University of Sussex
Centre for International Education

THE LUMINOS FUND

HAWASSA UNIVERSITY

Learning the Speed School Way: Analysis of Speed School Pedagogy in Ethiopia

December 2015

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

Analysis of Speed School Documentation and Pedagogy in Ethiopia 5

Introduction 5

- **Data Used** 5
- **Format of this report** 5

Speed School Philosophy, Aims & Organisation 6

- **Philosophy and Aims** 6
- **Organisation** 6

Curriculum and Training 6

- **Curriculum and Lesson planning** 6
- **Minimum Level Competences and textbook content** 8
- **Facilitator Training** 8

Speed School Pedagogy in Practice 10

- **Classroom culture and management** 10
- **Lesson structure and timings** 11
- **Summarising** 11
- **Presentation of concepts/Explaining** 12
- **Responding** 12
- **Questioning** 13
- **Teaching and Learning Resources** 13
- **Group work** 13
- **Pupil tasks/Class work** 14
- **Assessment** 14
- **Learning outcomes** 14

Conclusion 15

- **Teacher attitudes** 15
- **Communicative Strategies** 16
- **Effective Pedagogic Practices** 16

Recommendations 16

- **Explaining/teaching content and questioning:** 17
- **Repetition** 17
- **Differentiation** 17
- **Facilitator Training** 17

References 18

Executive Summary

An impact evaluation of the Speed School programme has demonstrated that Out of School Children (OOSC) who benefit from it are able to demonstrate superior learning outcomes than a comparable group who have not gone through the programme (Akyeampong et al., 2011). In this report, researchers from the Centre for International Education (CIE) University of Sussex, UK and their partners from Hawassa University, Ethiopia have focused attention on understanding what it is about the pedagogy of the Speed School programme that is responsible for the positive effects. In reviewing the Speed School pedagogy, the researchers were also interested in aspects of the curriculum and the organisation of the training for the facilitators (teachers) that might need improving to enhance its impact. Analysing how the pedagogy is practiced is a key part of understanding why the pedagogy works in the way it does, but also identify gaps between the philosophy and aims, and the observed practice.

Research into the Speed School pedagogy is ongoing and covers a wide range of schools and teachers, and will be completed in March 2016. Hence, this is an initial report based on limited observational data of the pedagogy in action, and as such, the findings and recommendations should be treated as preliminary.

The following research questions underpinned the review of the Speed School curriculum, pedagogy and practice:

- What is the philosophy behind the Speed School curriculum and pedagogy?
- How does the organisation of Speed Schools support this?
- To what extent does the training of the facilitator support convergence with the curriculum and pedagogy?
- How does the pedagogy work in practice?
- What are the gaps that arise between the philosophy, documentation and practice?

The report briefly outlines the Speed School organisation, followed by its philosophy and aims. Key aspects of the facilitator training, curriculum and pedagogy in practice are then discussed in detail including what could be gleaned about the learning outcomes that pupils were attaining in class. Notably, even amongst just four teachers, there was sufficient variety of practices to allow us to tentatively point out the different ways in which facilitators enacted the pedagogies, some more successfully than others, within each sub section.

The review found that in the hands of motivated and creative teachers, the Speed School pedagogy succeeds in getting OOSC to learn with enjoyment and demonstrate an aptitude for deep learning that traditional teaching approaches find more difficult to achieve. Training plays a big part in how this is achieved. The facilitator training goes beyond showing teachers what to do, but provides them with the kind of learning experiences that they are expected to promote in their classrooms. Thus, even in the hands of less experienced and responsive teachers, the condensed curriculum and flexible structure promoted in the teaching process means that pupils are able to engage with the content through a variety of activities that always includes social interaction, so that learning is far more likely to take place.

A larger review by Westbrook et al, 2013, found that when teachers formed more positive attitudes towards their pupils and the pedagogy promoted in their training, they were more likely to use three overall communicative strategies: (a) paying inclusive attention and giving feedback; (b) creating a safe learning environment; (c) drawing on pupils' backgrounds. In turn these communicative strategies led to teachers using six pedagogic practices effectively that were also interactive by nature: *group work; questioning; teaching resources; using a local language as medium of instruction; lesson planning; sound explanations.* Viewed in the light of this framework, it is easy to see why the Speed School pedagogic model has a positive effect on the learning experiences of pupils. However, gaps also appear that could be strengthened to further enhance the pedagogy for OOSC. Engagement and application of the methodology for teaches can be demanding, especially the lesson planning demands, frequent observations and studying at weekends. Programme designers have to give serious thought to the workload implications so that teachers do not fall into a bureaucratic routine of meeting

instructional planning and management requirements, and thereby lose much of the quality and diversified instruction that the pedagogy seeks to promote.

Six practices worked together to create what might be described as the particular strengths of the Speed School pedagogy:

1. **Group work**: the relearning of content/concepts within a group and then representing it to others makes learning shared and collaborative, sociable and interactive.
2. **Questioning** is seen as a key strategy and is often lively and interactive even when teachers' questions are lower order.
3. **Teaching and learning materials**: while the government textbook is the sole reference point its content are adapted to the specific pedagogy, and local materials such as clay, or stones, or chalk, plus card and paper are used to augment the learning and make it meaningful.
4. **Use of local language** is government policy but the gradual use of Amharic and English alongside ensures that pupils can understand what is going on, and makes group work function well.
5. The flexibility allowed in **planning** within the given structure ensures Opportunity and Time to Learn, and also ensures a variety of activities within each lesson, as well as keeping to a set time needed to cover the curriculum for that day, week and Phase.
6. **Demonstration and explanation** of content and new concepts are generally well explained, with teaching and learning resources integral to the explanation, and in the best examples provide a fast pace and cognitive challenge.

