

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME HAS IMPROVED THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AT PRIMARY LEVEL

Last year, some Members of Parliament called for an urgent review of government's free education system owing to declining education standards. Government through the Ministry of Education and Sports has continuously come up with strategies to improve education service delivery through programmes such as Universal Primary Education (UPE and Universal Post Primary Education and Training UPPET) also known as Universal Secondary Education. These programmes enhance equitable access to education as well as improved quality education through such interventions such as the Quality Enhancement Initiative (QEI).

In October 2008, the Ministry in partnership with the Education Development Partners (EDP's) launched the QEI as a pilot intervention to enhance quality of primary education in 12 districts that were reported to be having the greatest difficulty in meeting their performance targets.

This programme was a result of a National stakeholder's conference held in Mukono in 2007. A three year Quality enhancement Programme (QEP) in primary schools was thus prepared in May 2008.

The Quality Enhancement Initiative focusing on 1,804 primary schools in the 12 least performing and most deserving districts was launched in 2009. The participating districts are Bukedea, Bududa, Amuru, Oyam, Lyantonde, Mubende, Kyenjojo, Nebbi, Arua, Buliisa, Nakapiripirit and Kabong.

Performance was characterised by irregular pupil attendance, huge pupil numbers against a major deficiency of teachers, inadequate facilities, poor pay, and a lack of monitoring from the local authorities.

The districts were selected on the basis of performance with the worst performing districts were given priority. The survey established that despite massive investment in the primary sub-sector, the above findings confirm that the quality of basic education in the 12 poorly performing districts is alarmingly poor and the planned interventions were meant to improve the standard of primary education in those areas.

Through the QEI, it was intended to bring the schools in the districts in line with the rest of the country.

The ministry has continued to implement the Programme, now in its third year with the aim of ultimately improving the quality of primary education in the country.

The strategic aim of this initiative is to strengthen accountability of stakeholders for children's learning outcomes, enhancing school level supervision and instituting policy legal positions that directly impact on the teaching and learning processes in schools.

The aims of the programme are:

- 1) Strengthening accountability of stakeholders for children learning outcomes
- 2) Enhancing school level supervision
- 3) Instituting/revitalising policy positions that directly impact on the teaching and learning process in primary schools

- 4) Improving the instructional processes at school level to enable pupils master basic literacy, numeracy and basic life skills

In order hold the selected districts accountable, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Education and Sports and Ministry of Local Government and Local Governments ie CAOs

The selected interventions were under the four pillars namely

Pillar 1 Pupil:

- 1) Provision of adequate numbers of qualified and competent teachers
- 2) Provision of instructional materials for P1 to P7
- 3) Enhanced provision of physical education and sports activities
- 4) Provision of classrooms
- 5) Tracking pupil attendance and monitor performance

Pillar II Teachers

- 1) Provision of teachers' houses
- 2) Implement scheme of service
- 3) Reduction of PTR to those agreed in ESSP i.e. 50:1
- 4) Implement Continuous Professional Development Programme for teachers

Pillar III-Management

- 1) Intensifying support supervision
- 2) Putting in place a non-monetary reward system for good performing districts and implement the Customised Performance Targets (CPTs) for Head teachers and deputy head teachers
- 3) Strengthening record keeping
- 4) Operationalising and utilising EMIS at the district level

Pillar IV-Community Participation

- 1) Implementation and enforcement minimum school entry age policy of 6 years P1
- 2) Provision of information, education and communication on parents/community support for school feeding
- 3) Encouraging parents to participate in the assessment of school performance

Expected outputs:

- 1) Increased time on task for head teachers and teachers through inspection
- 2) Improved pass rates at PLE competencies in numeracy and literacy for P.3 & P.6, pupil attendance, completion rates, Net Intake Ratio
- 3) Reduced Pupil teacher ratio 50:1 and Pupil Classroom Ratio
- 4) Adequate supply of curriculum support materials for lower primary and books in the hands of pupils for upper primary

