Between PAR and Extractive Research

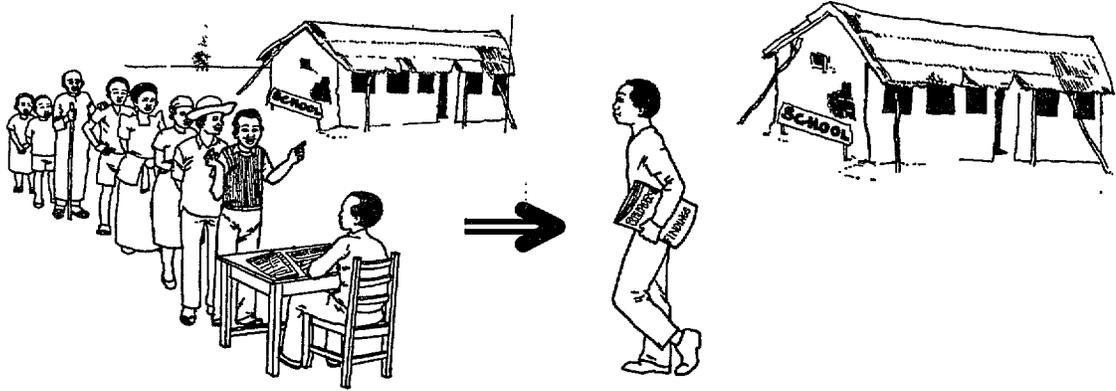
Participatory action research PAR is quite different from the research carried out in the first two studies, which was extractive research. In that method, researchers were involved mainly in collecting and extracting information from the schools where research took place. Later, they returned to the schools to present only selections of the findings and broad recommendations. These recommendations lacked guidelines for implementation.

The advantage of PAR is that it seeks to improve the role of stakeholder groups in the concerned schools by actually making them researchers. That is, the members of the group are involved within the research from the beginning of the process to the end of each cycle. The stakeholder groups can then own the research and directly use it to solve problems at school level. They collaboratively collect information, analyse it, and on the basis of their analysis, carry out activities aimed at improving the pupils' quality of learning.

The principal outcomes of extractive research are written reports which may or may not be followed by action. The principal outcomes of PAR are the actions taken by stakeholder groups based on their research. These actions could be focused on improving the quality of learning of pupils or students.



*Good Participatory Action Research – Information is obtained in a participatory manner, analysed collaboratively and normally action by all participants follows.*



*Extractive Research - Information is obtained by the researcher and a report is written by the researcher and usually no action is taken by anyone.*

## **2.6 Participatory Action Research Between February 1998 and October, 1998**

The period covered by the material presented in this guide extends from February 1998 to October, 1998. During that time, the IEQ core team was built and consolidated, schools were selected and the work began.

### **2.6.1 Selection of Schools**

Only three schools were selected for the following reasons:

- 1) This was a pilot project.
- 2) It was the first time it was to be carried out in schools in the country.
- 3) The work is intensive and therefore time-consuming.

The pool of schools to select from was arrived at following recommendations by the Ministry of Education Headquarters, TDMS field staff and district officials. The three schools selected were from Kazo County, Mbarara District.

#### **2.6.2 Development of a Core Team**

The IEQ core team consisted of two initial field facilitators who remained responsible for the overall coordination of PAR. Three additional field researchers joined the team, each working with the teacher and community groups at one school. A sixth researcher joined the team to work with the pupils of all three schools. Other members of the team included the CIS of Kazo County, the Coordinating Centre Tutor (CCT), who is responsible for the TDMS cluster in which the three selected schools are located and the Senior Research Advisor, based in the USA.

#### **2.6.3 Stakeholder Groups**

In each of the three schools selected, the IEQ core team worked with the following stakeholder groups: pupils, community (including parents, local leaders and religious leaders) and the teachers.

#### **2.6.4 Meetings**

Meetings were held to carry out PAR activities with each of the stakeholder groups in each of the schools. Each group met independently and decided democratically when and where they should meet, who would be their facilitator, what the agenda would be and who would do the work. Participants evaluated their achievements at periodic intervals.

### **2.6.5 Presentation of Achievements of Stakeholder Groups**

In September and October 1998, each of the stakeholder groups in Kazo presented their findings and achievements to forums to demonstrate how effective participatory methodology can be in rural schools. There were three forums.

The first was the Schools' Forum, where county officials, parents from all three schools, teachers from all three schools, and a representation of pupils from the three schools were present. The next one was the District Forum, where relevant district officials were present and the third was the National Forum where Ministry of Education officials including the Minister of Education were present and other relevant education officials from various parts of the country.

Out of these forums came the request that IEQ document these experiences so that others may learn from this tried and tested method.

### 3 PRINCIPLES

There are some principles which are fundamental to participatory work in schools to improve education quality. That is because they encourage active participation, contribute towards a sense of ownership and develop a capacity and confidence to engage in education improvement. These principles guide all phases of IEQ's work; planning, monitoring, attending and facilitating sessions, as well as evaluating what the core team accomplished.

Listed below are the major principles that IEQ followed in the schools and communities.

- **Learn from and with people**
- **Go at the pace of the stakeholders**
- **Learn progressively**
- **Link learning to action**
- **Be flexible and use friendly approaches**
- **Use triangulation and multiple perspectives**
- **Search for reasons why**
- **Be inclusive among and within groups**
- **Promote voluntary participation**

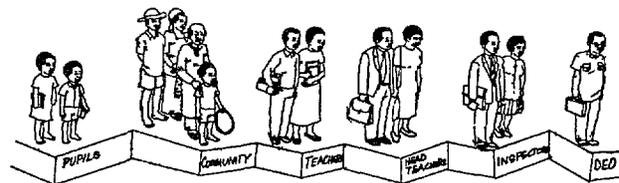
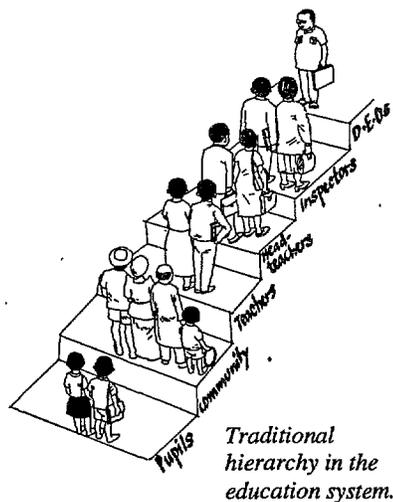
The remainder of this guidebook presents and describes the principles by explaining how each one is defined by and guides IEQ work. This explanation is then supported by examples from field experience with schools and communities. Finally, the reader is offered a number of questions designed to deepen understanding of the principles to

reflect upon how that principle might guide her or his work. The questions after each principle are meant for both individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups.

### 3.1 Learn From and With The People

This principle is based on the belief that all stakeholder groups in education have ideas and skills. Everyone has the potential to be a teacher in a broad sense and a learner at the same time. Each stakeholder group has experiences and insights that the others can learn from. In brief, everyone has something to offer to better our education in schools for the benefit of our children, ourselves and the whole country.

People holding high level positions in administration and management (bosses) in education are usually thought to know more and be wiser about all situations. So, there is a tendency by those who are not in positions of authority to sit and wait for directives from above. The participatory principle of learning from and with the people operates in a different manner: it places all people on the same plane. That means turning the traditional organizational hierarchy on its side so that everyone is at the same level, i.e. parents, teachers and students are treated equally. If that is done, it indicates respect for all the people working directly or indirectly in education.



