

CASE STUDY

Project Description

ROYNF (Robert and Yeranda Nkosi Foundation) is a micro level incremental innovation complemented by comparative data which seeks to raise learning outcomes by developing a language appropriate participative learning model. The ROYNF approach is compatible with Uganda's national Thematic Curriculum, and yet distinct, in that, it features pupils' student group work, application in private schools, and kinaesthetic/participative activities. While these might not be new ideas, their application in this context is innovative. This project targets Lumasaaba language speakers, but the approach should be useful in other languages, as well.

The first three years of primary school are targeted, but there has not yet been enough time to effectively measure its impact on the entire test group. Grades 1 and 2 will have had only one year of intervention. A comparison of baseline and end line learning outcomes between test and control groups gives an indication of the positive effect of the approach.

ROYNF's strengths are particularly in the areas of teacher training, appropriate language use and methodology. See Innovations Grid annex.

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Early Learning Innovations

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Project Implementation and Capacity Building

ROYNF has developed tools and procedures to establish a baseline for both test and control classes, using a modified EGRA tool which measures reading competencies. ROYNF was instrumental in the development of the original Lumasaaba EGRA tool for RTI. Ideally, a comprehensive evaluation would take place after three years of intervention in order to assess the impact on all three years of the intended program, but only one year of program intervention has so far been possible. At the end of the intervention, a thorough learning outcomes assessment observed that Grade 1 pupils have much higher reading levels than their control group counterparts and that Grade 2 is also significantly more advanced than the control group, though not as advanced as it would have benefited after two years of intervention.

ROYNF has trained teachers and has produced excellent materials, including a teacher training manual, in accordance with orthographical standards and the national curriculum.

ROYNF staff are competent in many areas, requiring less input from the TA technical consultant in many areas. Extensive input on M&E has been given and incorporated.

Mitigating circumstances

- Three private schools were originally part of the ROYNF test group. Two have since opted for an English only curriculum, reducing the test sample size for comparing learning increases in the private school domain from three schools to one. Test and control groups among the public schools remain well represented.

- SIL has contributed greatly to the development of the Lumasaaba orthography which has been adapted for all dialects while still allowing for dialect distinctiveness. This has allowed ROYNF to produce materials which include all important phonemes for all dialects in their teaching practices.

- Due to the Nairobi airport fire, the community of practice meeting scheduled for August'13 was moved to January'14. This meeting would have provided important analysis and input on program planning and assessment of technical needs. Despite this missed opportunity, ROYNF's technical capacity and visits from the TA technical consultant enabled them to implement activities as scheduled.

- Though the language of the area, Lumasaaba, is a (Uganda School and Health Reading Program) SHRP cluster 2 language, SHRP has been slow to respond to opportunities to cooperate with ROYNF. Incorporation of ROYNF's innovations by SHRP is unlikely, as SHRP lacks the resources to revise its current methodology and materials.

Lessons Learned

While cooperation with larger and better resourced partners can increase the likelihood of sustainability and/or scaling up, conforming to their program can also result in the compromising of innovative aspects under development by the grantee.

Regardless of the apparent value of an innovation, some potential partners will not have the ability to incorporate the innovation due to lack of resources or rigidity in their program implementation.

The ROYNF project is a collection of best practice innovations working synergistically. The isolation and evaluation of the proportional effect of any one innovation has proven difficult. Familiarity with the project environment does, however, enable an estimation of the relative effectiveness of the different components of the innovation package. The ROYNF innovation was accompanied by many best practices. The effect of the innovation would likely have been greatly diminished had this not been the case.

Scaling

The ROYNF innovative methodology has limited potential for being quantitatively scaled up because the participative kinaesthetic methodology is less practical in crowded classrooms. The domain seems, therefore, to be limited to private schools and public schools with small class sizes. Most private schools are, however, opting for an English only approach.

Lumasaaba is in the second SHRP language cluster which would suggest potential for cooperation with SHRP. It does not, however, appear that SHRP is in a position to support an alternative methodology which would require different materials and different teacher training

ROYNF has attended MLEN (MultiLingual Education Network) community of practice meetings in Kampala to seek out new relationships.

Recommendations

This project can be positively considered for scaling up where class size allows. This would, however, be a rather limited scope.