Finally, seven areas were identified where improvement could take place. These areas should be given more attention in the curriculum documentation, stress during the training of facilitators and monitored at in the Speed School classroom level. The gaps are: *explaining/teaching content; questioning; repetition; individual attention; differentiation; ensuring adequate supply of textbooks and supplementary readers to strengthen individualised learning.*

Developing better quality of questioning by the teacher will support pupils to grasp the intellectual content, and vice versa, for pupils to be taught and encouraged to ask questions themselves. When teachers are able to ask more open questions, the physical and social set up of the classroom and the pedagogic framing would give time for pupils to think, especially the 30 second slots planned especially for this. Furthermore, pupils should be encouraged to construct their own questions, almost as another 'media' along with cards, games and music.

Speed School programme designers should think of introducing individualised enhancement activities as part of the teaching and learning process. This could be in the form of tasks that stretch from easy to the more challenging, and a system for recording progress with respect to the different tasks undertaken by the pupils.

Facilitator training is so intensive that covering all the practices may well not be possible and much of the actual teacher learning will have to be on-the-job. The practice where the training is phased and facilitators are given the opportunity to work through the curriculum in stages is good practice that should be encouraged.

Speed School Programme designers should explore the use of video clips of dynamic teachers in Speed School classes to show new teachers the example of the pedagogy in practice, and how the different parts add up to the whole. In other words, the facilitator training should become 'a study of practice'. Ensuring individual attention to children could also be further highlighted and planned for, with a transaction between each child and teacher possible in most lessons, and with five children a day identified for close attention. Keeping an eye on the individual and the Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs) they are supposed to achieve may help teachers to work out better how to close the gap between pupils' current level and the level they need to attain to transition to the government primary school.

Analysis of Speed School Documentation and Pedagogy in Ethiopia

Introduction

Statistics indicate that Speed Schools in Ethiopia have had considerable success in educating thousands of Out of School Children (OOSC) up to the level expected at Grade 3 or 4 of the primary curriculum in just ten months of schooling. If the facilitator training, curriculum or instructional strategies offer a particular advantage or 'boost' over other instructional strategies in maximising learning for such children, then understanding this in detail will enable further development and transfer into other context. Moreover, having identified the key characteristics, we need to understand which aspects can be adopted by teachers in mainstream public schools and so extend knowledge about its benefits beyond the boundaries of the programme. For the purpose of maximising the impact on learning for OOSC, it is worth understanding which aspects of the Speed School curriculum, facilitator training and pedagogy as practiced in classrooms need further enhancing.

Thus, this report analyses and characterises the training, curriculum and pedagogy used in Speed Schools in Ethiopia and draws on preliminary research carried out by Centre for International Education, University of Sussex in collaboration with the University of Hawassa, Ethiopia.

Research into the Speed School pedagogy is ongoing and covers a wide range of schools and teachers, and will be completed in March 2016. Hence, this is an initial report based on limited observational data of the pedagogy in action, and as such, the findings and recommendations should be treated as preliminary.

The following research questions underpinned the review of the Speed School curriculum, pedagogy and practice:

1. What is the philosophy behind the Speed School curriculum and pedagogy?
2. How does the organisation of Speed Schools support this?
3. To what extent does the training of the facilitator support convergence with the curriculum and pedagogy?
4. How does the pedagogy work in practice?
5. What are the gaps that arise between the philosophy, documentation and practice?

Data Used

Documentation read to support understanding of the observed pedagogy consisted of the Speed School Facilitators' Guide Training Handbook, the Speed School Manual and the Minimum Learning Competencies Grades 1-4 (Ministry of Education). Observational data came from four teachers who were observed over two or three lessons, three women and one man, all of whom had only been teaching for 6 weeks as Speed School teachers. This was an opportunity used in the context of trialling observational instruments for more extensive and intensive research, and so cannot be seen as representative of practice across the wider group of Ethiopian Speed Schools. In particular, the Speed Schools were located in areas within two hours travel of Hawassa city and therefore not facing the challenges of those in more remote locations. Pupils' books, teachers' plans, the classroom and textbooks were also studied. Observation also included a half day of facilitator training where the 48 trainees were in their third day of the first week of training before going out to become full time Speed School facilitators, plus informal interviews with the Implementing Partners and Training Officers who carried out the training.

Format of this report

The report briefly outlines the Speed School organisation, followed by its philosophy and aims. Key aspects of the facilitator training, curriculum and pedagogy in practice are then discussed in detail including what could be gleaned about the learning outcomes that pupils were attaining in class. Notably, even amongst just four teachers, there was sufficient variety of practices to allow us to tentatively point out the different ways in which facilitators enacted the pedagogies, some more successfully than others, within each sub section.

The report concludes by drawing broadly on the framework developed by Westbrook et al. (2013) in their study of effective pedagogies in developing countries and identifies the key factors that support the pedagogy and

possible gaps or areas of potential weakness. Finally, it makes some preliminary recommendations to guide improvements to the Speed School curriculum, facilitator training and practice in Speed Schools.

Speed School Philosophy, Aims & Organisation

Philosophy and Aims

The aim of the Speed School is for pupils to cover the first three grades of the government curriculum in one year, achieving minimum competency levels and then to transition to the local Link primary school into Grade 3 or 4. Out of School Children (OOSC) children are those aged 9-14 from poor families, those who have never been to school, girls, older children and those without one or both parents. The Speed School Facilitator's Training Guide (p.16) takes advantage of the situation Speed School pupils are placed in for their espoused pedagogic approach:

- Older students can learn within a shorter time span and at a faster pace than younger children.
- Mastering Literacy at an early age is key to academic success.
- Children who have been out of school can be more motivated and enthusiastic to learn.
- Individual attention to each student's learning process produces better results.

Here the central assumption is that an enabling environment can harness children's natural desire and motivation to learn, articulated overtly in the Accelerated Learning Principles. Social constructivism underpins a holistic child-centred, cooperative and collaborative approach where active 'doing' by the learner is central to learning. Body and mind are seen as working together and capable of absorbing different forms of learning simultaneously. Smaller classes of 25 allow individual attention as well as group work to enact these principles.