*With participatory work, the hierarchy is turned on it's side.*

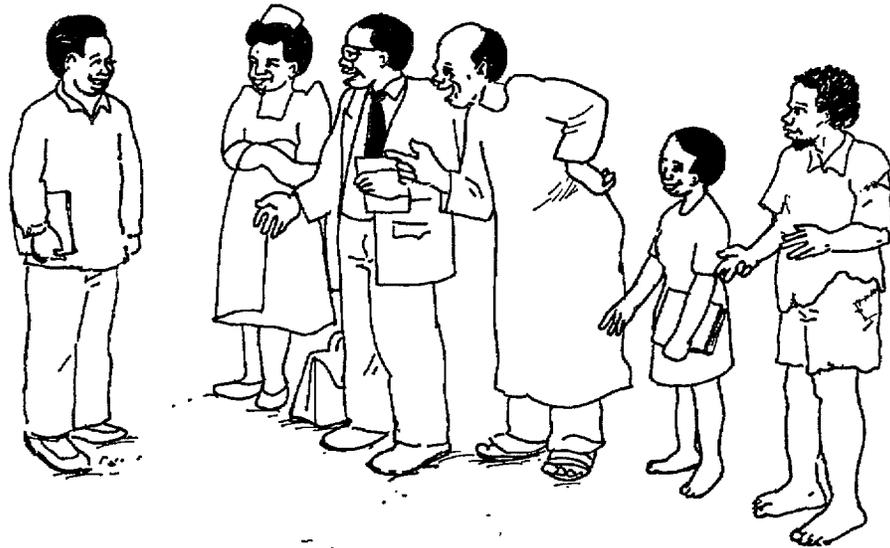
The principle includes the idea that everyone can learn and that learning does not take place only in the classroom. Learning also takes place in a variety of situations or contexts outside a school. Therefore, learning from whichever quarter ought to be recognized..

Learning from and with the people is difficult to put into practice. In typical organizational settings, people tend to be directive when communicating with others. That is, more often we tell others what to do rather than balance the directing or sensitizing of others with listening to them. This is particularly true of those who are in positions of authority, e.g. teacher trainers, tutors, headteachers, etc. Thus, parents, students, teachers and others tend to become dependent on those they consider above them in school or in society. The challenge for all groups is how to interact with respect for each another. Further, those in positions of authority must give space and opportunities to those who do not have authority; in other words to “hand over the stick” from the haves of power to the have-nots of power. If one is successful in practising these principles, it is an efficient method of empowering people.

One element of democracy is to involve all the stakeholders in decision-making. A prerequisite for making good decisions is that those involved in making the decision are well informed on the issues being discussed. As such, those who come from “outside” a community or school, however learned they are, need to learn from those “inside” a community or school. It is amazing how when “local” knowledge is used, what fantastic results it may produce.

The argument for promoting this principle is that if we can put together all good ideas taking into account all interests, then we may improve education relatively faster than if we do not. If we depend on ideas of only one person or a few people, we may not advance fast enough. Often local knowledge is very important. For example, in a rural

school, the parents, students and teachers of that school, in most cases, know their local situation much better than say an official a long distance away, e.g., at Ministry of Education Headquarters, Kampala. Under this principle, equal recognition is given to the contributions of everyone concerned in the education process, which are all the stakeholder groups mentioned above.



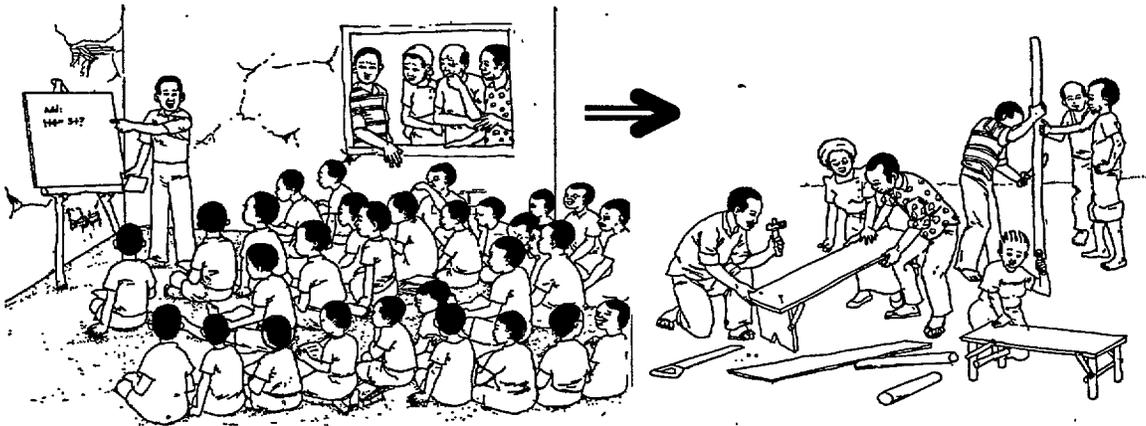
*Every person has knowledge and views to offer.*

Furthermore, when people are consulted on any issue and are fully involved in making a decision, they are more likely to feel ownership of the action. In turn, having ownership is followed by taking responsibility for making sure that planned actions are carried out. The expected outcome is that the more people who take responsibility, the higher the possibility of our children acquiring quality education. The assumption is that groups who take their destiny in their own hands and take action collaboratively are very likely to succeed in their endeavours.

### 3.1.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES

#### *Pupils*

A core team member was once surprised by what P 2 pupils were doing while drawing a map of their school. He observed “the pupils were very knowledgeable about their school environment and on their map they included what appeared to be insignificant places like garbage pits and an outdoor rack for drying utensils.” Apparently, the core team member had not expected the pupils to include the two items but the pupils were emphasising the importance of hygiene and or sanitation. In this regard, they acted as a resource people because they indicated what was important to them in their school. The core team member learnt from the pupils.



*Community observes their children sitting on dusty floor.*

*Community takes action by making furniture.*

#### *Community*

In one school, it was noted that lack of seats for pupils inhibits quality education because in most classes pupils sat on dusty uncemented floors. In a community meeting, a resolution was passed that encouraged members to discuss strategies on how

to improve on pupil seating. The community realized they could not afford to buy proper benches but that did not stop them from acting. Working within their budget, timber was bought, some pieces were halved, the space between benches determined, and work started. The carpenter started off with putting in two rows and two columns. Meanwhile, the community members checked on the progress of the work, and the following was noted by them:

- Use a whole board to sit six instead of four pupils
- Use the space sparingly to accommodate 100 pupils per class
- Smoothen the surface of the timber to facilitate good writing and protect pupils clothing
- Apply wood preservatives and pesticide to check the termites
- Provide a third strong stump support in the middle to avoid breakage due to overload and buckling.

The above is an example of the community improvising to supply simple innovative furniture where there was none before. In the words of the community, “our children have now moved from the ground floor to the first level.”

The core team members learnt from the community how to deal with pupils’ seating arrangements using available but limited resources.

### ***Teachers***

After discussing the conditions for quality learning, the teachers in one school listed how they could apply these conditions to their teaching in the classroom. From there, they worked out which methods they could employ to monitor whether they were succeeding in providing their pupils the appropriate conditions for quality learning.

One method they selected was peer supervision. The core team members were impressed to see these primary teachers produce an instrument to be used in peer supervision. Core team members also learnt something when the teachers worked out the procedure to carry out this activity on their own.

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

#### **Learn from and with the people**

- 1) Is there any person or group of people from whom we cannot learn? Consider the stakeholders you work with and think about what you might be able to learn from them.
- 2) To what extent is learning a “give and take” process?
- 3) “Experience is the best teacher”. Share with fellow participants a memorable learning experience, when you were influenced by the knowledge or skills of others. Can the group draw any lessons to be learnt from each of those experiences?

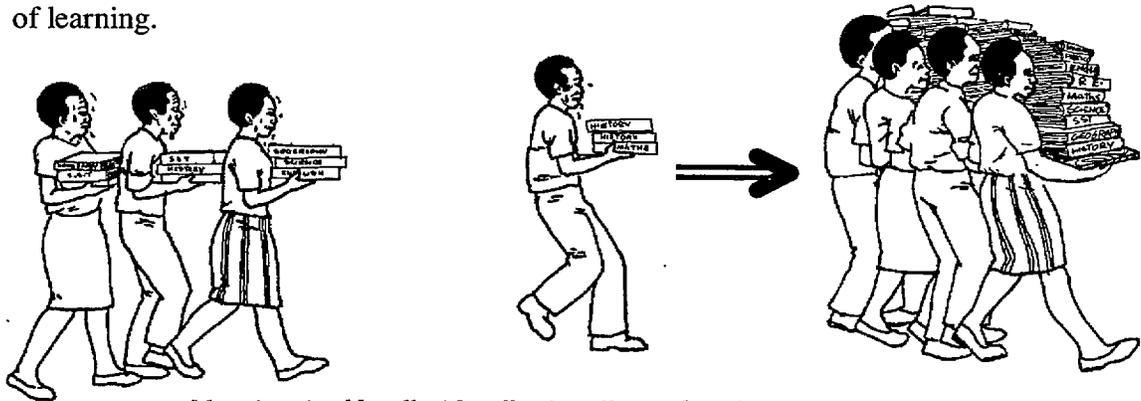
### **3.2 Go at the Pace of the Stakeholders**

This principle applies particularly to facilitators who come from one stakeholder group and work with another stakeholder group. For example, a CCT working with communities or researchers working with teachers. In such cases there is a tendency for the facilitators (CCT or researcher), to push the communities and teachers to work at the facilitator’s speed. The pressure to show results is understandable in our situation today as there is a lot to be done before we ensure quality learning. However, there is

also a need to consider carefully the advantages and disadvantages of moving at a pace the stakeholder cannot manage.

