

Helpdesk Report: Child Friendly Schools and Learning Outcomes

Date: 2 July 2010

Query: Evidence to support the widely held belief that 'child friendly' schools, classrooms and teaching methodologies in primary schools lead to improved learning outcomes, not only test scores but wider competencies and skills.

Enquirer: DFID Nepal

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1. General Overview

Overview of UNICEF approach

www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_7260.html

UNICEF has developed a framework for rights-based, child-friendly educational systems and schools. Within this framework:

- The school is a significant personal and social environment in the lives of its students. A child-friendly school ensures every child an environment that is physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling.
- Teachers are the single most important factor in creating an effective and inclusive classroom.
- Children are natural learners, but this capacity to learn can be undermined and sometimes destroyed. A child-friendly school recognizes, encourages and supports children's growing capacities as learners by providing a school culture, teaching behaviours and curriculum content that are focused on learning and the learner.
- The ability of a school to be and to call itself child-friendly is directly linked to the support, participation and collaboration it receives from families.
- Child-friendly schools aim to develop a learning environment in which children are motivated and able to learn. Staff members are friendly and welcoming to children and attend to all their health and safety needs.

A rights-based, child-friendly school has two basic characteristics: It is a child-seeking and a child-centred school. Above all, it must reflect an environment of good quality characterised by several essential aspects: inclusive of children, effective for learning, healthy and protective of children, gender-sensitive and involved with children, families, and communities.

2. Evaluation of UNICEF Approach and Case Studies

UNICEF Child Friendly Schools Programming: Global Evaluation, 2009

www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_51289.html

This evaluation found that there are several CFS models, all successfully applying the key principles of inclusiveness, child-centeredness, and democratic participation in varying contexts and with varying emphasis. Learners in child-friendly schools felt safe, supported, and engaged, and believed that the adults in the school support the inclusion and success of all students in schools that had high levels of family and community participation and were implementing child-centred pedagogical approaches. More importantly, child-friendly schools were found to be successful in creating environments where female students experienced a positive school climate.

The evaluation identified as one of the major challenges, a lack of infrastructure and strategies to fully accommodate students with physical and learning disabilities, and the inability to fully implement child-centred instructional methods due to inadequacies in teacher preparation and teaching skills. Also, schools were finding it difficult to come up with strategies to involve communities in a meaningful and mutually rewarding way.

Recommendations for improving CFS programming included identifying strong school leaders and equipping them with more skills and capacity to implement CFS, as well as developing and instituting strategies that will improve readiness for implementation at the school and community level. CFS was also identified as a good model for teaching lifeskills.

Case Studies

A collection of case studies from a number of countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Macedonia, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uganda), aims to capture the richness of experiences UNICEF and its partners have accumulated through applying the CFS approach in their programmatic work on quality. The case studies aim to provide evidence for advocacy and contribute to exchange of experiences between the countries and capacity strengthening.

www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_49289.html

Global Capacity Development Programme

As the main proponent of the CFS model, UNICEF has prepared a Capacity Development Programme on child-friendly schools that supports countries in designing and implementing CFS models that are most appropriate for their specific circumstances. By identifying key principles and outlining common practices – as well as highlighting effective approaches, documenting success and compiling lessons learned – UNICEF seeks to comprehensively bring together currently existing resources and information on CFS.

www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_49288.html

3. Articles Recommended by Experts

Children as Decision Makers: Sharing Experiences across Cultures

Sue Cox, Anna Robinson-Pant, Caroline Dyer and Michele Schweisfurth (Eds.), 2010

www.continuumbooks.com/books/detail.aspx?BookId=132979&SubjectId=940&Subject2Id=1412

The chapter by Clive Harber does bring together evidence from a wide range of small-scale studies, which could well be useful.

The Teacher's Toolkit

Paul Ginnis, 2002

www.crownhouse.co.uk/index.php?page=reviews&product_id=100

For a really user-friendly discussion of the cognitive benefits of learner-centred education and a rights-based approach to learning. The main message is that teacher-centred, stressful classrooms are detrimental.

