ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
END OF AWARD REPORT

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For awards ending on or after 1 November 2009

This End of Award Report should be completed and submitted using the **grant reference** as the email subject, to **reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk** on or before the due date.

The final instalment of the grant will not be paid until an End of Award Report is completed in full and accepted by ESRC.
Grant holders whose End of Award Report is overdue or incomplete will not be eligible for further ESRC funding until the Report is accepted. ESRC reserves the right to recover a sum of the expenditure incurred on the grant if the End of Award Report is overdue. (Please see Section 5 of the ESRC Research Funding Guide for details.)

Please refer to the Guidance notes when completing this End of Award Report.

Grant Reference	**RES-167-25-0217**		
Grant Title	**Strengthening ODFL systems to increase education access and attainment for young people in high HIV prevalence SADC countries**		
Grant Start Date	**April 1st 2007**	**Total Amount Expended:**	**£ 245,495**
Grant End Date	**July 31st 2010**		
Grant holding Institution	**Institute of Education, University of London**		
Grant Holder	**Dr. Pat Pridmore**		
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Dr. Ephraim Mhlanga (Co-researcher)		**South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE)**	

1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Please provide below a project summary written in non-technical language. The summary may be used by ESRC to publicise your work and should explain the aims and findings of the project. *[Max 250 words]*

This research aimed to help two project countries (Malawi and Lesotho) increase access to learning for vulnerable school students, living in high HIV prevalence areas, through complementing classroom teaching with open, flexible and distance delivery of the curriculum and strengthening support for learning.

Literature reviews and case studies identified factors disrupting schooling in high HIV-prevalence areas of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and initiatives to address these factors. They also confirmed that most SSA countries lacked an enabling policy framework to support multi-mode delivery of the national curriculum.

A school-based educational intervention programme was then developed to address these factors using self-study learner-guides to complement conventional schooling and strengthening psychosocial and learning support for vulnerable students. Primary sixth-grade students in Malawi and secondary second-grade students in Lesotho, at-risk of dropping-out or grade-repetition, were recruited onto the intervention over one school year. The impact was evaluated in a randomized controlled trial.

The findings showed that in Malawi, the programme reduced overall student drop-out by 42% (OR=0.58). This effect was not significantly different among at-risk children targeted by the program and those not targeted in their class suggesting the intervention had spillover effects beyond the intended beneficiaries. There were improvements in mathematics scores for at risk students and a history of grade repetition was a better predictor of future drop-out than orphanhood. In Lesotho the intervention reduced absenteeism and improved mathematics and English scores.

These findings suggest that the intervention reached the most vulnerable and was effective in increasing access to education and learning.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

a) Objectives
Please state the aims and objectives of your project as outlined in your proposal to the ESRC. *[Max 200 words]*

Aim:
To expand knowledge, skills and empowerment of young people in high HIV-prevalence areas of the project countries, Malawi and Lesotho, through using open, distance and flexible learning (ODFL) and support as a complement to enrich conventional schooling.

Objectives:
1. To synthesise existing knowledge through reviewing literature and interviewing

stakeholders to (i) identify factors that disrupt schooling (ii) analyse key ODFL initiatives and structures to increase access to education for school-aged students (ii) and describe the policy context for ODFL.

2. To generate new knowledge by developing case-studies to describe factors that disrupt conventional schooling and learning in the study-sites.

3. To increase understanding of how ODFL can be used to address these factors by conducting research with school teachers and field workers from community-based non-governmental organisations to develop and implement interventions to complement conventional schooling.

4. To evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions in reducing student absenteeism, drop-out and grade-repetition.

5. To disseminate the new knowledge to enable appropriate, evidence informed development of ODFL policy to better integrate and sustain more effective ODFL initiatives and systems and thereby increase access to education and learning.

b) Project Changes

Please describe any changes made to the original aims and objectives, and confirm that these were agreed with the ESRC. Please also detail any changes to the grant holder's institutional affiliation, project staffing or funding. *[Max 200 words]*

In one project country, Malawi, a change was made so that the intervention was carried out in primary schools rather than secondary schools. This change was agreed with the ESRC.

c) Methodology

Please describe the methodology that you employed in the project. Please also note any ethical issues that arose during the course of the work, the effects of this and any action taken. *[Max. 500 words]*

(1)Situational analysis

Literature reviews identified factors disrupting schooling in SSA; described current educational interventions to increase access and attainment of vulnerable school-students; and analysed the policy environment to support multi-mode delivery of the national curriculum.

(ii) Selection of study-sites, sampling and randomisation of schools

In Malawi, two study-sites were selected in rural areas with high HIV-prevalence rates, high student drop-out and grade-repetition rates, contrasting socio-cultural contexts and low levels of donor intervention. In each study-site all government primary schools (excluding junior primary schools) within 10km of a secondary school were ranked in quintiles using data using Primary School Leaving Certificate scores and two matched pairs of schools from each quintile were randomly assigned to either intervention or control group. In Lesotho, two study-sites were selected using the same criteria as Malawi with one study-site located in the highlands and one in the lowlands. In each study-site all secondary schools were ranked in quintiles according to school

performance in the Junior Certificate examinations and two matched pairs from each quintile randomly assigned to either intervention or control group.