Before the stakeholders begin to participate in any activity, they want to be sure of what they are doing. In other words they want to be confident about themselves, the “outsiders” (if the facilitators are from another stakeholder group) and the activity itself. The IEQ experience in participatory work is that one is considered as an “outsider” even if he/she comes from the same village and speaks the same language/mother tongue. For instance, a teacher can be an outsider among the pupils, a CCT can be an outsider among the teachers and community members within his/her coordinating centre, an inspector can be an outsider among the teachers and headteachers, a community development worker can be an outsider among the community members, and so on. Therefore, as an “outsider” you need to build confidence among the people you are working with. This process takes time and varies from stakeholder group to stakeholder group, and from individual to individual.

Taking direction from the stakeholders themselves rather than taking the lead on your own helps you to go at their pace. Though it seems to take longer, the IEQ experienced that where community members, teachers and pupils took directions from themselves, some results were achieved within a relatively short time in improving the environment of learning.



*More is gained by all with collective effort and working at a similar pace.*

Once stakeholders understand and feel confident, they get involved. Involvement itself creates a sense of ownership and empowerment, which is critical for sustainability. Therefore, you need to solicit for involvement from the stakeholders through facilitation not instructing or lecturing. This method of working may take time, but remember, “patience pains but pays.”

The IEQ core team members found that when participants understood the purpose of specific activities, they got involved and participated actively and consequently felt happy to be associated with the work. With time, the community and teachers might undertake participatory work without the presence of an “outside” facilitator. In a way, we can say that understanding encourages involvement which in turn ensures sustainability and ownership. This is so because the participants feel empowered.

A facilitator going at the pace of the stakeholder enables the stakeholders to appreciate the issues, learn the participatory process, gain confidence and take on facilitation roles themselves. As a consequence participants become self-driven.

### ***3.2.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES***

#### ***Pupils***

A core team member had fixed particular days and dates when she would meet with the pupils for IEQ work. But sometimes other programmes were arranged by the school on those days that the IEQ pupil group was scheduled to meet. For example, one afternoon as the core team member approached one of the schools for a meeting, she heard some noise and found the pupils were restless. She proceeded to the P.6 class and asked the pupils whether they were waiting for her. The pupils responded loudly and in unison, “No, we have a sports competition.” She inquired if they could hold their meeting after

the sports competition on that day. The pupils replied that they would be tired and preferred to postpone that meeting to the following week. The core team member followed the pace of the pupils. That particular day, sports was a priority for them and that had to be respected.

### *Community*

In this particular community, at the time of the presentation at school, district and national forums, the community members realized that they had not taken any action to present. One of the community members attempted to “smuggle in a false action” and he said, “we shall say that we have built a classroom block”, when in reality, there was no classroom built. He was reminded that “we shall cross the river when we reach it.” So the community limited their presentation to the little they had done and continued working at their pace, slowly but surely. Later, after the forums, these community members completed five classrooms, and then the school had double streams for each class.

### *Teachers*

When the teachers in one school had a small group activity, they usually followed it immediately by a plenary session so that all could share the experiences that came out of each group. It was observed, during discussions on four conditions of high quality learning which were not clear to the teachers, that time was not adequate for each of the four groups to present. Two groups presented their shared experiences while the other two were carried forward to the following meeting. The facilitator did not rush the presenters and therefore accommodated the varying pace of each of the groups. Although this may appear to be a slow process, it had the advantage that time was given for all the conditions to be clearly understood by all members who were attending. The

teachers were also able to work as a team and all teachers reached a stage where they could agree on how to apply the conditions to promote quality teaching and learning.

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

#### **Go at the pace of the stakeholders**

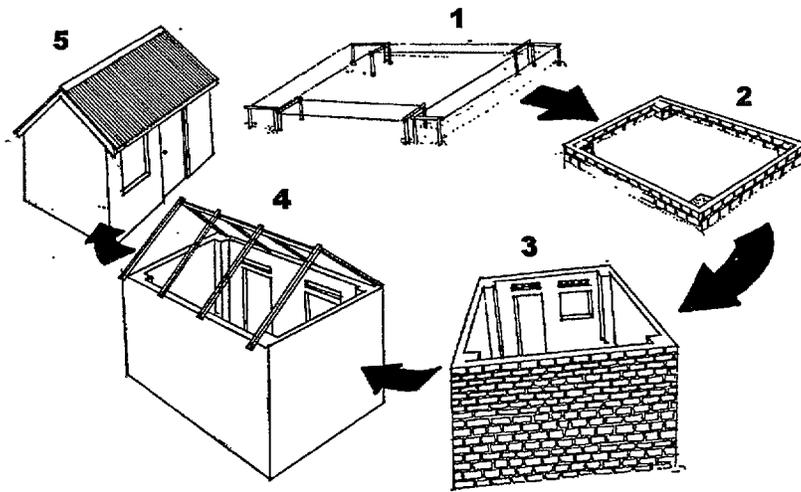
- 1) Is the education system functioning perfectly? If not, how is the stakeholder group you are in or working with, ready to change the education system and improve it?
- 2) “The best way to sabotage change is to take on too much and move very fast.” Do you agree with this statement? If yes, what do you think are other disadvantages of moving at a very fast rate in the search for quality education? If not, discuss your reasons with the rest of the group you are working with.
- 3) What factors would you consider useful in determining the pace of the stakeholder group?

### **3.3 Learn Progressively**

Progressive learning suggests that learning is continuous from birth to death and very often knowledge is increased gradually. There is no end to learning and the rate of learning varies at different times and situations. Indeed, on some occasions we may feel that we are not moving at all or even moving backwards. The strategy should be all the time to increase learning for productive work for the benefit of the individual, the stakeholder group and the society at large. So even a crisis, such as a sudden huge

influx of enrollment of pupils for UPE, might be regarded as a new opportunity rather than a roadblock for further action.

This principle fits in well with the well-known thought, which advises teachers to teach from “the known to the unknown”. New learning for an individual takes place from the position the individual is at and builds upon what is known. The same applies to any stakeholder group; the learning starts from where people are. A good facilitator builds on people’s experiences, skills and existing strengths. This not only maximizes learning potential possibilities but also builds self-confidence and self-esteem. That is individuals and groups gain the courage and self-respect to believe in themselves and the power inside them to change for the better.

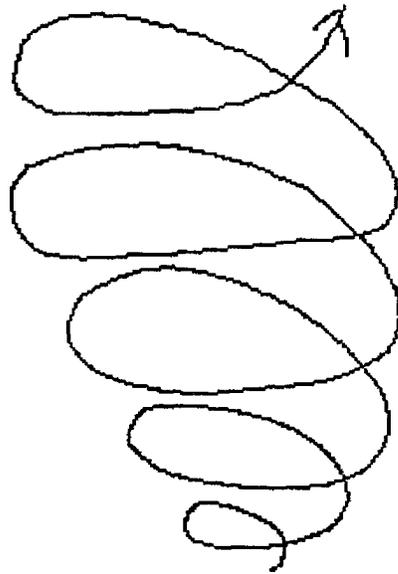


*Learning progressively can be compared to constructing a building.  
The builder starts with the foundation and builds upwards in stages.*

One good way of learning is to reflect on the work you and the group are doing. When an action is taken, it is useful to think about that action from many angles or ways. When there is some gap in time between the action and the reflection, it is very likely new thinking or ideas may arise. These new ideas very often help to push the work forward.