Organisation

To achieve the aims for the Speed School, the structure of the annual and daily calendar and curriculum has to depart radically from that of the formal school and give more opportunity to learn the condensed content of 10 months. The annual Speed School calendar is from September to June with 40 weeks of teaching and only two one week holidays. The school year is divided into three terms of two or three months, each term or phase corresponding to a year of the formal primary curriculum. The teaching day is longer, too, than the four or five hours of the shifts in government primary schools, and runs from 8am to 5pm, with 7 lessons a day with a one hour and forty minute lunch break, and four hours of lessons on Saturday mornings. Facilitators are expected to work longer hours than this in preparation and assessment, 8 hours a day, 40 days a week minimum. Pupils are assessed continuously but the year culminates in a month long revision period to support students in taking the placement examination designed by the Link Primary schools, that identifies which level the students have reached and hence which Grade they are to transit to.

Speed Schools are located in kebeles or villages with large numbers of out of school children, usually in a classroom located in existing primary schools or classrooms donated by the community or a church and managed by a Community Management Committee organised by the Implementing Partners (IP). New structures that have to be built follow a given size. Each school is expected to have furniture for 25 children, chalk and display boards along with drinkable water to create the 'enabling environment 'to maximise learning. The programme is also expected to provide exercise books and pens, the School or IP provides textbooks and 40 supplementary readers, enough for each student to take one home and read it every week. The programme also encourages provision of supplementary reading materials from other sources to complement its efforts.

Curriculum and Training

Curriculum and Lesson planning

The curriculum itself is rooted in the Ethiopian national curriculum and its Minimum Learning Competencies, with the government textbook for each year and subject as the key reference, with the rationale that the pupils have to transition back into mainstream primary schools, demonstrating that this is a cost-effective way of using

existing resources. It also signals the importance of ensuring that pupils in the Speed Schools are able to meet minimum learning competencies that forms the bedrock of the national curriculum. In effect, the curriculum is meant to create a seamless transition into mainstream government schools at the appropriate level of competence.

Pupils learn Native Languages, English, Mathematics, Amharic and Environmental Sciences, within a tightly planned curriculum that moves them from grade 1 level in Native Languages and basic numeracy in the first two months, to four months at grade 2 level adding in Amharic and Environment Studies, and four months at grade 3 level of contents plus English. Each subject has a specific allocation of hours to it.

The Training Guide takes pains to show the relationship between the Speed School and government curriculum so that facilitators are aware of how one fits into the other with the imperative to progress pupils through the curriculum at each phase, as a Training Officer at the Facilitators' training emphasised to the trainees: '*a child cannot learn the next phase if they have not understood the first phase*'. Hence, the observed facilitator training focused on planning at an annual and a daily level to ensure curriculum coverage and progression at the class and individual level, with lessons to be prepared per topic and lesson every day. Several trainee facilitators questioned this, asking why they could not simply write weekly plans, to which the Training Officer replied with the excellent analogy of: '*A man (sic) who is teaching without a lesson plan is walking in the dark*'. Though planning lessons on a daily basis focuses the mind of the teacher on how the lesson fits with a previously taught lesson, it can create a feeling of heavy teaching load. This, perhaps explains why facilitators saw this as somewhat excessive. Furthermore, facilitators were taught how to consider and write clear, specific objectives for each lesson and to check whether these were achieved or not, and if not, to be acted upon in future planning. A chart hanging on the wall gave examples for objectives such as 'tells, writes, explains, gives examples'. Interestingly, in discussions around 'What kind of questions can we ask?' the Training Officer insisted that these 'should be related to the objective', and carried out within the framework of Think/Pair/Share.

This close attention to planning was reflected in the given lesson structure that the Training Officer painstakingly wrote out on the board, dividing up an hour into ten minute chunks of activity, beginning with questions or teachers' explanation, then music and song, 'teaching by card', group work, 30 seconds of silence for students to think about what they had learnt and what they could remember, ten minutes of shouting out slogans and ten minutes of peer teaching at the end. If a topic is not completed within the hour, then facilitators are allowed to continue without the need for further planning but only if a new topic is not to be introduced. However, planning in this observed session seems to focus on what the teachers were to do rather than what and how the pupils were to do and learn. Presumably, because they had experienced how pupils are to learn through activity based learning approaches, lesson planning took on a whole different meaning from the traditional and often theoretical approaches to lesson planning where oftentimes teachers had not re-enacted or modelled learning from the perspective of the pupil.

A clear distinction between learning to teach the Speed School way and other approaches described in other teacher education programmes in sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) (Akyeampong et al., 2012) is the encouragement to be flexible in the application of the Speed School methodology. This is a significant departure from the scripted lessons that some Accelerated Learning Programmes have encouraged, and which can limit the opportunity to learn for children in some contexts and conditions that require the teacher to make significant adjustments in teaching to achieve meaningful learning. So, while there is thus a given lesson structure, there is also some flexibility as to the way in which a concept could be taught and what kind of tasks are given to each group and in this way teachers' ingenuity can shape the learning. This appears to be a strength of the Speed School pedagogy, avoiding the prescription that can be a straightjacket for teachers' practice. The very nature of the pedagogy requires creative thinking and planning by the teacher to adapt the pedagogy for their particular classes, and also to allow their pupils parallel space and time to rethink the learning. The lesson structure also means that teachers have to adapt textbook content to the pedagogy rather than simply lecture and reproduce the content through rote learning. Scripted lessons such are used in the training given in the non-formal Schools for Life programmes in Northern Ghana are helpful at the very beginning of training but may not be flexible enough to avoid dependency and therefore the risk of rote learning (Arkorful, 2012). On the other hand, the very flexibility within the given structure also means that there will inevitably be some variation in the way that facilitators interpret and enact the curriculum and in the lessons observed this was very true, with some facilitators better able to be creative, pay attention to pupils, and explain concepts than others. No training,

however intensive or lengthy, can develop all teachers to teach at similar high levels of expertise, and the real strength of the Speed School pedagogy is that the given structure taught so painstakingly in the training ensures that even in the hands of the weakest facilitators, pupils learn through a variety of means including the more sociable group work.

