

**THE IEQ APPROACH:
STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION**

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INTRODUCTION

Language is one of humanity's major means of expression. It plays a major role in the education of the child both formally and informally. Ayo Bamgbose (1976), for example, posits that in formal education the degree of mastery in the language of instruction influences school achievement quite considerably. He therefore holds the view that a child who comes to school with a language of his own and is then introduced to learning in another language is bound to have problems that are different from those of a child who is taught in his own mother tongue. There is therefore the general belief that primary education at least is best begun in a child's mother tongue.

Many eminent linguists, psychologists, educationists and other scholars agree that there is a definite link between language and development. It is not the language per se which determines or affects development, but the level of mastery of the language in question is the issue at stake.

If the medium of instruction is the language the child understands very well, s/he can clearly understand instructions and fully participate in the educational process. It has also been observed that it is those countries that use their indigenous language in education and as the official language that are most developed or are developing the fastest. Ghana aspires to be part of this development; it cannot afford to be an island unto itself.

In recent years, the selection of a language of education has been a debated subject in the anglophone countries in Africa at international conferences. A major position seems to have emerged from the deliberations at these international conferences: the language of education for a child living in her or his own language environment should be her or his LI (i.e., first language or mother tongue) (see, for example, UNESCO 1951, UNESCO-OAU 1968, UNESCO 1989, UNESCO 1995).

Ghana has the following as the main objectives of primary education:

- The ability to count, use numbers, read, write and communicate effectively.
- To lay the foundation for inquiry and creativity.
- To develop sound moral attitudes and a healthy appreciation of Ghana's cultural heritage.
- To develop manipulative skills that will prepare the child to function effectively to his or her own advantage as well as that of the community.
- To inculcate good citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in national development.

We believe that the above-stated objectives cannot be achieved unless children can master the language of instruction first. Using the foreign language for instruction, one that the pupil does not control well, is inhibitive and disabling.

In the first IEQ project in Ghana (1992-95), University of Cape Coast, in partnership with USAID and the Government of Ghana's (GOG) primary education reform initiative, conducted classroom-based research on pupil

learning in primary schools. That study examined the availability, sources and use of instructional materials in classrooms in six primary schools in Ghana. The findings revealed that children were neither using written materials nor interacting with teachers and classmates in ways *that promoted English Language fluency and literacy*.

THE IEQ II STUDY

This second IEQ study builds on the first. Findings from the first study have influenced the questions asked in the second. An instrument developed for the first project has been adopted for the language Implementation study. In addition, just as the first IEQ was affiliated with a USAID primary education reform initiative, so also three of the six schools included in the current USAID/GOG are from the Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) project. Linking with (QUIPS) schools allows IEQ researchers access to some of the QUIPS data, thus enabling IEQ researchers to understand better particular schools and communities. The present IEQ II study continues the collaborative approach established in IEQ I.

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Ghana expands on the collaborative approach established during IEQ I. The institutional partnership includes the University of Cape Coast, the University College of Education, Winneba, the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon and the Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Service (MOE/GES). Team members from two other USAID primary education reforms project also work collaboratively with the IEQ team. This presentation will explore the benefits and challenges of this approach to data collection, analysis and policy formulation.

THE PARTNERSHIP

IEQ II is a unique collaboration of professional from three universities mentioned above and MOE/GES. The team includes four teacher educators, an anthropologist and a linguist from the universities, one GES administrator each from Teacher Education and Basic Education Divisions, and an evaluation project statistician. The value of such cross-institutional partnership is already evident in researcher participation in MOE, GES/donors' seminars and GES officials' participation in school-based data collection and analysis. Researchers learn firsthand of constraints facing the MOE/GES officials' experience, the rigor and complexity of conducting research; and the teacher educator, anthropologist and linguists exchange valuable insights about culture language, schools and education. Linking with QUIPS schools allows IEQ researchers access to some of the QUIPS data, thus enabling IEQ researchers to understand better particular schools and communities.

In addition to this fruitful dialogue, all researchers are developing skills in designing and conducting school-based qualitative research.