At the start of some work or programme, we often like to have a complete plan to attain our objectives. A set plan may not always be possible because achieving some objectives may be a complex process and not predictable at all stages. Thus, it is not always possible to have a blueprint (total plan) that if followed faithfully would lead to our objectives. It is necessary sometimes to reflect upon initial outcomes to guide and influence future activities.

Another way to consider learning is as a spiral increment of knowledge. We begin to solve a problem or challenge and move towards a solution that could be illustrated as completing one cycle. However, on solving one part of the problem, you may recognize another part. And then you start your cycle all over again but this time at a higher or more advanced level than the first cycle. This learning cycle which continues in a spiral form suggests that we never complete our learning. What should comfort us is that if we adopt this attitude to learning, we advance throughout our life and work. The world has never stopped changing. Why then should we resist to change and better ourselves all the time?



In the process of learning and acting, it is strongly recommended that the group builds in a monitoring system. Monitoring is necessary at periodic intervals to check whether the group is progressing in achieving the objectives the group is pursuing. Whether those time periods are in terms of days, weeks or months depends on what is being monitored. The group needs to decide the appropriate intervals for carrying out the monitoring activities. It has been assumed that the group has set itself time-frames or limits in which certain objectives are to be achieved. When these periods have ended or perhaps before, it is also a good idea to evaluate how the group has performed in achieving those objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation helps to identify both strengths and weaknesses. It is necessary to know both so that the group can address the weaknesses and be encouraged by the strengths to move ever forward. Part of the process of learning is making mistakes; what is important is that recognition of mistakes should be used as a learning experience so that they are not repeated. Groups and individuals should not be afraid of taking action because they think they will make mistakes.

### ***3.3.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES***

#### ***Pupils***

Recent research work with pupils was built upon the previous IEQ work. Pupils revisited the characteristics of good pupils which were listed and recorded by P6, P4, and P2 pupils the previous year. Pupils identified the characteristics that they themselves could strive for. The pupils themselves prioritized and selected which areas they would work on. The first school chose keeping time, the second school chose attendance which involves not dodging lessons and absenteeism, and the third school chose coming early to school.

The pupils looked for the root causes of the problems. Some of the causes included fear on the way, absenteeism due to market days, walking slowly to school and heavy domestic chores.

After pupils in one of the schools analysed the problem of dodging lessons, they decided each day to record the number and names of pupils who dodged lessons. After doing this for some time, the pupil research monitor realized it was not practical to write 107 names everyday. She reported this problem at the following weekly IEQ pupil meeting. Other pupils participated actively in discussions on how to solve this problem. One girl suggested, “pupils look at your neighbour and if he or she dodges, give the name to the research monitor.” In response a boy said, “How can you give in your friend?” And another girl intervened, saying “one reports a friend to improve and help him or her learn better.” To facilitate the recording of data, pupils finally resolved to drop the writing of names and record only the number of pupils. This is an example of how pupils on their own can learn progressively.

### *Community*

During community meetings, there were often debates on what day of the week IEQ meetings should be held. Several days of the week were suggested and some were tried. Eventually Saturday was chosen as the best, because the children are all at home and can take care of home chores while parents go for community meetings. The important interest of the community, therefore, is not education at any cost but needs to take into account the work pupils do at home. Such work especially for the pastoralists cannot be left unattended even for a day! Such interests therefore have to be considered seriously if one wants to engage such communities in participatory work. Through trial and error, the community and the core team members learnt which was the best time for the community to meet.

**Teachers**

The teachers first outlined from their own memorable learning experiences the conditions necessary for quality learning. They then examined whether those conditions existed in the classes they were teaching. They did this by listing all the teaching methods they knew of and later discussed what each of these methods meant in practice in the classroom. Although they thought before the discussion they knew everything about the teaching methods they listed, even the most experienced teacher in the group admitted he learnt something new. Next, the teachers examined the weaknesses in their own teaching. That step was followed by studying and implementing methods which could help in checking whether they were improving their teaching.

Teachers were learning progressively how to improve on their classroom practice.

***Questions for Discussion and Reflection*****Learn Progressively**

- 1) When does learning start and when does learning stop during our life?
- 2) Can you think of any other type of learning besides progressive learning?
- 3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of progressive learning in the improvement of education quality?
- 4) What factors facilitate progressive learning?
- 5) What strategies can you use in your work to monitor progressive learning?

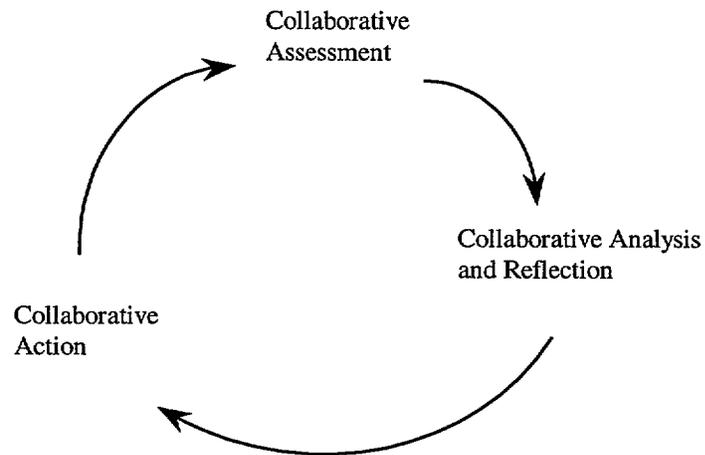
### **3.4 Link Learning to Action**

Earlier, it was stated that learning is continuous and that it takes place everywhere, any time and that everyone is a learner. However, learning is probably easier said than done. Still, every education trainer, facilitator, teacher or advisor is eager to assess whether and what the learners, participants or trainees have learnt. What indicators would you use to measure if learning has taken place? The most valid indicator used to measure learning is action. Therefore, the aspect of doing is central in a learning situation. You may have heard of the common saying, “learning by doing” but why is “doing” an important aspect of learning?

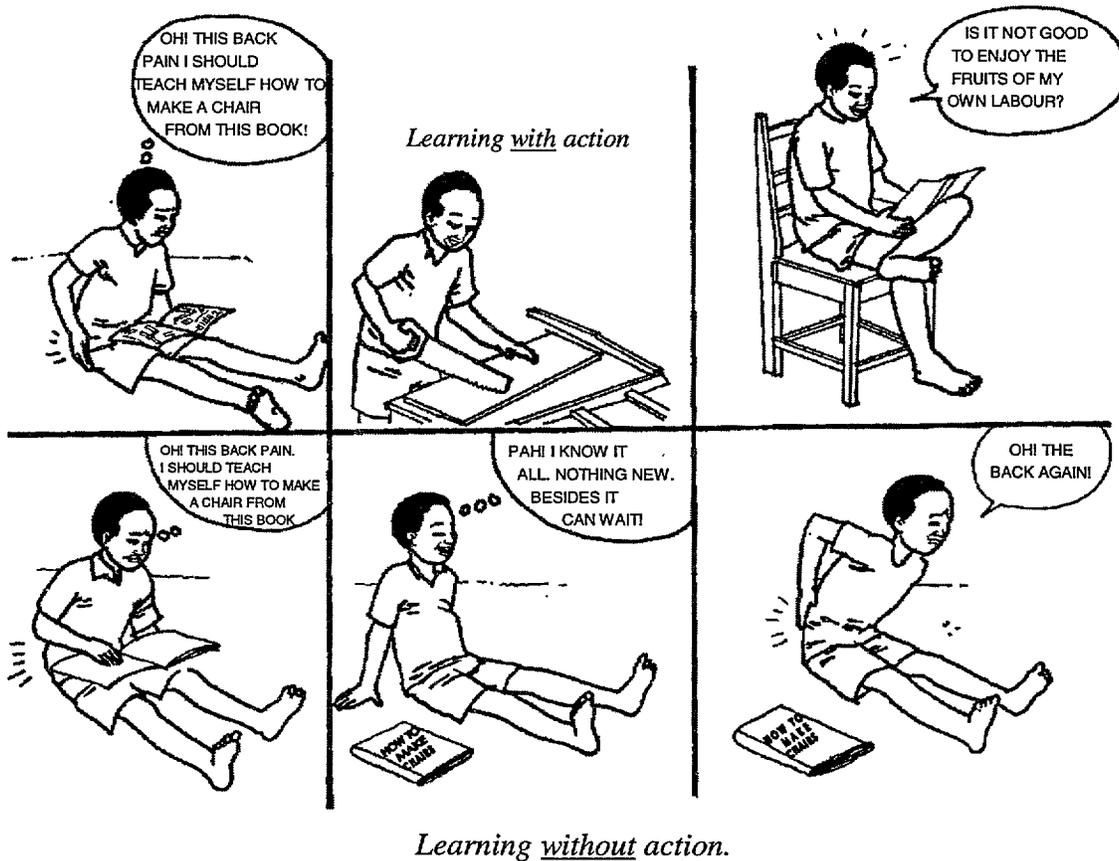
First, action is a demonstration. Secondly, learning should cause a change of attitude to do the required task, and thirdly it demonstrates that the necessary skills and knowledge to perform a task have been acquired. Therefore, action should not come as surprise or by accident. It should be the result of a step by step process, involving assessing the problem or situation, analysing it to understand the problem or situation better and finally taking action upon the problem or situation. In a group setting, as with stakeholders in education, the learning process is increased by collaboratively proceeding through these steps.