'Joyful Learning' in Rural Indian Primary Schools: an Analysis of Social Control in the Context of Child-centred Discourses

Arathi Sriprakash, *Compare* 39 (5), 2009

Efforts to improve the 'quality' of education for all in government primary schools in India have seen a shift towards child-centred teaching. This paper examines the 'Joyful Learning' programme, an example of a pedagogic reform implemented in rural primary schools in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. Through an empirical analysis of teachers' pedagogic discourses, I explore what it means to introduce child-centred pedagogic principles in low-income, rural Indian contexts.

Child-centred Education and the Promise of Democratic Learning: Pedagogic Messages in Rural Indian Primary Schools

Arathi Sriprakash, *International Journal of Educational Development* 30 (3), 2010

Global and national agendas to achieve universal primary education and improve the 'quality' of school provision in developing countries have identified the need to reform classroom pedagogy. Since the 1990s, child-centred ideas in particular have been utilised in teacher-training programmes and school reforms with the intention of creating more child-friendly, democratic learning environments. Analysing episodes from classroom observations conducted in a rural Indian primary school, this paper highlights some of the possibilities and conditions for achieving child-centred pedagogic change.

Developing Learner-Centred Education among Secondary Trainee Teachers in Malawi: The Dilemma of Appropriation and Application

Peter Mtika and Peter Gates, *International Journal of Educational Development* 30(4), 2010

This article is mainly concerned with the capability of trainee teachers to implement learner-centred practice at one of the teacher education institutions in Malawi. The notion of learner-centred education has assumed a positive policy position for teaching and learning in both primary and secondary sectors not only in Malawi, but also in the wider world. However, there is no clear evidence on the extent to which trainee teachers or indeed qualified teachers develop and utilise learner-centred education during their classroom pedagogical practices.

The Cultural Politics of Constructivist Pedagogies: Teacher Education Reform in the United Republic of Tanzania

Frances Vavrus, *International Journal of Educational Development* 29 (3), 2009

This article examines recent educational reforms in Tanzania by looking at the cultural politics of pedagogical change in secondary and teacher education.

Learner-centred Pedagogy in Tibet: International Education Reform in a Local Context

Stephen Carney, *Comparative Education* 44 (1), 2008

This paper explores the introduction of the new Chinese curriculum for basic education. In contrast to many previous initiatives since 1949, this reform attempts to change not only what is taught, and by whom, but fundamental notions of how learning is best facilitated.

4. Focus on Asia

Child Friendly Schools in Eastern Asia and the Pacific: 'How Friendly can they be?'

UNICEF, 2004

www.unicef.org/eapro/CFS_IN_EAP.pdf

The summary of a larger review of Child Friendly Schools in East Asia and the Pacific, confirming the efficacy of the approach but highlighting gaps that remain to be addressed.

Child Friendly Schools for All

World Bank/South Asia Strategic Choices for Education Reform, 2008

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATIONLP/Resources/460908-1209498676534/4950769-1217974426107/GroupExcerciseSouthAsia2.pdf>

South Asia is home to one fifth of young people under 25. Democratic reforms and the rapid economic growth in the region have provided impetus to growing demand for quality

education. Looking particularly at Bangladesh, India and Nepal, this report looks at getting all children into schools, particularly the most disadvantaged, using existing budgets.

Assessing Child-Friendly Schools: A Guide for Programme Managers in East Asia and the Pacific

UNICEF, 2006

www.unicef.org/eapro/Assessing_CFS.pdf

While East Asia and the Pacific has made considerable advances in terms of CFS implementation, the absence of common indicators and monitoring mechanisms for assessing CFS impact has been identified as a key issue that needs to be addressed.

Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities: Lessons from the East Asia and Pacific Region

UNICEF, 2003

www.childinfo.org/files/childdisability_InclusiveEducationConsolidatedReportEastAsia.pdf

This paper highlights good examples of inclusive education initiatives in Cambodia, China, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand. The final chapter sums up lessons learned and provides recommendations for 'ways forward' in meeting the goals of equal access to quality education for children with disabilities in the next decade.

