The Kuchinerla School for Girls in Andhra Pradesh, India
The Impact of In-Service Training on Teachers’ Performance

EQUIP1 Pilot Study
World Education, October 2006
Policy Brief

The Issue
Research has shown that successful professional development experiences have a noticeable impact on teachers’ work in and out the classroom. (Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Borko and Putnam, 1995). In India, policy documents and official commentaries recognize the need to enhance the relevance and the quality of pre and in-service teacher education as a way to make education more child-centered and relevant to students’ and teachers’ local contexts. However, messages mediated through the prevailing training approaches are not having the expected impact on classroom processes (Dyer et.al., 2004; NCTE, 1998).

Purpose, Method, and Limitations of the Research
This activity was implemented through the EQUIP 1 grant, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). As part of the study, two in-depth interviews were carried out before and after the intervention, with all teachers (four females and three males) in the Kuchinerla Transitional School in Andhra Pradesh, India. Each interview lasted, on average, 50 minutes.

The research seeks to inform donors and decision-makers about the importance of providing context-relevant, in-service training to teachers to address their needs and the needs of the children they teach. More precisely, it aims to identify the best approach to change teachers’ beliefs and behavior that affect girls’ retention in school.

Limitations
Because the sample is small and limited to one school, this study does not purport to make generalizations to the larger population outside the Kuchinerla school. In addition, World Education is both the implementer of the in-service training and its evaluator. Although this was an open-ended reflection on process means of evaluation, being the implementer and evaluator can be considered a limitation of the study.

The Kuchinerla School in Andhra Pradesh
Since the late 1980s the Indian government has developed policies and initiated programs aimed at increasing girls’ access to and achievement in school. As part of this effort, the Girl Child Laborers’ School was established in May 2000 in Kuchinerla, a small village in Andhra Pradesh. The school provides a one-year, nonformal education program for 100 girls aged 7-14 that prepares them to (re)enter the formal educational system. Most girls attending this program “dropped-out” of regular schools, according to them, because of poor educational quality – specifically, teachers’ inability to teach basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills. The program aims to increase access to quality education, defined in terms of having curriculum that is relevant to local conditions, employing active-learning instructional methods that are suitable for (out-of-school) girl students, and providing life-skills vocational training to enhance physical and economic well being. Eight teachers work at the Kuchinerla School, which includes three male and five female teachers. In addition to teaching, all teachers play a variety of roles in the daily school program. To maximize the scarce resources

1 The Centre for Applied Research and Extention (Care) coordinated the local community effort with funding from the national government and private sources.
available, teachers work as counselors to help children transition into a residential program, general caretakers, school administrators and leaders in the community outreach programs.

**Teachers’ Experiences before the Intervention**

**Teacher Training**
Most teachers in the school had only received teacher training from the Government of India’s National Child Labor Project (NCLP), before and during their short careers as teachers. NCLP conducts teacher training once a year with a limited number of teachers from each school. It is the responsibility of the trained teachers to then disseminate what they learned to their colleagues in the schools. The NCLP training covers the contents of *Abhyasadepika* (the government curriculum for transitional schools), but does not include techniques on the use of teaching aids in the classroom. In general, during the interviews teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of the training provided by the NCLP. They expressed a strong desire to receive better training on teaching techniques, focusing more on application of knowledge than theory, using play as a teaching method, learning how to use charts, models, blocks, etc. They also expressed the need to receive guidance and to “learn from others.”

In addition to requesting more training and resources for teaching, most teachers also expressed a desire to acquire new skills, such as gardening, poultry, stitching, and embroidery. Some teachers expressed a desire to receive training on dealing with psychosocial issues that children experience while they are away from home and to counsel children who miss their parents and want to leave school. Teachers expressed interest in learning how to make children feel “at home” as that would decrease school evasion.

**Curriculum**
Most teachers at Kuchinerla realized the deficiencies of the curriculum and the limitations of a one-year program. Regarding the curriculum, teachers mentioned that textbook chapters should contain more information. They also mentioned that more models and charts should be introduced to help students learn faster. The idea that students should be able to learn faster is a recurrent theme among teachers, probably because of the limited time children have at their transitional school. Most teachers requested teaching aids to teach languages (Telugu and English) and math. However, teaching aids such as posters, flash-cards, sticks, were not always used in the classes when available. In fact, reports from World Education program staff revealed that when teachers made use of the resources available, they did not always understand why and when to use supplementary materials in the classroom. Teachers had difficulty in transferring knowledge from one situation to another and tended to rely mostly on the mechanical use of the materials available.

Teachers also emphasized the lack of curriculum relevance to children from rural areas. In many instances, the drawings presented in the textbooks are relevant to children who live in urban areas. Girls who live/study in rural Kuchinerla have difficulty in understanding the meaning of the drawings as it has no relevance to their everyday life.