In the assessment phase of learning, the group is encouraged to think of and study some information or an experience from various aspects or angles. They then analyse the situation, examining it in detail to discover meaning, essential features, constituent parts or components, relationships and values of anything being studied. Finally, a plan of action is developed and action is collaboratively taken. This process of assessment, analysis and action encourages reflecting on the learning conditions and usually the result is a push to improve learning as well as learning conditions. In this way action takes place as a result of reflection, and action promotes reflection.

Since learning is continuous, after taking an action, you reassess the problem or situation, analyse it and take further action. This process is continuous and could be illustrated as:



The strategy of IEQ strategy includes facilitating stakeholders to go through the process of assessment and analysis before taking action. In this way, action to improve education quality did not take place immediately, but after reflection and planning.



### 3.4.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES

#### *Pupils*

In one school, the pupils wanted to learn from their own experiences and from their environment. The pupils decided to draw the old and new local homestead. Information about the old homestead was obtained from their parents and other adults. One improvement they identified in the new homestead, compared with the old one was latrines. The pupils discussed how good hygiene prevented diseases like cholera. Pupils followed up this discussion by proposing ways they could improve school

hygiene. They proposed items that they could make themselves, including toilet baskets, cobweb brooms, sweeping brooms, toilet covers and drying racks. Some pupils volunteered individually to make some of the items at home. These items were made and donated to the school by the IEQ pupil group.

Given the space and opportunity, pupils can link learning in the classroom to action in their lives.

### *Community*

At a community meeting, when conditions for quality learning were being discussed, one issue among the many that were raised, was nutrition of the pupils. Some parents reported that they had observed that when their children returned from school, they were exhausted and sometimes almost collapsing. The importance of lunchtime nourishment for pupils, who were in school from 8.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., was emphasized by many parents, who resolved to ensure that every child takes some packed lunch from home. To follow up their own regulation, one community member volunteered to visit the school at regular intervals to monitor which children had packed lunch. The parents of the children who did not carry packed lunches were reminded that it would be difficult for their children to learn on an empty stomach. The number of children who came with their packed lunches increased dramatically after this action.

### *Teachers*

The teachers participating in IEQ research identified different areas of learning. Efforts were made to link learning to action. They realized the need for feedback most importantly from the direct beneficiary; the pupils. In one of the meetings they developed a tool termed “pupils evaluation.” The tool for easy use was based on:

- 1) What three things did you like in the lesson?
- 2) What three things did you not like in the lesson?

A sample of the responses from the pupils to question 1:

“a good picture or drawing on the chalkboard” and  
“the teacher was smart.”

A sample of the responses from the pupils to question 2:

“I could not understand the words”  
“I could not see what was written on the chalkboard.”

After a number of agreed evaluations, the teachers collectively analysed the data and adjusted accordingly. The teachers said that they made greater efforts to write legibly and made appropriate seating arrangements in the class so that every pupil could see the chalkboard.

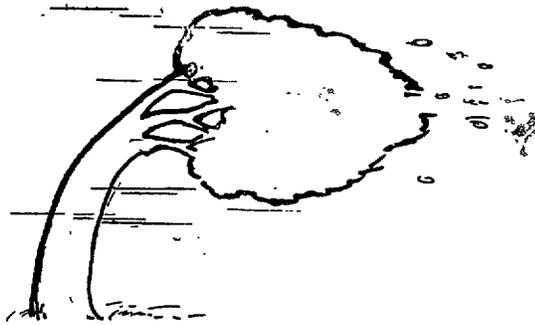
### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

#### **Link learning to action**

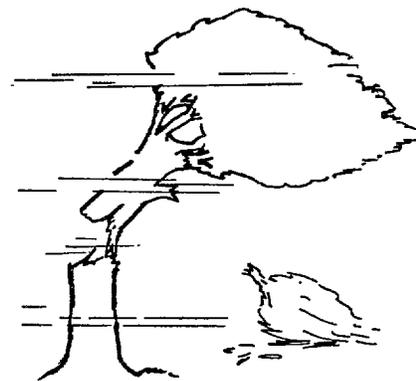
- 1) “We are judged by our actions and not by our words”. How would you apply this statement in your group to improve education in your school or institution?
- 2) As an education stakeholder, what does your action to improve educational quality look like and involve?
- 3) What indicators would you use to measure the progress in improving educational quality?
- 4) How would you reward stakeholders for a successful task?

### 3.5 Be Flexible and Use Friendly Approaches

It is necessary to be flexible because the participatory process rarely plays itself out the same way each time and in every place and situation. Even with “expert” knowledge of a place and its people and with good plans and organization, you may be caught by surprise with the unexpected. If so, there is a need to be open to the new situation, challenge or idea. It is possible that the new situation reveals new opportunities and new ideas and may be the path to follow for success. As new information is revealed, be prepared also to modify an already existing practice or approach. However, please note that being flexible does not mean forgetting one’s strategic objectives.



*A flexible tree bends with the wind.*



*A rigid tree breaks with the wind.*

The IEQ experience in participation indicates that “how it works out” depends on the environment and the people. It is known that the social, political and economic situation varies from place to place and over time. Likewise with people; there is a great diversity of people in terms of customs and behaviour and even these customs and behaviour have not remained constant all the time. Therefore, it is difficult to say in advance what will be the exact pathway one has to follow.

When we interact with other people, there are better chances for cooperation and collaboration if we act and treat people in a friendly and open manner. In practice we demonstrate friendliness and sincerity through how we communicate, behave, make seating arrangements, dress, and generally the type of interaction we have with people. Some ways are considered friendly and others are not. You need to work out which are which for any group of people.

Another aspect of an informal process is that people especially facilitators, should avoid being tense, rigid, unsmiling, aloof and proud. There is a common myth that it is not possible to do serious work and enjoy it at the same time. It is possible to do good work and achieve results by including fun, singing and dancing. Work and fun may not always be simultaneous but each (work and fun) could alternate. So fun could be had in between serious bouts of work. Work, too, can be fun.

A good facilitator respects and responds to the concerns and needs of their participants. Everyone has some biases and prejudices and makes some assumptions. These may become even more pronounced when one belongs to one stakeholder group (e.g. CCT or a teacher trainer) and works with another stakeholder group (e.g. teachers) as a facilitator. It is necessary first to be aware of one's own biases and prejudices and assumptions and then develop methods to overcome these difficulties.

### ***3.5.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES***

#### ***Pupils***

In one of the schools, pupils selected a research monitor and his assistant, to monitor and record the number of pupils who came early to school. For one meeting, both monitors were absent and the pupils who attended that meeting wanted a report of the

previous week's attendance. To everybody's surprise, a female pupil came up with two pieces of paper and said, "the research monitor left me with the recordings." The pupils learnt from this experience that it is possible that both monitors may be absent from a meeting. So they resolved to elect a substitute monitor to take the place of the two monitors, if they were both absent again. The pupils demonstrated a high degree of flexibility and responsibility when they had the opportunity to make decisions in their own interest.