Minimum Level Competences and textbook content

The expectations for what pupils are to attain come from the government Minimum Level Competences (MLCs), and demand much of both pupils and facilitators to learn and cover in ten months. For example, by the end of the last four months for reading in English pupils should have moved from reading initial letters, matching them to pictures, and reading 25 key words related to people, animals, objects and colours (MLC for English Pre-reading and reading, Grade 1) to using and reading around 300 words, using phonic cues to read new words and reading short paragraphs (MLC for English Reading Grade 3). For pupils learning through Sidamigna or Oromiffa where the script is based on the alphabetic principle, this may be easier than those learning in Amharic with its different character-based script. The Minimum Competencies for Maths stipulate that by Grade 3 pupils will be able to add whole numbers to10,000, multiply whole numbers up to 100 by 1-digit number and divide multiples of 10 and 100 up to 10,000. For Environmental Studies, Health and Society, by Grade 3 students will have quite sophisticated concepts around disease prevention, sanitation activities, local geography, local industrial items and small scale value chains.

The national textbooks facilitators rely on to teach mathematics, language, English and Environment science provide good reference points as they represent concepts in arresting but simple diagrams and pictures, delineate careful progression of learning and are closely related to the MLCs. As such, they support the facilitators in understanding the concept itself, and how to present that concept in class. For English at Grade 1, for example, pictures of familiar school objects such as a pencil, book and bag have the English word underneath, with speech bubbles for simple greetings, progressing onto instruction on how to write individual letters, important for those learning first in Amharic, and giving examples of familiar words they start with, to very simple stories and then to a n two paragraph stories using more complex grammatical constructions. The mathematics textbook for Grade 1 begins with colourful pictures of children, animals and people for addition, moving onto clear visuals representing larger addition using base 10 of 10 + 1 = 11, to subtraction of numbers visually represented through pictures of familiar objects such as bananas and sweets.

In contrast to the rubric in the Training Handbook, the Training Officer at the training event observed said that while each teacher gets a photocopy of the textbook for each grade and subject, pupils themselves do not receive a copy of the text book, nor are facilitators given a set of the supplementary readers, but have to procure these with the help of the local primary school and other means such as buying second hand books or from parents themselves. Any content therefore has to be written out or, as mentioned above, adapted by the facilitator or read out loud. This may not be representative of general practice in other Speed School training context. Nevertheless, for this particular training, this limits opportunities for pupils to study for themselves, to learn more from the many examples given in the textbook, and makes them more reliant than they need to be on the teacher. The older pupils, some of whom had attended government schools prior to dropping out, were clearly progressing at a faster rate than their younger peers, and they needed to set or be set, their own pace in class. Furthermore, lack of individual textbooks meant that the teacher was limited in what she/he could set for homework, as to what could be easily written out and then copied down by the pupils, nor could the parents, particularly the mother (if capable), follow and support (and learn) what their child was doing in class.

Facilitator Training

With such a short timeframe, the accelerated curriculum and given pedagogy, great importance rests with the training of the teachers so that they are ready to enact it in classrooms after just three weeks of training. With IPs only remaining in the one region or woreda for three years, teachers get some refresher training but much hangs on that initial training and they must learn fast, be committed and self-directed, and have faith in the pedagogy itself. Thus, the effectiveness of the facilitator training and the continued professional support they receive is key to the effective implementation of the Speed School curriculum.

According to the Facilitator's Training Guide, teachers are recruited on the basis of their fluency in the local language, having achieved at least to Grade 10 at secondary school, preferably having obtained a formal teaching qualification and experience of creating an encouraging learning environment. They expectation is that facilitators undergo intensive training for 21 days. This starts with a needs assessment and the development of a training plan, working 7 hours a day, with one-week refresher training during the year. There are variations to this depending on local situations or circumstance. The particular training reported here is an example of how the facilitator training is varied to fit a particular circumstance.

In the training observed there had been a delay in signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local authorities and this had resulted in delaying the start of the school year for Speed Schools in SNNPR. Hence, to ensure teachers were trained in time for the start of the new term, they were trained first, for just one week in order to teach Phase 1, that is, the first two months where Grade 1 content is taught, going out to apply their learning directly as a teacher the following week. They were to return at Christmas for a second week to learn about Phase 2, and then at Easter for Phase 3. To support them they have Continuous Assessment Improvement, that is, frequent in-class visits from Community Mobilisers (CMs) and Training Officers (TOs) in addition to refresher training. This three-phase training approach in effect was to ensure that teachers had the opportunity to practice what they were learning and receive feedback before moving on to the next phase.

Uniquely, therefore, training had to focus on practice, with no time for the subject content and theory that dominates traditional initial teacher education in Ethiopia and indeed Sub-Saharan Africa (Akyeampong et al 2012). However, it offers the possibility of learning theory through practice. However, researchers were not able to observe all three phases with a single cohort of facilitators to determine the extent to which the theories behind practices were discussed or implementation challenges handled.

These teachers in training seemed young, in their early to mid-20's, with 4-5 men older, in their 30s or 40's. They are Grade 10-12 leavers, but all had the Certificate in Education from teacher training college but as yet no experience. They were all upgrading to the Diploma over the next year, part of the government's plan to raise teachers' qualification. However, they had to study for this at the same time as teaching on the Speed School programme, studying at weekends, and making up the four hours they are supposed to teach on Saturdays during breaks and lunchtime, giving them a very full year ahead. So while, it could be said that these trainees were building on their knowledge of teaching through intensive practice, workload issues could potentially limit their own classroom effectiveness.

The half day of observations took place over the one week in a large secondary school in a hilly part of Dale Woreda in SNNPR, with the 48 facilitators packed into one classroom with wooden benches. The classroom had many homemade charts and annual lesson plans stuck up on walls illustrating what and how had been learnt. Several charts illustrated the aims and philosophy of Speed Schools, detailing what kind of child is targeted, with one giving a full list of the14 different learning approaches such as 'community based learning' and 'nature based learning' that facilitators were to use. Additionally, one chart listed 25 activities that facilitators were expected to do every day from greeting students in three languages, checking sanitation, getting pupils to stretch after each lesson, dictations twice a day, using slogans, discussions, carrying out assigned jobs, telling a story, peer teaching and going outside. The study of practice was therefore visible from the start of the training. This training environment which mirrored what facilitators were expected to meet in the typical Speed School classroom creates the potential for easy transfer of the knowledge and skills the training was impacting. In many residential in-service training experienced by teachers in many sub-Saharan Africa countries, teachers sometimes receive training in resource-rich environments e.g. in in-service training (INSET) centres, only to be faced with classrooms which have very little or none of the facilities and resources that the training exposed them to.