Achievements

- 1) The trend in PCR has been fluctuating (between 1:70 and 1:72 for the three years)
- 2) The best Pupil Classroom Ratio (2009) in QEI districts was registered in Lyantonde (1:58), Mubende 1:65, Nakapiripirit 1:67,
- 3) Improved completion rates to P 7 gradually improved from 47% in 2007 to 51.5% in 2009. Completion rates improved for both boys and girls.
- 4) Improved attendance rates of pupils and teachers: 63% was the overall average percentage attendance of pupils according to the QEI baseline survey
- 5) Improved literacy and numeracy in P 6. The National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) indicators show that pupils in P 6 attaining desirable levels of competency in literacy improved from 33.5% in 2007 to 48.1% in 2009 while competency in numeracy slightly shifted from 53.5% in 2007 to 53.3% in 2009.
- 6) Improved numeracy and literacy in P3. Pupils attaining desirable levels of competency in numeracy levels greatly improved by 28.7% from 42.6% in 2007 to 71.3 in 2009. The P3 competency in literacy rates improved by 14.1% from 33.5% in 2007 to 48.1% in 2009.
- 7) Improved PLE pass rates: The pass rates improved by 5% from 81% in 2008 to 86% in 2009. In 2009, Nakapiripirit recorded the highest pass rates of 93%, Kyenjojo district also performed well with 92% and Buliisa had 90% PLE pass rate amongst the QEI districts.

Lessons learnt:

- 1) District dialogues are instrumental in dissemination of information and sharing experiences with stakeholders
- 2) The stakeholders are not as informed as expected. Most of them are not well conversant with the reforms and activities in education ministry
- 3) School inspection, monitoring and support are critical undertakings

Next steps in furtherance of Quality Education

- 1) Introduce a new teacher allocation formula which ensures that every class gets
- 2) Increase budgetary provision for instructional materials
- 3) Revamp the community mobilisation programme in order to reach the people on the ground
- 4) Explore and Promote alternative ways of providing meals to pupils at school
- 5) Establish an efficient way of sharing Inspection reports between local governments and the Ministry
- 6) Strengthen joint monitoring of schools by MoES officials, line ministries and Education Development Partners

The QEI has registered a lot of achievements in the districts under implementation as shown above.

At a glance:

ACHOLI, LANGO SUB REGIONS GET 1.9M TEXT BOOKS

A total of 1.9m textbooks worth 5.8m Euros have been supplied to 10 districts in war affected Lango and Acholi sub regions under the Royal Netherlands Government funding.

The Royal Netherlands Government provided 23m Euros last year to supply text books, water tanks in the two war affected regions.

The Netherlands government also provided a grant of 5m Euros towards the improvement of Quality of primary education in 12 districts in the Northern region. This was in consideration of the poor performing districts in regard to national examinations.

The funds also helped to provide water tanks to selected primary schools in the same region.

A total of 1.7m thematic curriculum materials worth 2.2m Euros have also been provided. These include books and learning charts and books.

Under the funding, schools were also given furniture worth 4.7m Euros as well as latrines.

The districts which benefited include Adjumani, Amolatar, Amuru, Apac, Dokolo, Gulu, Kitgum, Lira, Oyam, Pader, Gulu and Lira Municipalities.

Primary one and two classes were provided with thematic curriculum materials aimed at improving numeracy and literacy skills of learners.

District inspectors of schools across the country were given 108 motorcycles and computers to enhance school inspection and records management.

A total of 1,041 tanks were supplied to 830 schools in the two regions.

A total of 70,175 pupils' chairs, 8,771 infant sitter tables, 19,737 three sitter desks, 2,848 teachers' chairs and 2,192 teachers' tables have been supplied.

The Commissioner for Basic and Primary Education, Dr. Daniel Nkaada says this has been a timely intervention.

The intervention is expected to improve performance in the war torn region that is now recovering from over 18nbyears of armed conflict by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).