### *Community*

One way in which IEQ community meetings tried to be friendly was in the seating arrangements. Chairs were usually arranged in one circle so that everyone felt they were part of one group and were facing each other as equals. Even in a large meeting like the Schools' Forum where about two hundred people participated, the seating arrangement was in a semi-circular form. When evaluating what went well in this schools' forum meeting, one community member commented: "I liked this meeting because there was no High Table".

### *Teachers*

As teachers prepared for the school, district and national forums for quality learning, there were rehearsals at various meetings. At one meeting three weeks before the presentation, a teacher who was a facilitator presented a view that they should select who would present the materials so as to avoid last minute confusion. However, an objection was made to the proposal: "Why the rush? Let us first discuss the items to present at the forums." Another member stated, "We still need to work as a team." Fellow members nodded in approval. The mover to choose presenters replied, "I can

change my mind, I am not rigid, the PLA principles tell us to be flexible.” This was followed by a very useful discussion on the content of their presentation.

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

#### **Be flexible and use friendly approaches**

- 1) What can you do to ensure that others see you as friendly and approachable?
- 2) In what instances in your life do you find flexibility a useful principle as opposed to rigidity?

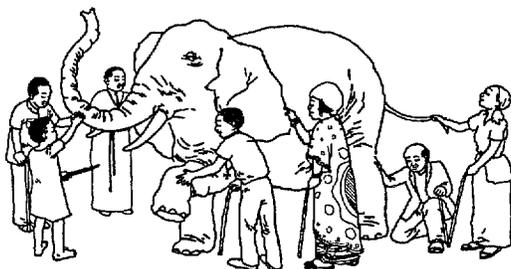
### **3.6 Use Triangulation and Multiple Perspectives**

To collect information for action, three aspects need to be considered: the method/s to be used, the source of information and the people gathering the data.

When some reliable information or data is needed, it is usual to think of using one tool or method. Sometimes, however, it may be more useful to use more than one tool or method to obtain information especially of the type that is important for the work one is doing or acting on. This is because every tool or method has both advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, if more than one tool is used, the sum total of the advantages and disadvantages may be balanced.

Similarly, if information on a certain matter is needed, for example, discipline in a school, one stakeholder group such as the headteacher could be approached. But the headteacher has only one perspective, as a manager and administrator of the school. Teachers may have other perspectives and so may the pupils. It is also possible that parents have a different view on discipline when compared to the other stakeholder

groups. In order to have a complete or holistic picture on the issue of discipline it will be necessary to obtain information from all the different stakeholder groups. Obtaining information from more than one source also has the advantage of being able to cross-check information received from different sources.



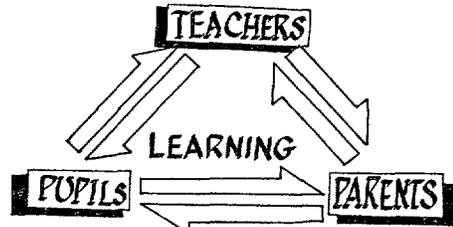
*What is an elephant? If we touch only one part of an elephant, we will not learn of what a whole elephant looks like. To get a complete picture of what an elephant looks like it is necessary to examine it from several angles.*

As stated previously, the IEQ core team believes that everyone potentially has something to offer as partners in education. That does not mean everyone does everything in education. There are different roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder group. It would be best if each stakeholder group worked out their own roles and responsibilities. But in order to obtain maximum cooperation between groups, each stakeholder group ought to listen to the other groups. In that way they could work out which roles and responsibilities are different and how and where there is an overlap or need for coordination. Such a process also helps to act as a check and balance among all stakeholder groups. Thereafter, like the different parts of a healthy body, the stakeholder groups can work together efficiently.

Sometimes one person or a small group claims to be speaking on behalf of all stakeholders. It may not always be true that that person or small group represents the views of all the stakeholders in a group. Therefore it is useful to listen to as many views as possible before making a decision. When there are differences in views, the first approach should be to seek a consensus by looking for common ground. In some cases, consensus may not be arrived at and then, as a last resort, it may be necessary to vote.

When forming a team to carry out participatory work, it is important to include members of different disciplines and backgrounds. Also both men and women should

be members of a team. Diversity brings in various ways of looking at one issue and so may help to produce highly efficient and productive solutions. Cross-fertilization in nature has certainly proved more effective than self-pollination. Cross-fertilization of ideas has helped to produce the world's great thinkers and philosophers. Why should we go for less?



*Pupils, parents and teachers should all be involved in the learning process.*

### **3.6.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES**

#### ***Pupils***

To carry on research activities with pupils in schools, the core team member had to first consult several stakeholder groups to determine the appropriate day and time to carry out the research activities.

In one school, the core team member first briefed the deputy headteacher, who was in charge of the school at the time, about the research work to be carried out with the P6 pupils.

The deputy headteacher requested the core team member to meet with the P6 teacher to discuss the issue. The P6 teacher and the core team member went through the P6 timetable together. They agreed that the most suitable time for the P6 pupils to meet was on Wednesday afternoons from 2.50 to 4.20 p.m., the time for extra-curricular activities.

From there, the core team member talked to the P6 class about IEQ research work. Most of the P6 pupils enthusiastically and voluntarily agreed to do IEQ work.

The above is a case where different stakeholder groups, i.e. pupils, teachers and headteachers were interested parties. Therefore, it was necessary to get their views on when P6 pupils could hold IEQ meetings.

### *Community*

In one community meeting, the participants drew maps of their villages. The catchment area for that particular school included six villages. So the participants grouped themselves by their villages. For each village, the map included all the households. The charts accompanying the maps indicated how many school-aged children were in each household and how many were in school. The charts also showed the number of children who absented themselves often and how many were not enrolled in school. The community had conducted a census of pupil enrolment in their villages.

It happened that for one village there was only one woman present at that meeting. She made an attempt to do the map of her village on her own. After sometime, she realised that she did not have all the information to include on the map and the charts. She consulted with the facilitator and suggested that she could take the map home and discuss it with her LC officials, who she thought had all the information. The meeting agreed with her proposal. At the following meeting she produced a map with all the necessary information.

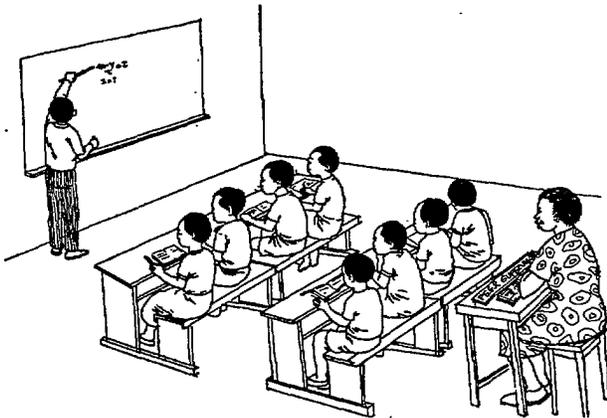
Here is a case where the community group decided that they need to work with another group, that was the LC officials, in order for them to move their work forward.

## Teachers

To establish a clear picture on the performance of classroom teaching, teachers used a variety of methods and instruments.

1. *Self-evaluation Questionnaire*: The teachers developed this instrument. Each teacher who volunteered to use it took it to a class they were teaching and completed the questionnaire after the lesson. The results from the questionnaires completed by different teachers were compiled and discussed by the teachers.

The teachers resolved to remedy some of their weaknesses which were revealed by analysing the data from the questionnaires.



*Peer Supervision: One teacher supervises her/his fellow-teacher.*

2. *Peer Supervision*: To improve quality learning, teachers saw a need to help one another as they taught. Teachers decided to practise peer assistance where a teacher would observe a fellow-teacher's lesson and record the strengths and weaknesses of the

teaching. Observations were discussed by the two teachers and some of the general comments were presented to the other teachers in a regular IEQ teachers' meeting. One of these observations was that most teachers were using one method most of the time – question and answer method.

3. *Pupil Evaluation:* With self-evaluation and peer supervision, the ultimate beneficiaries, the pupils, have not been given an opportunity to be heard. When this oversight was observed, there followed a hot debate. Some teachers argued that the pupils did not know what to look for while others said that they would lose the respect of the pupils. It was agreed eventually that pupils can make some comments about teaching and that if teachers respected pupils, pupils will reciprocate. Pupils' evaluation was carried out and some teachers were surprised at the feedback they received. One experienced teacher was informed by his pupils that his handwriting on the chalkboard was not good and another teacher did not realize that some pupils could not see the chalkboard from where they were seated.

