



Peace Education: An efficient mechanism for sustainable quality learning Teacher training for the Cocoa regions of Ivory Coast

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE: POOR QUALITY LEARNING

In Ivory Coast, the primary school repetition rate has remained constantly high at above 20% and the completion rate only reached 58% in 2013 (EFA GMR). When measuring what competencies students actually learned, the results are even more alarming. The World Bank led PASEC evaluation showed that students only answered correctly to 32% and 36.5% of French and Math questions (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2013).

Furthermore schools face a crisis of violence and conflict. Major aid agencies have identified the widespread use of degrading physical punishments and the use of verbal insults and threats in classrooms of West Africa (Antonowicz, 2010). In Ivory Coast, 10 years of internal conflict have allowed the belief that violence is a natural means of correcting behaviour to endure. Such violence is highly detrimental to children's affective developmental growth, which is key to establishing a child's readiness and ability to learn.

The latest research (Hattie, 2008), demonstrates that quality teaching that is, teaching which is child-centred, participatory and nurturing is the single most important factor to improve learning outcomes. For example, a teacher's provision of formative evaluation improves learning achievement 125% more effectively than the average innovation and a relationship of trust between teacher and student is 80% more effective.

Various African countries, including the Ivory Coast, have reformed their education systems so as to prioritize the teaching of competencies rather than the teaching of objectives. Yet transforming what happens inside classrooms, that is rote memorization, hierarchical relations, corporal punishments and teacher centred practices has proven extremely difficult. As the AFD notes, "At the moment these reforms have had a very limited impact on teachers' practices ... transmissive teaching models still predominate" (Cros, et al., 2010).



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Grains of Peace intervenes to improve learning outcomes through a peace education program that concretely demonstrates to teachers how to practice the pedagogical techniques needed for competency-based learning and that addresses the quality of the interactions teachers forge with their students.

1. We implement an innovative training program that allows teachers to transition from an authoritative and frontal approach to teaching to one that is participatory, active and respectful of children's rights.
2. Each trained teacher receives and is instructed to use a pedagogical kit with peace classroom activities that enable children to learn psycho-social competencies and soft-skills, which research shows, are important correlates of academic achievement (Carpara, 2000) (Wentzel, 1998).
3. Trained teachers benefit from an in-class formative evaluation 6 months after the initial training.

RESULTS, METHODOLOGY AND BENEFICIARIES

The program has already trained 18,000 teachers, built national capacity through 300 local trainers and reached 427,000 children in 4 years. The national program is divided into 21 regional cycles that use a cascading model relying on local capacity. Each cycle consists of:

- One local expert trainer → four-day training session of 20 teacher trainers (60-40 gender parity)
- Each trainer → Four x Two day sessions of 20 teachers each + follow-up monitoring → 1,600 teachers trained
- Classes of 50 children x 1,600 = 80,000 (ECD) benefit daily

The methodology is distinctive because despite its massive reach it allows every single teacher to have a trainer observe their classroom practices and provide them with personal feedback. This formative evaluation is not only invaluable for teachers to improve on a personal basis, additionally it provides us with a rich database on how teachers are changing their techniques and students are developing soft skills.

« There was a big change in my classroom. Before I did everything but now the children participate in their learning. They police each other's behaviour and participate much more in class. Teacher CM2 »

THEORY OF CHANGE

The program's effectiveness emanates from the unique method with which we impart our trainings and the personalised follow-up of teachers. In contrast to the mostly theoretical training teachers receive, ours allows them to experience and practice the tools of child centred and active learning. We utilise the proven transformative effects of cooperative group work, role-play sketches etc... to personally involve and commit each of the participants (Sinclair, 2008).

The very nature of peace education is learner centred, competency-based and only acquired when "doing" peace through experiential and participatory activities. Whilst other subjects like maths or grammar might be learned through memorization, peace cannot. Peace education therefore provides a tangible example of the techniques needed to achieve quality teaching and competency based learning, an ability that remains a challenge to many of today's teachers.

Furthermore child-centred learning requires teachers to internalize a cultural and mental paradigm shift that perceives respect, engagement and inclusion of all students as teaching's key priorities. Our experiential peace education training is a means to achieving that personal transformation of consciousness.

« Grains of Peace's training helped me understand that children face difficulties and to become much more patient during my teaching. I have evolved in that I am much less angry during class. I talk much more with my students. Teacher CM2 »

PARTNERS

Key to the program's implementation is the strategic partnership developed with the Ministry of Education of Ivory Coast. It is the Ministry's commitment to the project that mobilises teachers and facilitates all the logistical aspects of the intervention. Furthermore we continue to work with officials so as to harmonise our pedagogical content with that of the Ministry. We are also ensuring the program's sustainability by mainstreaming our program's approach within the Ministry's current reform of initial teacher training.

We have also built partnerships with schools and national and international NGOs in the informal sector such as Save the Children and we are a member of UNESCO's Network of Foundations and Research Institutions for the Promotion of a Culture of Peace in Africa.

GRAINES DE PAIX AND TRECC

The program has successfully finalized its first phase having completed 15 out of the 21 training cycles. Our mid-term evaluation and monitoring analysis confirms the program's relevance and positive results.

It is in the light of this second stage, with a mature and established program, that we are actively looking for partners to join our existing group of co-funders (Fondation Smartpeace, the City of Geneva and the Municipalities of Meyrin, Plan-les-Ouates and Lancy) to finance our upcoming training cycles particularly in the regions of the cocoa production.

The TRECC educational initiative offers an instrumental opportunity to propose long-term solutions to the complex problems of quality learning. In the same vein the educational project Graines de Paix proposes moves away from the building bricks and walls approach to building resilience, agency and long-term pedagogical change within classrooms.

Jacobs Foundation's team in Ivory Coast has already shown interest in the project for TRECC's Phase II. We are keen to simultaneously build partnerships with the Cocoa industry in this regard. Our teams in Abidjan and Geneva would be available to present in further detail the project to interested partners.



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