As they carry out the multi-site case study of schools around the country, the researchers are discovering the range of ways in which the language policy is being implemented. Soon they will be able to identify themes and patterns across the six sites that promote or undermine quality teaching and learning in schools in Ghana's multilingual society.

It is a fact that primary education is the prerogative of the GES; therefore, our involvement or participation in such a research is in the right direction. As GES officials and members of the research team, we have been exposed to the procedures and methods of preparing for data collection, the actual process of collecting data and the analysis of data. With regard to the preparation of the instruments, relevant information on what goes on in our schools went a long way to help formulate the questions for the data collection.

In the process we learnt certain terminologies and facts about research. At the same time the university professors learnt from the officials of GES on the behavioral patterns of teachers, pupils and the school communities. There has been rich exchange of ideas between the GES and the universities. At the sites, teachers and head teachers cooperated readily when they realized that a GES personnel was a member of the team. Initially they may have felt uneasy because they thought they were going to be assessed for reports to be sent to the GES headquarters for sanctioning, but this changes.

The involvement of the GES will go a long way to help with the formulation or revision of the language policy. It will also help with the effective implementation of the policy. Already the research findings action teachers in training need to improve the methodology and use of the Ghanaian language in teaching. The universities, which are partners in the research as well as in teacher education, can use the findings in designing the curriculum and assessment of trainee teachers. The already existing collaboration between the universities and GES (i.e., primary and teachers education) could be strengthened.

Just as primary education is the domain of the GES/MOE so is research to the universities. However, as practitioners, we in the GES are the main users of research findings on education. It is, therefore, proper to be in close touch with the universities, working together on research and using the outcome for the improvement of our work. Otherwise, such research findings will be of no value as they only pile up in the libraries and archives.

Being part of this research will enable GES to form a permanent team for similar researches in schools. This collaborative effort has also given the university members an insight into the activities of the GES and has exposed them to the constraints and the related problems of implementation. In this regard they could be encouraged to help find solutions to these problems.

I remember when I was first invited to join the research team for IEQ II, I thought whoever invited me had made a mistake because there I was among these university dons talking about quantitative or qualitative research and using unfamiliar terminologies. The whole discussion at the beginning was unfamiliar.

The members of the team were also unfamiliar. So I said to myself, I don't belong here. But for the encouragement given me by Eric, I was going to leave. He said, "No don't go, you will make some contribution".

With time, I became more and more interested when I realized that I was making useful contributions to the team's work at the various stages of the research development, particularly in the preparation of the instruments. As a teacher educator, it gave me the opportunity to ask questions that would bring out some important issues. Being part of the research team has been a wonderful opportunity to have firsthand information on views, comments, responses, assertions and positions of researchers, teachers, headteachers, pupils, parents, and educationists on the language policy and its implementation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As Development Partners, USAID through IEQ is supporting the research on the implementation of the language policy. This effort is very much appreciated by the Government and people of Ghana. However, it is the desire of the Ministry of Education to get the Development Partners to build capacity by training counterpart staff to take over from the foreign consultants. This is important because Ghana cannot continue to rely on technical assistance forever. If skills and capacities are data banked, there could be the possibility for physical mainstreaming that could make funding more cost effective and sustainable. It must be mentioned through the series of professional development workshops planned in this second IEQ II project the USAID is

gradually building the needed capacity for such type of research. We of Ghana are appreciative of this type of partnership.

With IEQ II, the technical advisor assists the research by working part-time with the research team. The benefit of having a technical advisor with international experiences is to learn about what goes on in the other parts of the world, giving the work an international touch. At the same time we learn that what is happening in Ghana is not too different from what is happening in the rest of the world.

The Ministry hopes for a situation whereby the donor will build capacity in Ghana for future researchers. Policy formulation needs support from research such as being carried out by IEQ II to give it direction and import.

In order to add quality to education delivery such donor support in research and other areas help a great deal. It is most appreciated when in areas of difficulty like the implementation of the language policy the development partners support the activities for implementation. One example of this is the provision of books in the Ghanaian languages and in-service training in methodology and use of the Ghanaian language in teaching. Even where the local people have the expertise, they are financially handicapped. Therefore, such a financial support as we have from USAID in IEQ II is always welcome.