Teachers emphasized the importance of teaching children skills that will help them earn a livelihood. They also emphasized the importance of learning about health and hygiene and nutrition in addition to learning literacy and numeracy skills. At the time of the first interview, the curriculum addressed issues of health, hygiene, nutrition, and life skills superficially. Teachers recognized they needed assistance in developing new materials and learning how to teach those topics better.
Findings

The results of in-depth interviews with teachers suggest that although teachers at the Kuchinerla School did receive pre— and in—service training provided by the Indian government, the training provided did not fully address issues of quality and relevance of education for rural teachers and students in the Kuchinerla School. More specifically, it concludes that without providing teachers with adequate training, materials, and support, they will not be able to address the needs of students who are already at great risk for dropping out of school permanently. A variety of measures may be undertaken at the school, community, and local government level to alleviate these problems. The section that follows explores the impact that the in-service training conducted at Kuchinerla has had on teachers and children.

1. Needs Assessment and Ownership of Change among Teachers in the School

World Education staff carried out an initial needs assessment with teachers at the Kuchinerla School to find out teachers’ and school needs. Teachers expressed their opinions about the curriculum, the training they wanted to receive, and necessary changes in school infrastructure. Based on those findings it was possible to design the best training to address their needs, without ignoring the current official curriculum. As a result, teachers’ level of involvement in curriculum development and training, and the rapport with World Education field staff has grown considerably over the last year and teachers are now being engaged in a process of self-reflection to understand the use of supplementary materials in the classroom and the transference of knowledge to different classes/subjects they teach.

Local governments in partnership with NGOs and community organizations should carry out a needs assessment to meet teachers’ and children’s learning needs. Building a relationship with school teachers and allowing them to share their experiences and needs is the first step in providing relevant training and improving teachers’ knowledge and performance. By allowing teachers to participate actively in trainings and the decision-making process, ownership of change was established.

2. Development of Supplementary Materials as Needed

One of the main concerns voiced by teachers at the Kuchinerla School at the beginning of the intervention was the lack of curriculum relevance to the local needs of teachers and girls. Several teachers mentioned that rural girls could not understand or identify with the pictures and stories presented in the official textbooks. In addition, topics such as health and hygiene and maintenance of a kitchen garden were poorly presented in the official textbooks. Teachers felt that girls (and themselves) needed to learn more about topics that directly affect their health and well-being. World Education conducted a thorough review of the existing curriculum with teachers and assisted them in making supplementary materials to help children attain better literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, they have been developing posters, informational sheets, and learning-by-doing strategies to learn about health, hygiene, languages, science, and math. Although those activities are still in progress, and more lessons will still be reviewed, teachers were satisfied with their accomplishments and are using the newly developed materials in the classroom. During the in-depth interviews carried out in Year 2 of the intervention, teachers mentioned that children are taking interest in the new materials and are learning faster than before.
3. Teacher Training in Child-Centered Methodology

Teachers at the Kuchinerla School expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of the training provided by the government, which does not emphasize teaching methodologies and classroom practice. They also expressed a strong desire to receive better training on teaching techniques, focusing more on application of knowledge than theory, using play as a teaching method, learning how to use charts, models, blocks, etc. Initially, teachers read directly from the text book and it would take longer for children to understand a lesson.

World Education carried out several teacher training sessions at the Kuchinerla School, where teachers started to use several methods, such as facilitating group discussions through posters/charts, giving practical demonstrations, and using songs and art to engage children from the beginning of class. Teachers reported playing the role of facilitator and letting children lead the discussions. Those changes represent a major shift from rote and memorization to teachers’ interacting more with children in engaging them in the learning activities. In addition, World Education organized several exchanges between Kuchinerla School teachers and local NGOs that specialize in child-centered methodologies and the experiential learning cycle. That has exposed teachers to new teaching methodologies and has broadened their professional connections with others with whom they can exchange ideas.

4. Relationships between public and private sectors to promote actions in favor of teacher in-service training

World Education and the Kuchinerla School teachers are engaging parents through school events and community activities, such as inviting the National Institute of Nutrition to visit villages and talk about nutrition to build a bridge between the school, parents, and community stakeholders. Those activities have proven effective in raising awareness about girls’ education among parents, although economic hardships still influence parents’ decisions to send their girl-child to school.

Effecting educational change is a long-term process that involves national strategies and innovative approaches. This brief suggests actions that require the allocation of additional resources by the government and changes in policy. Specific recommendations at the national level include: a) reinforce relationships between public and private institutions that promote specific actions for in-service teacher training in rural areas; and b) coordinate with NGOs and the government to increase the resources available for teachers’ professional development.

Government should organize regular in-service training that emphasizes more practice and less theory. They should also encourage exchange of information among teachers in transitional schools and NGOs or organizations that successfully train teachers in child-centered methodology.
References


This policy brief was written by Valéria Rocha and Bindu Sunny, World Education, based on findings from Kuchinerla School teachers’ interviews, as part of the EQUIP 1 Pilot Study grant, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development, Sub Award # GRT-01946.001. World Education, Inc. implements the Activity in collaboration with the Centre for Applied Research and Extension (Care), an Indian NGO.

Photos by Michael Ginguld

For additional information, please contact:
World Education
Valeria Rocha
44 Farnsworth Street,
Boston, MA 02210-1211
USA
Tel: (617) 482-9485
Fax: (617) 482-0617
E-mail:vrocha@worlded.org