5. Available Resources

Child-Friendly Schools: Emerging Practices in Eastern and Southern Africa. A Human Rights-Based Approach

UNICEF, 2009

www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/0910_CFS_Emerging_Practices_in_ESAR.pdf

Child friendly schooling is not a 'one-size-fits-all' model. The case studies presented here show how different UNICEF country offices are applying the principles, and emphasises the critical role of education in equipping learners with skills and knowledge they need to cope with the speed of change in an interdependent world.

Rapid Response: Programming for Education Needs in Emergencies

Jonathan Penson and Kathryn Tomlinson, IIEP-UNESCO, 2009

www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Info_Services_Publications/pdf/2009/RapidResponse.pdf

This book examines the influences on educational programming in conflict-induced emergencies and questions whether standardised interventions are appropriate and effective educational responses. It focuses particularly on child-friendly spaces, school-feeding programmes and pre-packaged education kits. Chapter 2 outlines child-friendly spaces and country examples are detailed throughout the book.

Challenges of Applying a Student-centred Approach to Learning in the Context of Education in Kyrgyzstan

Roxane de la Sablonnie, Donald M. Taylor and Nazgul Sadykova, *International Journal of Educational Development* 29 (6), 2009

The challenge of maximising student learning is especially salient in the context of drastic social and political changes that have taken place in countries such as Kyrgyzstan. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, teachers and students are confronted with new ways of thinking, which are challenging their understanding of how to promote efficient student-centred learning.

International Aid Agencies, Learner-centred Pedagogy and Political Democratisation

Richard Tabulawa, *Comparative Education* 39 (1), 2003

Recent pronouncements by international aid agencies on their interest in and preference for a learner-centred pedagogy so far appear not to have attracted much scholarly attention. This paper attempts to explain this interest. It argues that although the efficacy of the pedagogy is

often couched in cognitive/educational terms, in essence, its efficacy lies in its political and ideological nature.

Education for All: The Quality Imperative

EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005

www.unesco.org/en/efareport/reports/2005-quality/

Quality is at the heart of education and influences what and how well they students learn and what benefits they draw from their education. The quest to ensure that students achieve decent learning outcomes and acquire values and skills that help them play a positive role in their societies is an issue on the policy agenda of nearly every country.

The 2005 GMR focuses on quality, with several background papers to support the issues.

The Multi-Country Child-Friendly Schools for Africa Capacity Development Workshop II Report

UNICEF, 2006

The purpose of this capacity development workshop in Mozambique in 2006 was to provide government counterparts, UNICEF officers and partners with an opportunity to develop their capacity and knowledge base for the effective planning, implementation and monitoring of the rights-based and gender-sensitive CFS programme, especially for girls and Orphans and other Vulnerable Children (OVC) in each country. There were seven specific objectives with related outcomes and a series of participatory activities to achieve them.

www.ungei.org/resources/files/CFSSMaputoWorkshopReport_FINAL.pdf

Commonwealth of Learning Tools

Commonwealth of Learning: Mainstreaming Child-Friendly School (CFS) Models and Approaches in National Pre-service and In-service Teacher Education Programmes. Several resources including:

Child Friendly Schools Standards and Indicators for Teacher Education: a Synthesis and a Self-Evaluation Tool

Commonwealth of Learning, 2010

www.col.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/CFS_Standards_Indicators.pdf

Creating a Caring School: a Toolkit for School Management Teams with Accompanying Guide

South African institute for Distance Education, 2009

www.col.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Creating_a_Caring_School_A_Toolkit_for_School_Management_Teams.pdf

Creating a Caring School: a Guide for School Management Teams with Accompanying Toolkit

South African institute for Distance Education, 2009

www.col.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Creating_a_Caring_School_A_Guide_for_School_Management_Teams.pdf

Guidelines and Template for the Development and Adaptation of Materials for the UNICEF-Commonwealth of Learning Child Friendly Schools Project

Commonwealth of Learning, 2010

www.col.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Guidelines_Template_forAdaptation.pdf

6. Additional information

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Websites visited

Childinfo www.childinfo.org
Commonwealth of Learning www.col.org
EFA Global Monitoring Report www.unesco.org/en/efareport
IIEP www.iiep.unesco.org
UNGEI www.ungei.org
UNICEF www.unicef.org
World Bank www.worldbank.org

Journals

Comparative Education
Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education
International Journal of Educational Development

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