In the case of evaluating classroom teaching, several methods and different stakeholder groups could be involved. The major consideration would be to make this exercise non-threatening to the teachers. After all, we have one objective, which is to improve learning.

### *Questions for Discussion and Reflection*

#### **Use triangulation and Multiple Perspectives**

- 1) What is the rationale of obtaining information from more than one stakeholder group to design strategies to overcome the obstacles of quality learning?
- 2) "Unity is strength and improving educational quality is a collaborative process among education stakeholders". What role can you play to supplement other stakeholders to bring about quality education?
- 3) How might you collect reliable information to assist you in designing strategies to improve quality learning?

### 3.7 Search For Reasons Why

One principle that applies to all the participatory work is that generally anything that people do can be analysed. So when, for example, you are collecting data or dealing with any challenge or problem, there is a need to probe, and probe, and probe. That is, continuously ask questions which may help you and the group to understand better what you are dealing or working with.

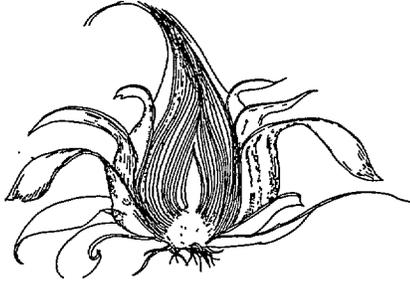
When working with, and within, a group, we must acknowledge that our behaviour and interpretations are based on our own perspectives, biases and prejudices. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of one's own attitudes and actions. One way of overcoming



*Think deeply to search for reasons why.*

bias prejudice is to question and gather additional information about every event and action. In that way, you go beyond the surface or appearances. There is a saying, “you cannot tell a book by its cover.” So you need to investigate further any matter that the group is interested in. Indeed we could say the search to understand our reality, that is what is happening around us, is a continuous process, that never ends.

By conducting active, participatory activities and using interactive facilitation styles, participants can be encouraged to look for causes of problems. There are so many problems we face in education and every one of them has a cause. Make it a point to examine exhaustively for all possible causes. Sometimes, there are causes of causes, so the questioning of causes continues until you get to the root cause; the father and mother of all causes. In most processes there are trends one needs to study if we want to improve our education and learning. And on some occasions there may be changes which we need to observe and study.



*Probing or searching for reasons why is like peeling an onion, layer by layer, to get to the root cause.*

A word of caution seems to be in order here. In IEQ experience, when a stakeholder group is searching for reasons why, for a particular problem, that stakeholder group often tends to concentrate only on the mistakes and failings of other stakeholder groups. For example, a teachers' group, in listing causes of a students, headteachers, parents, county inspectors, district officials and Ministry of Education officials. Rarely will the teachers talk of their own weaknesses. But it is not only the teachers as a stakeholder group who do this. All other stakeholder groups are also guilty of this error of off-loading responsibility on to others. The solution would be first for each stakeholder group to recognize both its own strengths and weaknesses. Then that stakeholder group may discuss the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholder groups. In other words, a stakeholder group should begin by putting its house in order. To quote from the Bible: "Remove a log in your eyes before you remove a speck in another's eyes".

There are some people and groups who have relevant and interesting experiences and are willing to share these with others. One role of a facilitator, and of other participants as well, is to encourage people to share more of their experiences by asking follow-up questions. Asking questions after a participant has contributed as mentioned before has the added advantage of deepening understanding of any issue being discussed. Certain ideas may become clearer for the entire group.

If we play the role of facilitator, it is important that we see ourselves as partners with the people we are working within the education process. Partnership suggests that each partner is sharing roles and responsibilities and is involved in decision-making. In this case, one responsibility for each partner is to learn all the time. By asking questions,

facilitators become partners as opposed to being bosses or directors in the learning of stakeholders. Participating in this way encourages everyone to be a contributor in the teaching-learning process.

### **3.7.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES**

#### ***Pupils***

Pupils were drawing maps of their schools to determine what they considered important in their school. They were continually encouraged by the facilitator to defend why a feature should be included on the school map, why they considered it important. Below is part of a report about the pupils' discussion on the structure where packed lunch was stored:

“There was a debate whether this structure should be drawn on the map. Some pupils argued that they were not using the structure so it was not necessary to put it on the map. But others argued that the pupils of P3 and P7 use the structure for keeping their maps. So both the pupils who used the structure to store their food and those who used it to store the IEQ work like maps thought it was important to them. Eventually the structure was included on the map.”

#### ***Community***

Communities had their meetings on how to improve the quality of education in their respective schools. At one particular meeting, a community member passionately appealed to fellow-members:

“Take action rather than making resolutions and shelving them. Think of concrete indicators. So far, you have put desks in the classroom for pupils to do their work well. How are the desks used for quality learning? How do you followup the teacher-parent relationship to promote quality education? How do you use the indicators for quality education? How do we sustain the work to maintain quality education?”

Here a community member was encouraging fellow community members to think more deeply about the issues of quality learning. Furthermore, these questions invited community members to begin the process of reassessing and reanalysing the situation after taking action, laying a foundation for subsequent action and support for quality education.

### *Teachers*

When something new is introduced, people have different perceptions. It is not until they understand and are satisfied with the explanations that they settle down to work and appreciate what is being done. This is what IEQ faced in its initial stage with the teachers. A core team member noted an encounter with one of the teachers: The core team member asked the leader what were his feelings about the research. In response he said:

“This research is helping us because we are now using our time fruitfully. These days during break we discuss nothing but research ..... A teacher who has access to this research will have market because as far as I can see, it is going to help us improve our teaching skills.”

The teacher also asked, “But why are you asking me these questions? Do you sense something?” The core team member replied, “No, but I just wanted to know.” Then the teacher further explained: “At first we did not welcome you because when we heard

that you were from UNEB we were wondering and asking ourselves what type of research do they want to carry out in our school when our children continue to fail examinations. We also thought you are proud and will behave as our superiors. But now we see that you are different. In fact now we have become researchers.”

The teachers had asked themselves the question “why” of the core team members until they felt comfortable about the answers that they had worked out.

### *Questions for Discussions and Reflection*

#### **Search for reasons why**

- 1) What advantage is there in probing, that is asking question after question, to a deeper level on a particular problem?
- 2) “There is no smoke without fire.” To what extent is this statement true in relation to finding the root cause of poor educational quality and identifying potential remedies?
- 3) What would you consider as indicators of poor educational quality?

### **3.8 Be Inclusive Among and Between Groups**

Every individual has something to offer society. Differences of perception and opinion offer opportunities to broaden thinking and therefore should be explored and discussed. When individuals challenge one another, this stimulates thought of how to deal with the differences. The results are often progress and development. In politics, for instance, challenges from a political group not in power may put the government in power on its

toes, to improve performance and produce results. If challenges and differences of opinion are handled correctly, they can lead to improvement in educational quality.

Marginalized people in our society, such as women, children and non-literates have ideas and contributions to make to improve the education sector. But because the dominant groups in society feel certain people have nothing to offer, the marginalized people are neither listened to nor given an opportunity to participate. Therefore, they resort to speaking in “small voices”. Their good ideas and potential contributions go unnoticed, and unutilized and therefore wasted.

In our school system women and non-literates constitute a significant number of parents who have a stake in education. And their and other children are the most important of all the stakeholders because they are direct beneficiaries. Therefore, attempting to improve quality will be difficult if we do not seek and encourage the input of the marginalized people at all stages and levels of education.



*Unity is strength. If stakeholders work together, they are strong to achieve their objectives.*

The IEQ experience is that marginalized people “drop out” of participatory work once they feel alienated either by methods of work or by how people relate to them. For instance the three communities where IEQ has worked registered high numbers of community members attending initial IEQ meetings. In each, there was an average of 80 community members: male and female, literate and non-literate. But IEQ used a system of passing an attendance list round for people to write their names. This was quite embarrassing for the non-literates who had to seek help from others to have their names recorded. The IEQ researchers also wrote down points generated either in group discussion or in plenary discussion on flip charts and hung up the flip charts for people to read. This was intimidating to those who could not read. As a result, IEQ witnessed

the non-literate people “dropping out” as time passed by. The attendance at meetings dropped to below 30 members in each community. Those who continued were all people who could read and write. The lesson IEQ learnt was that using techniques such as employing symbols and drawing on the ground are more useful in engaging everyone.