The teachers were trained through the same methodology used to teach the pupils: they were seated facing one another in six groups according to Card, Games, StoryTelling, Music, so experiencing – 'doing' – what was a very different pedagogic approach, one they would not have come across as school pupils or trainee teachers (Abebe and Woldehanna 2013). Quite explicitly, the training sought to reconceptualise how these trainees viewed learning, and children, in a way that was far more than simply 'child-centred', encouraging trainees to accept what the pupils brought with them and how they learnt. Using a socially situated and metacognitive approach, the young and jovial Training Officer (who had been a head teacher of a primary school), gave the rationale for each part of the lesson, pointing out also that '*we need to reveal the learning for the students*', that is, the Speed School children. The term 'Activity Based Learning' was used by the Training Officer, emphasising

the point about how important it is that learning involves active engagement with all the senses. The rationale given for the group work, that is, the 'activity' or 'doing 'part, was for pupils to 're-teach and re-test' lesson content and concept, as the Training Officer termed it, through various media of song, card, story or game. **This 're-learning' or rehearsal of content by different groups in tandem with simple teaching and learning resources is at the heart of the Speed School pedagogic approach. It is the 'saying again' in the pupils' own words, so that they appropriate and own the learning.**

Importantly, the facilitator training encouraged precisely this approach, asking volunteers to come to the middle of the classroom to tell a comic tale, or illustrate how they would use cards to teach numbers or stones for counting in a game or a song, drawing on their own cultural backgrounds and presumably what they have also learnt in their formal teacher training. The atmosphere was highly convivial and enjoyable for all. Some trainees came out twice to show in front of the others, those who were more confident and perhaps had more experience, while those who did not volunteer were not pushed to perform.

Thus, the facilitator training adopted an approach directly in tandem with the Speed School philosophy and aims, and illustrated to the facilitator how teaching and learning in the Speed School classroom was to be organised, and crucially, illustrated quite powerfully an approach to learning that was directly child-centred. So unlike, many other training approaches, trainees are not 'told' how to organise learning for children, but the training process is enacted in such a way as to enable teachers experience what their learners were expected to experience. In a sense, the reflects John Dewey, the internationally recognised American educator's idea that direct experience is the most powerful educational experience, and that carefully constructed, this experience is more powerful than lecturing or telling pupils what to do and how to learn.

Speed School Pedagogy in Practice

Classroom culture and management

A key aim is for facilitators to create a positive enabling environment for their pupils and this came across strongly in the observed lessons.

Two of the classes were in classrooms on the campus of a very large primary school, set apart a little, but not far enough to prevent many of the pupils peering in continually to look at the team of researchers but also simply what and how was being taught. The classrooms had adobe walls and corrugated iron roofs, but were relatively spacious and light, with wooden benches formed into groups facing one another. There was a bench for the teacher to put her textbook and register, and a table at the back where pupils' clay letters, numbers and other art work were displayed, albeit somewhat broken and dusty. There were many home made charts and letters written onto flash cards stuck up next to the chalk board. The second lot of classes observed were markedly different, being just two classrooms in the middle of a field, donated by a church and one room was half filled with old furniture.

Pupils were remarkably relaxed yet very engaged and at times excitable, certainly in relation to primary school classrooms in other Sub-Saharan African countries. Facilitators and Community Mobiliser constructed what could be described as a stress free environment in which the pupils' identity as part of a special learning community was emphasised and where pupils were responsible for one another's well-being and learning. For example, one teacher quietly and patiently stopped a lesson that took place after lunch when four pupils came in 20 minutes late, admonishing them by saying they had interrupted their peer's learning. She asked the class if they should apologise to all. On saying 'yes', the four students then went around the class shaking each pupils' hand and saying 'sorry' which took a good 5 minutes or more from the learning. However, this evidently engendered community spirit and a sense of responsibility that was as important as more formal learning. Similarly, when a pupil from another class came to request a chalk duster from the teacher the CM who was observing the class suggested that they ask the class as well. There was a loud 'yes' and it was done. One teacher reminded the class several times that they were a 'smart Speed School class', another remarked that the pupils were all 'clever', but only in one class did we observe slogans being chanted, at the end, led by a boy, shouting 'we will be clever!' Thus, there was clearly a reinforcement of the idea that learning was a collective responsibility and the classroom resembled the training ground of a single team – no child was to be left behind. Thus, underlying the approach is the idea that every child has the potential to learn, hence the whole learning experience appears

to encourage positive self-image. The Speed School pedagogy as observed by the researchers did not pre-occupy itself with technical pedagogy, but ensured that *how* the content is learnt is as important as *what* was learnt.

The Training Handbook determines that any pupil 'mis' behaviour should be understood as emanating from the facilitator's failure to engage the child, or being caused by the school infrastructure (lack of water or pleasant latrines) or on the child's circumstances such as transition, learning disabilities, hunger, ill health or family issues. This approach contrasts with research that suggests that the teacher often puts blame on the student for poor behaviour in similar contexts (Westbrook et al 2013). Concrete suggestions are given to alleviate these behaviours, with the onus on the facilitator to build an enabling and safe environment that minimises any need for sanctions. Pupils, like their facilitators, are expected to follow a code of conduct around the school, one extolling respect for others, wearing appropriate dress and shoes (if possible) and including zero tolerance of corporal punishment. Attendance of pupils is taken twice a day in carefully kept registers, as are registers of teachers' attendance.