(ii) Case-studies

In each project country two case-study schools were selected from the intervention group in each study-site. Each school had a local community based organisation willing to participate in the research. To inform the case-studies, data were collected using participatory activities with young people, semi-structured interviews with guardians and key informants and focus group discussion with teachers and community members. Cross-case analysis was used to illuminate contextual factors that disrupt schooling.

(iii) Intervention development

Findings from phases 1 and 2 were used to develop an intervention, which was adapted and implemented after wide consultation with schools, communities, Ministry of Education officials, donor agencies and academics. The intervention comprised:

ODFL strategies for 'at-risk' pupils:
- 'School-in-a-Bag' containing self-study learner-guides in Maths and English, notebooks and pens (and maths instruments in Lesotho).
- School-buddy system.
- Learning-support club run by volunteer youth leaders who had a 'School-in-a-Bag' containing the learner-guides and related text books, readers, HIV game, football and wind-up radio.

Orientation, support and capacity-building in:
- Record keeping, monitoring and follow-up.
- Guidance and counselling.
- Promoting inclusiveness.
- Community support for pupil welfare.

(iv) Intervention implementation

After training all stakeholders, teachers of intervention classes kept an 'at-risk' register of vulnerable students and gave each one a 'School-in-a-Bag', a school-buddy to provide support and encouragement, and an invitation for student and buddy to attend the weekly learning-support clubs. One monitoring and support visit was made half-way through the school year.

(v)Intervention evaluation

The intervention was evaluated in a randomised controlled trial. The impact of the intervention was analyzed on Maths and English exam results and on student attendance and drop-out rates, controlling for baseline exam scores and measures of school quality and pupil characteristics.

Qualitative data to illuminate the process by which any change had taken place were collected from intervention schools through post-intervention evaluation workshops, semi-structured interviews with students and teachers and analysis of teachers' diaries.

d) Project Findings
Please summarise the findings of the project, referring where appropriate to outputs recorded on *ESRC Society Today*. Any future research plans should also be identified. *[Max 500 words]*

Factors disrupting schooling (from literature reviews/case-study findings.)

Household:
  i.   Increased household reorganisation/family disintegration leading to reduced social cohesion, increased child abuse and unplanned pregnancy.
  ii. Increased poverty, lack of social-welfare and intra-household discrimination against orphans.
  iii. Increased demand for child labour and early marriage.
School:
  i.   Lack of psychosocial support.
  ii. Stigmatisation and discrimination of students living in poverty.
  iii. No identification or systemmatically monitored and support of vulnerable students.
  iv. Harsh school discipline and sexual harrassment (in Malawi).
  v.   Family scepticism about value of schooling (in Lesotho).

Intervention impact

<u>Overall</u> differences were estimated between intervention and control groups using multilevel modelling to account for clustering of outcomes at school-level. Multilevel logistic regression was conducted to determine impact of the intervention on school drop-out, grade-repetition and progression to next grade. Results showed that the intervention in Malawi reduced overall drop-out by 42% (OR=0.58) and that this was greater among at-risk students (OR=0.42) than students not at-risk (OR=0.64). There was no significant interaction between at-risk status and the intervention suggesting that it was equally effective for targeted (at-risk) and non-targeted students.

Regression analysis was then used to estimate programme impact on the sub-group of at-risk students in the intervention group. For ethical reasons, no comparison sub-group was selected in control schools and therefore propensity score matching was used to match each at-risk intervention-group student with a control-group member. The results showed that in Malawi there was no overall programme impact, nor any interaction between the programme and the at-risk group on repetition, absenteeism or promotion to next grade. However, for promotion to the next grade at-risk students in both intervention and control-groups were more than twice as likely (OR=2.21) to be promoted to the next grade.

The analysis of intervention impact on exam scores in Malawi gave consideration to bias created by absenteeism and drop-outs who did not sit the exam in 2008 and 2009 and those who repeated Standard 6, or transferred in from other schools and thus did not sit exams in 2008. Missing data were replaced using multiple imputation techniques and final exam scores analyzed controlling for scores at baseline. There was no overall significant effect on exam scores but there was an improvement in the maths exam for at risk students (p=.031). The improvement was 0.9 marks on a test with an average score of 6.9. The effect size was 0.20. Findings from Lesotho showed that intervention schools had improved test scores in English and mathematics and reduced absenteeism compared to control schools. The effect appears to be larger (through non-significant)

for students in the at-risk group. It is possible that the intervention benefited all children in the intervention classes.

Qualitative analysis of process data suggest that additional benefits have been achieved through building student's self-esteem and social networks; raising awareness of vulnerable children in schools/communities; and situating youth-volunteers as advocacy/role models within communities.