Involving every stakeholder in participatory work requires that individuals within groups as well as the facilitators should become aware of their roles and develop methods of offsetting bias. Biases are threats and, in fact, do hinder inclusiveness. For example, one may hold biases about people of another ethnic group or tribe or religion. If we really wish to improve the quality of our education, we need to get more and more people involved in education and not less and less. If there are differences between groups, first these should be recognized. Then these differences should be developed in such a way that they strengthen rather than weaken the national efforts.

### ***3.8.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES***

#### ***Pupils***

While holding discussions on research work, pupils were gender sensitive. Both male and female pupils were involved in participatory activities. For instance, pupils monitored three performances on keeping time in one of the schools. In order to ensure that both boys and girls were included, they alternated who would record the data and make the report.

In one particular pupils’ meeting some pupils came up and helped the core team members to put up a flip chart paper. When it was time to record a discussion that was about to take place, a female pupil volunteered to record but as she went up to the flip

chart paper, the male pupils in the group protested, saying, “Last week a girl wrote on the flip paper, now it is the turn of the boys”. The pupils exchanged ideas peacefully and arrived at a consensus that both boys and girls should be given equal opportunities to participate. The core team member and pupils listened to and respected each others knowledge, experiences and contributions.

In another school, pupils have suggested strategies such as reading books when the teacher is not in class to deal with indiscipline. To improve on reading and writing skills for quality learning, pupils suggested involving parents, grand parents, aunties and uncles in telling and writing folk stories during the holiday. This involved participation of other stakeholder groups like parents who are encouraged to participate in pupils learning. Learning does not take place only in a classroom, it can take place everywhere and with everyone.

### ***Community***

This principle is exemplified in an exercise of drawing the village maps. Male and female members of the groups separated into two groups and each group started their maps on the ground. Each group identified landmarks of social, religious, political and economic importance within the area around the school. The symbols used on the maps included materials freely available around ranging from different types of leaves, to bricks and sticks, etc. They cross-checked for what might have been left out. It was fascinating when some non-literate women separated from the rest of the women and then drew a second map. This map did not include any words, but had all the features that the other group thought was important to include. Each of the three maps, two by females and one by males, were explained well by one representative of each group to the plenary.

**Teachers**

Two people staged a role-play on a memorable experience in primary school to aid reflection on quality learning. The rest of the teachers observed and then identified the conditions that assisted learning. After the role-play, the teachers were paired and given ten minutes to take a mind walk and share their memorable learning experiences between the two members. In a plenary session each member of a pair reported the experiences to the rest of their colleagues. Everyone got involved because each participant had a chance to speak, even those perceived to be shy.

**Questions for Discussion and Reflection****Be inclusive among and within groups**

- 1) Which are the stakeholder groups who have an interest or stake in education?
- 2) Are there any individuals in the group you are working with, who have been excluded or not encouraged to join in your collective effort to improve education? For what reasons do you feel this may be the case? What strategies might you adopt to be inclusive and encourage their involvement?
- 3) What would you consider as supportive factors to active participation of stakeholders within and among groups in activities to improve educational quality?
- 4) In what way can you involve individual stakeholders with differences in opinions or perspective, to participate in your group activities?

### 3.9 Promote Voluntary Participation

*“You can motivate by fear.*

*And you can motivate by reward.*

*Both methods are temporary.*

*The only lasting thing is self-motivation”*

Homer Rice

For participation to be effective and lasting, all concerned should have the interest and commitment to participate in an activity. Voluntary action involves willingness of stakeholders to be actively involved. When people volunteer freely and independently to do something they usually honour and respect that decision. They feel accountable for the decision and its outcomes. They develop the commitment to sustain that activity and improve on it to make it better. In other words, they own the activity and feel proud to be associated with it. On the other hand, forcing individuals or stakeholder groups to participate is like “flogging a dead horse”, and the result is usually frustrating. Individuals who are forced neither own the decision nor feel responsible for its outcomes.

Participatory work involves increasing people’s capacity to initiate their own activities. To achieve this, participants need to be interested and internally motivated. External motivation is usually short-lived and not effective because the motivation disappears as soon as the external stimulus is removed. Internal motivation is more efficient, because it creates a lasting drive to do things including learning independently without a facilitator or teacher.



*A facilitator using force.*



*A facilitator working collaboratively.*



*Result: Success and work are sustained.*

The core team members' experience is that appreciating the actions taken by volunteers is very stimulating and motivating for the voluntary participants. The appreciation can be simply expressed in words or by clapping. The IEQ practice came from the belief that it is not possible to sustain material and financial unofficial rewards.

Therefore voluntary action involves encouraging the stakeholders to be actively involved and giving them the opportunity to do so. It must be remembered that the participation of the stakeholders might not be 100% and you should continue to encourage and commend participants' efforts. The main benefit for parents is that they learn and improve the school for their children, and for the teachers, they develop professionally by playing an active role in participatory work in schools.

Participatory work involves increasing people's capacity to initiate their own activities. For stakeholders to initiate their own activities, they need to be given the opportunity to do so. Those who are in positions of authority should not only provide the space for stakeholders but should also promote participation on a voluntary basis.

Currently, in our context voluntary participation is not popular because most people have to struggle hard to earn a living and do not have much spare time. What needs to

be communicated well and clearly is that if we improve the quality of our education, all of us stand to benefit.

### **3.9.1 FIELD EXPERIENCES**

#### ***Pupils***

Taking one school as an example, Participatory Action Research activities began at 2.00 p.m. on Thursdays. As other pupils went to classes for the afternoon session, the P.6 IEQ group carried the blackboard, some chairs, flip-chart paper and other necessary materials to the research venue under a tree in the school compound. On one occasion the core team member was not able to get to the school as scheduled. The pupils carried on working without her presence nor of any other adult. This demonstrates that when pupils take up work voluntarily, they will do it without being pushed by adults.

#### ***Community***

In one community, participants volunteered to hold IEQ meetings twice a month. They kept committed to this decision and attendance at meetings was fairly good. At one stage, however, one core team member spoke strongly to persuade them to hold IEQ meetings every week. They agreed perhaps because they felt intimidated. Attendance at IEQ meetings declined drastically. Although they did not object openly to a core team member's forceful ways immediately, they later showed it by not turning up for those meetings. In other words, "they voted with their feet." This experience underlined to core team members the importance of promoting voluntary participation.

***Teachers***

The teachers identified what constitutes quality education. The brainstorming came up with 18 items and still their ideas was not exhausted. During the course of this discussion, the teachers realized that they, as teachers, had weaknesses which needed to be identified and ways and means of overcoming them should be taken up as a priority. Core team members learnt that when teachers were involved voluntarily in this work, they were prepared to discuss freely their weakness without fear of victimization from the group.

***Questions for Discussion and Reflection*****Promote Voluntary Participation**

- 1) Which method has long term benefits for our schools, voluntary participation or forced participation?
- 2) What can you and your group do to promote and sustain the spirit of voluntary action in your efforts to improve educational quality of our institutions/schools/communities?

## 4 CONCLUSION

The IEQ core team hopes that you have found these guidelines interesting and useful for your work in education, whatever your role is and wherever you may be located. It is our firm belief that theory alone will not improve the quality of our education. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you act by trying to practise yourself these proposed principles.

Although you have not been given a step-by-step model to follow, the underlying principles required for carrying out participatory work has been described. Therefore, there is opportunity to get started in a creative manner and get action done to improve quality learning in our schools.

If you have organized a group and have started working and meeting some challenges and problems, you may wish to contact us.

Please do not hesitate to do so if you think we may be of help to your group. Our objective, we believe, is the same as yours which is to improve the learning of our pupils and students for their benefit and that of the whole country.

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## 5 FURTHER READING ON PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGY

This list is not exhaustive but is meant to facilitate and stimulate the reader to seek for other literature on the participatory process.

Chalmers, Robert (1988): *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York.

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