Reflecting the handbook and the philosophy, the happy and constructive atmosphere of all the Speed School classrooms was the most unusual feature for the team of researchers, often calm, but switching to contained excitement when pupils performed, or someone said something humorous. Teachers did not shout, but lowered their voices, and used praise appropriately but not indiscriminately. Pupils were rarely reprimanded or indeed corrected publically or privately as far as observations could tell and appeared most engaged when teachers openly smiled or laughed and were enthusiastic. All seemed to adopt a kindly attitude to the pupils, but not all were dynamic during the observed teaching, quite possibly because to do that may sap the considerable energy needed to teach all 7 lessons 6 times a week.

Lesson structure and timings

The annual plans written by the teacher and hanging up in the classrooms illustrated how carefully time had to be used to cover the curriculum.

One teacher's annual plan for English, for example, gave a week to learn small and capital letters, another week for greetings, body parts, and colours, and a third week for counting, familiar objects, 'my family' and describing people. The teachers used a fairly similar lesson structure that framed content but allowed for variety with typically 10 or 15 minutes of recap or presentation of new learning, 10 or 20 minutes of group work, 15 or 20 minutes of classwork, and then homework. The routine meant that pupils knew what was expected of them, they seemed to feel safe and little time was needed for procedural talk.

In the lessons where pupils really seemed engaged, there was greater variety of activities with a faster pace, and each lesson part could be easily discerned, often with the teacher explicitly announcing 'now is the time for group work'. Time could also be given for pupils to role play or recite a poem at the end. In the less successful lessons the different activities were more difficult to discern with longer times for each activity so that children grew bored and restless and the teacher had to spend more time explaining what they were to do. A clear difference was seen in the way that showing group activities to the rest of the class was handled. In some classes this involved a serial performance by each group with the rest of class responding where necessary. This sometimes led to disengagement especially from pupils who seemed to have grasped the concept well and were ready to move on. In other classes the children were encouraged to continue with individual activities (desk work) in and around participation with the group that was showing.

Summarising

Recapping functioned to stimulate pupils at the beginning of the lesson, assess prior learning and homework and to consolidate or revise and only then to explicitly move pupils onto new content.

Several lessons began with 5 or mostly 10 minutes of recap through teacher questions, with reference to homework, work on the board or use of flash cards held up with sounds or numbers on, for example, from the 'W' sounds with its associated 7 sounds and syllables in Amharic. Sometimes pupils referred to the homework in their exercise books to answer questions, with one lesson illustrating extended pupil talk around the homework topic of family relationships. One teacher asked pupils what they remembered about multiplying and dividing and gave them a minute to remember, with 7 different pupils contributing and coming up to the board to write down

their own sums. Less successful recaps were short and not interactive, where pupils were asked to the board to answer sums from the previous day with the teachers' closed question of 'can you do division?' answered by pupils chorusing 'yes!'

Presentation of concepts/Explaining

Accelerated learning depends on pupils grasping lesson content rapidly and securely, so that teachers' explanations of new content and concepts need to be clear, imaginative, and based on secure content knowledge.

This is particularly important since pupils do not have their own textbooks to refer back to in case of misconceptions. In the most successful examples, facilitators presented content that was cognitively challenging and progressed pupils on fairly rapidly within the one lesson One wrote new sounds in Oromiffa on the board clearly such as Ga G + A = Ga gababa ['short'] to teach stress, using much short, sharp and constructive choral work where she pronounced the sounds and words as a model, and used linguistic terminology to support a metacognitive awareness of phonology, stress, vowels and consonants. She added to this, working at a fast pace through different combinations of sounds, inviting 4 pupils to the board to act as teachers, all in 15 minutes. The homework was to repeat the exercise but with 5 different letter combinations so requiring pupils to transfer new concepts learnt onto unfamiliar letters and avoiding repetition. Similarly, the same teacher drew 4 circles on the board asking 'how many oranges?' and then divided these into two to show visually how division works:

0 0 1 1	0 0 1 1

Another used analogy to explain the 'Wu' sound in Amharic and clearly wrote all the different associated 'W' sounds and then a whole word that began with that sound so that pupils could see and hear how graphemes built up into whole words. Conversely, another teacher gave no explanation of division or of what pupils were to do but wrote sums on the board for pupils to copy and answer. Only in the middle of lesson after the group work did she ask 'If I have 10 bananas and give them to five people how many will each have?'. Another copied out information on 'Crop and Animal Products for Consumption' from the textbook that took 23 minutes with pupils craning their necks around her to copy it down, but without giving any rationale for what she was writing or reading it aloud so that the copying lacked any context or meaning.

Responding

Social constructivist views of learning support a dialogic, interactive classroom, so how teachers listen to, observe and respond to their pupils is important.

It was noticeable that teachers rarely publically corrected or remediated pupils but used less public ways such as marking a 'cross' in their books or sometimes discussed the problem one to one. In this way, pupils felt safe to make mistakes and also knew they would not be picked on if they did not put their hand up in response to a teacher's question. When the teacher did correct the pronunciation of the 'HHii 'sound during a game, it was quietly done and appropriate to the context. Two of the teachers observed appeared to study groups of children working together, before either moving to another group or quietly intervening. Most teachers, however, went directly to each group and intervened, albeit quietly talking to the pupils which may have been another way of assessing their understanding. One teacher in particular returned several times to work with a particular group who were having problems, the story telling group, and let them show their 2-minute role play at the end of the lesson. However, in another class with a group made up of all boys, it took half a lesson before the teacher noticed that most of them were not engaged and in particular one boy who hid his exercise book on a shelf and did nothing. The pace of the lessons could be adjusted to the pupils who got through the work fastest, as in one lesson, or to the pace of those working more slowly: differentiating tasks was a discernible weakness of the teachers.

Questioning

Questioning in teaching as a form of formative assessment enables the teacher to regulate learning so that progress towards expected learning outcomes can be reliably achieved. This was the one area identified that was generally less skilfully carried out.