See also outputs recorded on *ESRC Society Today,* on the website (www.spfoe.ioe.ac.uk) and a paper to be submitted to Comparative Education Review).

e) Contributions to wider ESRC initiatives (e.g. Research Programmes or Networks)

If your project was part of a wider ESRC initiative, please describe your contributions to the initiative's objectives and activities and note any effect on your project resulting from participation. *[Max. 200 words]*

N/A

3. EARLY AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

a) Summary of Impacts to date

Please summarise any impacts of the project to date, referring where appropriate to associated outputs recorded on *ESRC Society Today.* This should include both scientific impacts (relevant to the academic community) and economic and societal impacts (relevant to broader society). The impact can be relevant to any organisation, community or individual. *[Max. 400 words]*

Evidence of scientific impacts:

i. Hits on project website to access newsletters, review papers, country case-studies, intervention reports and links to conference papers.

ii. Papers presented at international conferences in London and Paris and published in conference proceedings. Papers presented at regional conferences in Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, and UK.

iii. Good attendance from academic and user groups at national seminars to disseminate findings in Malawi, Lesotho and South Africa (and presentations in partner institutions).

Evidence of wider impacts:

i. In Lesotho, the Chief Education Officer for Curriculum and Assessment has used the findings to raise the profile of ODFL within the MOE and make

provision for its wider application within the current MOE education policy document. As a result of training materials developed, and lessons learned from the research, the process to give a formal qualification for teachers on guidance and counselling has been initiated by the University of Lesotho.

In Malawi, the Director of Planning in the MOEST expressed interest in taking up the self-study learner-guides to help primary students keep-up and catch-up when automatic promotion is introduced.

In South Africa, SAIDE has used the findings to develop a school management strategy and tool-kit to implement the South African inclusive education policy.

ii. Letters of support for follow-on activities to maximise Project impact from DFID, the MOE in each country, civil society organisations, teacher organisations (e.g. Lesotho Teachers Trade Union); teacher training colleges and the Examinations Councils. (Obtained for an ESRC funding bid.)

iii. Increased research capacity within the team and the project countries through team dialogue, workshops, field-work/visits, presentations and co-authored papers.

iv. Increased collaboration and capacity to deliver the intervention - achieved through training and follow-up support of district-level Primary Education Advisers (PEAs), head-teachers, class-teachers, youth leaders, and school management committees.

v. Extensive buy-in from other stakeholders:

In Malawi, textbooks were provided free by MOEST and supplementary readers by a local NGO. Test items were provided by MOEST and adapted by senior examiners with the Malawi Examination Board. PEAs helped administer research instruments.

In Lesotho, civil society members and teachers supported youth-club members and teachers helped design and administer tests.

The self-study learner-guides were written and instructions translated into local language by staff and students at IOE and the University of Malawi respectively.

Wind-up radios and bicycles were given by UK charities.

Changes were made to exclusionary policy and discipline practices in eight schools in Malawi.

b) Anticipated/Potential Future Impacts

Please outline any anticipated or potential impacts (scientific or economic and societal) that you believe your project might have in future. *[Max. 200 words]*

The new knowledge generated has the potential to make a significant impact on the scientific and policy community who focus increasingly on experimental evaluations of policy initiatives.

Potential impacts within project countries could therefore include :

  i.   Further development of a more enabling education policy framework to support multi-mode delivery of the national curriculum through schools.

 ii.   Further development of the curriculum for teacher education to strengthen the capacity of teacher educators and their trainees to write and use high quality self-study learner-guides and provide more effective support for learning.

iii.   Establishment of a core team of trained ODFL practitioners within teacher training colleges and supporting institutions.

Wider impacts from uptake of the research findings could include:

  i.   Capacity building of teachers to strengthen multi-mode delivery of the national curriculum and strengthen support for learning through the SADC-wide capacity building initiative and NEPAD's e-schools and Open Education Resources (OER) projects.

 ii.   There has been interest from UNICEF in using the findings to further develop their Child Friendly Schools approach by strengthening multi-mode curriculum delivery.

You will be asked to complete an ESRC Impact Report 12 months after the end date of your award. The Impact Report will ask for details of any impacts that have arisen since the completion of the End of Award Report.

4. DECLARATIONS

Please ensure that sections A, B and C below are completed and signed by the appropriate individuals. The End of Award Report will not be accepted unless all sections are signed.
Please note hard copies are NOT required; electronic signatures are accepted and should be used.

A: To be completed by Grant Holder

Please read the following statements. Tick ONE statement under ii) and iii), then sign with an electronic signature at the end of the section.

i) The Project

This Report is an accurate overview of the project, its findings and impacts. All co-investigators named in the proposal to ESRC or appointed subsequently have seen and approved the Report.	√

ii) Submissions to *ESRC Society Today*

Output and impact information has been submitted to *ESRC Society Today*. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted as soon as they become available. **OR**	√
This grant has not yet produced any outputs or impacts. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted to *ESRC Society Today* as soon as they become available. **OR**	☐
This grant is not listed on *ESRC Society Today*.	☐

iii) Submission of Datasets

Datasets arising from this grant have been offered for deposit with the Economic and Social Data Service. **OR**	√
Datasets that were anticipated in the grant proposal have not been produced and the Economic and Social Data Service has been notified. **OR**	☐
No datasets were proposed or produced from this grant.	☐