

Radio for Education:

The challenges in providing effective primary education in Zambia through Interactive Radio Instruction

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Introduction

- MSc – Practising Sustainable Development
- PhD - The monitoring and evaluation of ICT4 Education initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa
- Presentation of findings during recent field work in Zambia



Structure

- Education in Africa and the role of Radio
- Interactive Radio Instruction
- Education in Zambia
- ‘Learning at Taonga Market’
- Methodological approach
- Challenges facing successful implementation of the programme at three levels
 - Challenges within the community
 - Challenges within the Ministry of Education (MoE)
 - Challenges within partner organisations
- Conclusions



Education – Access and Quality

- Enrolment for primary education is rising across Africa
- Levels of attainment amongst those enrolled are steadily decreasing
- Improving quality is recognised as a much greater challenge than administering expansion of enrolments
- EFA initiative – focus on ‘the quality imperative’
- Focus on quantifiable measures - test scores, exam results etc



Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI)

- Differs from traditional distance education – the primary goal is the improvement of educational quality
- Represents shift from didactic model of learning to a more inductive, constructivist, student-centred pedagogy
- Potential demonstrated in Bolivia, South Africa and Venezuela – IRI programmes with over a million students
- IRI can be ‘scaled-up’ due to heavily front loaded nature – cost per learner decreases with increase in users



Education in Zambia

- Free basic education introduced in 2002
- Recent progress in primary education through ‘New Breakthrough To Literacy’ (NBTL) and ‘Primary Reading Programme’ (PRP)
- Approximately 800,000 of an under-eighteen population of 6.5 million do not attend school
- Hidden charges and ‘compulsory contributions’ still prevent the most vulnerable children from going to school



‘Learning at Taonga Market’ (LTM)

- Zambian IRI programme initiated in 2000 by the MoE
- Covers primary education Grades 1-6
- Daily 30 minute broadcasts with pre- and post-broadcast activities
- Focussed around a mentor who facilitates learning
- Children sing songs, answer questions and listen to stories – all dramatised through the ‘Taonga’ marketplace
- Community provides a Centre Support Committee, structure for the learning and support for a mentor



‘Learning at Taonga Market’ (LTM)

- The MoE recognises the need for non-traditional forms of schooling and is actively promoting LTM across Zambia

‘The government’s commitment to achieving EFA cannot, however, be realised even by 2015 if it is to be delivered only through the classroom mode. It is for this reason that the IRI initiative, commonly known as “Learning at Taonga Market”, was introduced to provide a serious alternative to conventional classroom teaching and learning.’

(MoE Permanent Secretary, Barbara Chilangwa 2005)



‘Learning at Taonga Market’ (LTM)

- Number of LTM learners (by gender) 2000-2005

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	n.a.	3994	7104	11561	19412	27819
Female	n.a.	3788	6989	11202	19101	28414
Total	1254	7782	14093	22763	38513	56233

- An anticipated 100,000 learners by 2010

The Freeplay Foundation

Research conducted in partnership with Freeplay Foundation

‘Providing innovative and practical energy solutions to ensure sustained access to information via radio.’

(www.freeplayfoundation.org 07/09/06)

- Lifeline Radio – Designed for humanitarian sector
- Over 1500 distributed across Zambia through the MoE





Methodological Approach

- 6 weeks of empirical research – based in Lusaka
- Focused on qualitative and anecdotal study
- Focus groups, interviews and participant observation
- EFA Goals utilised as analytical filters
- Assessed challenges facing the programme at three levels
 - Community
 - Ministry of Education
 - Partner organisations



Challenges within the community

- Providing financial support for mentors
- Ensuring quality of mentors
- Using locally appropriate language and content



Challenges within the community

‘The schools shut down a lot because the mentors want to be paid. We are not allowed to pay them so the community have to struggle to pay them and then the school shuts.’

(MoE official, Choma)

Challenges within the community



Community garden for mentors at Cheelo LTM centre



Challenges within the community

- Providing financial support for mentors
- Ensuring quality of mentors
- Using locally appropriate language and content



Challenges within the community

Level of Education	%
< Grade 9	2
Grade 9	21
Grade 10	6
Grade 11	8
Grade 12	63

Academic level of mentors, 2005



Challenges within the community

- Providing financial support for mentors
- Ensuring quality of mentors
- Using locally appropriate language and content



Challenges within the MoE

- The decentralised system of education
- Consistency and commitment
- Availability of funds



Challenges within the MoE

'The MoE just isn't mobilised enough to get the radios out to where they are needed in the remote areas ... they just don't have enough funding... Most of the centres are in remote areas, the vehicles don't have gas and so can't get out there.'

(NGO worker, Lusaka)



Challenges within the MoE

- The decentralised system of education
- Consistency and commitment
- Availability of funds



Challenges within the MoE

‘We don’t want a political setting for the programme, it brings problems. If it looks like the school is linked to a party ... then it goes out of favour when the party does – even the appointing of mentors becomes a political issue ... putting in someone who is related to the headman or the MP.’

(Senior civil servant, Lusaka)



Challenges within the MoE

- The decentralised system of education
- Consistency and commitment
- Availability of funds



Challenges within partner organisations

- Differing ideologies
- Potential for dependency
- Inappropriate provision of infrastructure



Challenges within partner organisations

‘The problem comes when you have different channels of people giving the radios. One NGO comes in here, Charity ‘X’ come in there, the MoE come in here and then you have us and our project coming in there – and sometimes you’ll find we all target the same schools. I was hearing that there was one place where they got six radios!’

(NGO worker, Lusaka)



Challenges within partner organisations

‘Charity ‘X’ pioneer loads of centres and then hand them over to the MoE, so this becomes a massive burden for the Ministry.... On the records of charity ‘X’ it will say that they have established a community school. But they don’t go back and do monitoring and evaluation there, they have no idea what is happening ... so often the school will close down very quickly with no support.’

(NGO worker, Livingstone)



Challenges within partner organisations

- Differing ideologies
- Potential for dependency
- Inappropriate provision of infrastructure

Challenges within partner organisations



Opening of Nangombe school building, May 2006



Challenges within partner organisations

‘The villagers complained that they should all be given this kind of help too, they felt left out. I regret that structure was put up in Nangombe because it has just divided the people that live together.... They all lived happily before that structure was put up.... With or without a structure they still would have run a school.’

(NGO worker, Lusaka)



Challenges within partner organisations

- Differing ideologies
- Potential for dependency
- Inappropriate provision of infrastructure



Conclusions

- Many positive aspects despite challenges - programme is making significant contribution to education in Zambia
- Currently expanding rapidly – potential to educate 100,000 vulnerable children by 2010
- Many challenges highlighted are common to ICT 4 Education initiatives across region
- Stimulate dialogue and share experiences together