The best examples were where a teacher moved close to each group at the beginning of a lesson recapping homework on 'My Family' and distributed open questions to each group, with pupils so enthusiastic they were lying over their desks to be noticed, several replying with extended answers. However, most teachers used a number of closed questions such as 'do we all understand?' which were supportive rather than probing or they asked lots of lower order yes/no questions directed to the whole class. In the Facilitator Training Manual there is a fairly lengthy discussion of such question-posing, known as the six-step Question Formulation Technique, using divergent, convergent and metacognitive techniques, with teachers to encourage pupils to pose their own questions. However, there were few examples of this, and these were procedural, pupils asking if they could do the homework there and then in the class (No), or if a letter on the board was an 'a' or a 'e'. All pupils appeared to be able to ask questions or make mistakes, however, but there was rarely opportunity or encouragement to do so. This means that pupils may not be getting enough opportunity to also self-regulate their learning by taking the initiative to ask their own questions and probe understanding.

Teaching and Learning Resources

While the Handbook says that each pupil will have their own textbook, none of the classes observed had more than the teacher's one copy, so that teaching and learning resources, however limited, became important for illustrating the learning.

Moreover, it is the pupils who make these as an integral part of their learning, becoming teachers themselves in considering how to show or represent the content through throwing a ball or using cards, or a game chalked on the floor, or making clay letters and numbers. Interestingly, one teacher allowed a games group ten minutes to carefully chalk 9 squares onto the floor, with one boy writing in letters and then rubbing them off, slightly off task. However, resources remained limited in quantity and variety and no classroom had a library of 40 supplementary readers nor did we see any reading aloud of a story. Again, however, this lack of resources can be construed as a strength as the pedagogy is not dependent on a costly package of materials that once used, need to be replenished, and may not be contextually appropriate in any case (Westbrook et al 2013). The variety of pedagogic approaches outlined in the Facilitator's handbook, and on the charts in the training, such as community -, nature -, peer-, music -, game-, based learning, rely on social interaction and not on material objects. Hence the pedagogy is inherently sustainable, can be reproduced in a variety of contexts with funding targeted on smaller classes and on the intensive training that develops teachers who are sufficiently creative to make do. However, ensuring that facilitators and pupils have access to a variety of learning resources can 'add' or enhance the Speed School pedagogic approach even further, and deepen the learning experiences of the pupils. Finding ways to source a variety of resources will be an important step forward in increasing the impact of instruction in Speed Schools.

Group work

This is where the active learning or the 'doing 'together mostly takes place, pupils socially constructing and relearning together and giving themselves some autonomy over their learning.

Even when pupils were not overtly talking and sharing, the very set up of the classroom into 4 or 5 groups and the specific time given in every lesson, five times a day, means pupils have to sit facing one another, share and talk and all of this contributes in a very large part to the collective and enjoyable nature of the learning. Groups were generally mixed gender, and where one group of boys were not working well together, the teacher agreed with the suggestion made by the CM that she should alter this to improve the learning. In the most engaged examples of group work the initial content is relearnt through being reproduced through different media of cards, games, concrete materials or storytelling. Pupils' heads touched in the middle of the table as they animatedly discuss a given topic, in one lesson what wild animals can be eaten. In the representation one boy, obviously one of the older ones, stood up and gave an extended list of the names of animals, with pupils reciting

animatedly after him, knowing exactly what they should be doing, not with a sense of simply repeating the boy's words but learning them. Pupils from other groups sang a song, or showed flash cards, sometimes the same two pupils, but most often different pupils as if they knew they all should contribute, and wanted to. One teacher set up the groups as competitors to see which could come up with the newest words and this caused excitement and enthusiasm but not any hostility.

Other group work took place less formally throughout the lessons, quiet discussions when doing class work or a pair quietly talking together. Pupils interacted freely with the teacher and each other irrespective of other divisions and could move to talk to other pupils but the routine of the lessons and their general engagement meant that free movement was rare, or happened at the end of lessons, or during breaks.

Some group work was more disjointed, with some writing, some talking, some copying from the board with some repetition or a simple activity unrelated to the topic of the lesson. Less successful group work was also seen when pairs worked together rather than a whole group or where one girl sat on her own at a neighbouring table – but she apparently preferred to be separate, despite a peer gesturing for her to join them, and she remained fully engaged.

Pupil tasks/Class work

While group work gave pupils the opportunity to re-learn and represent content, classwork was for them to apply what they had learnt often with harder examples but independently, even while they were still seated in their groups and encouraged to talk quietly to one another.

This classwork could be challenging, for example, having to work out if the stress was long, short or both with new combinations of letters or coming up with their own words beginning with 'W' in groups. Classwork typically took around 10-12 minutes, with around 3 minutes where the whole class worked together on giving the answers, with different pupils going to the board to write. However, it was also in this section that the pace could drop significantly as pupils worked at very different speeds and levels of understanding.

Assessment

According to the Handbook pupil assessment is continuous and this was reflected in the observed classes, carried out in different modes.

Teacher questions during recaps seemed to be assessing prior learning or homework, or pupil self-assessment/correction when the whole class went through homework or classwork as individuals came to the board to give the correct, or incorrect answer. Importantly, the teacher assessed every pupil's book during classwork, putting a tick with a written word of praise or a cross with pupils eagerly handing over their books. While teachers gave immediate feedback, they were not often observed spending any time interacting with individuals or going over work with them there and then and it was hard to understand how individuals' difficulties or misconceptions were remediated. One girl, for example, copied down the 'correct' answers to 5 division sums from the classwork but not on the corresponding lines in her book so showing her misunderstanding and inability to self-correct without teacher help. Learning was seen as iterative, with the recaps and consolidation of content matter giving those pupils who had not immediately grasped content several opportunities to catch the learning. There may have been remediation in the last lesson where there was peer teaching or after school catch up sessions, or even in subsequent lessons but this was not observed. Scrutiny of facilitators' mark books showed that two formal assessments or tests had been carried out in these first few weeks, although it was unclear what these were, with most pupils getting 9 or 10 out of ten, but three pupils getting 2s or 4s for the first test and absent for the second: further research could follow up the reasons for both the low mark and the absence, and make, presumably, the connection between them.

Learning outcomes

It was difficult to ascertain precisely what pupils had learnt as so much of the learning is iterative, a spiral curriculum in miniature by means of covering the same ground through different activities and media and with consolidation of content every lesson.

Learning outcomes would need to be assessed over a week's worth of work. Certainly, by the end of the individual lessons observed and by scrutinising pupils' exercise books, most pupils had a secure grasp of the curricular items covered – simple addition, multiplication and division up to 21, reading familiar words beginning with 'W' and its 7 sounds, and knowing about crop and animal production in a generalised way. However, there is wide variation: in one class around 5 were getting the answers to more difficult division wrong (21/2 = 10) or were copying out syllables or sums so slowly that they did not finish while others wrote very quickly and neatly, got their work right, ticked as such by the teacher, and sat doing little for over ten minutes. Some groups may have been organised according to age in some classes, judging by the height of pupils, but differentiating work for the different educational experiences and ages of the pupils did not appear to take place with pupils expected to do the same work within the same time span.

Judging by where the teacher was in terms of the mathematics textbook, the board and classwork and matching this with pupils' books , pupils in one class after around 7 weeks of teaching had achieved half of the Grade 1 mathematics curriculum and could apply place value to numbers up to 20, understand the concept of 'half', add up to 20, multiply whole numbers up to 10 by 2, subtract numbers up to 20 and identify the symbol " $\times$ " for multiplication. For Environmental Science pupils appeared to have covered only two topics. This purely observational evidence suggested that most pupils would meet the Minimum Competences for Native Language and mathematics Grade 1 by December, prior to moving onto Grade 2 in January.

Conclusion

In the hands of motivated and creative teachers, the Speed School pedagogy succeeds in getting OOSC to learn with enjoyment and to demonstrate an aptitude for deep learning that traditional approaches seem to find more challenging or difficult to achieve. Even in the hands of less experienced and responsive teachers, the condensed curriculum, government textbook and flexible structure of each lesson mean that pupils engage with content through a variety of activities that always includes social interaction so that learning is far more likely to take place.

In concluding more specifically *why* and *how* the Speed School pedagogy appears to work so efficiently, a framework produced in a rigorous review of effective pedagogies in developing countries helps to explain what might be going on (Westbrook et al, 2013). This review found that when teachers formed positive attitudes towards their pupils and the pedagogy promoted in their training, they were more likely to use three overall communicative strategies: (a) paying inclusive attention and giving feedback; (b) creating a safe learning environment; (c) drawing on pupils' backgrounds. In turn these communicative strategies led to teachers using six pedagogic practices effectively that were also interactive by nature: *group work; questioning; teaching resources; using a local language as medium of instruction; lesson planning; sound explanations.* Viewed in the light of this framework, it is easy to see why the Speed School pedagogic model has a positive effect on the learning experiences of pupils. However, gaps also appear that could be strengthened to further enhance the pedagogy for OOSC.

Teacher attitudes

Teachers' attitudes appear very positive towards the pupils, and the training. The facilitator training takes time and care to give the social and economic backgrounds of the targeted group of Out of School Children, and reasons as to why school dropout occurs and hence the rationale for Speed Schools. Teachers' responsibilities are also framed within a child's right to education as is their role as change agent, working to improve the future for these children and their community. This view was overtly articulated by the teachers and a CM. In this context, the nature and content of the training makes sense, the pedagogy having a distinct structure for a specific purpose. However, engagement and application of the methodology for the teachers is demanding, especially the lesson planning demands, frequent observations and studying at weekends. The programme has to give serious thought to the workload implications and ensure that teachers do not fall into a bureaucratic routine of meeting instructional planning and management requirements, and thereby lose much of the quality and diversified instruction that the pedagogy aims to promote.

Communicative Strategies

The philosophy of the Speed Schools is to be communicative and a very large part of its success lies in the employment of these three overall strategies. Firstly, the role of the Speed School teacher is to create an enabling environment that is inherently safe, with no corporal punishment, and a collective responsibility for learning, and this was manifestly so in all the classes the researchers observed. As an integral part of this, teachers pay attention to pupils and are inclusive, helped by the smaller classes and the organisation of pupils into social learning groups. The recaps, relearning of content by groups, and continuous assessment mean that all pupils are active and receive the attention and encouragement of the teacher. Pupils' backgrounds and experiences are well known to the teacher, and valued by them and are overtly drawn upon in the lessons as examples to illustrate concepts so that the pupils understand and can engage with the learning.

In addition to these three communicative strategies, a fourth emerged, that of bringing into focus the process of learning, leading to metacognition. This was articulated as 'revealing the learning' to the pupils, so that what and how is being learnt is overtly signalled by the teachers and the pupils, and potentially understood by both. Such metacognition gives the learning an intellectual slant and in the best examples seen supported the pupils in following and sharing what was going on, rather than the lesson remaining a mystery in the hands of the teacher.

Effective Pedagogic Practices

These six practices were not seen in isolation but worked together to create what we might describe as the particular strengths of the Speed School pedagogy:

- **Group work**: the relearning of content/concepts within a group and then representing it to others makes learning shared and collaborative, sociable and interactive.
- **Questioning** is seen as a key strategy and is often lively and interactive even when teachers' questions are lower order.
- **Teaching and learning materials**: while the government textbook is the sole reference point its content are adapted to the specific pedagogy, and local materials such as clay, or stones, or chalk, plus card and paper are used to augment the learning and make it meaningful.
- **Use of local language** is government policy but the gradual use of Amharic and English alongside ensures that pupils can understand what is going on, and makes group work function well.
- The flexibility allowed in **planning** within the given structure ensures Opportunity and Time to Learn, and also ensures a variety of activities within each lesson, as well as keeping to a set time needed to cover the curriculum for that day, week and Phase.
- **Demonstration and explanation** of content and new concepts are generally well explained, with teaching and learning resources integral to the explanation, and in the best examples provide a fast pace and cognitive challenge.

Overall, there is clearly a sense that both teaching and learning must be viewed from the perspective of the pupil, and that everything must be done to make the classroom learning space a positive and engaging one.

Recommendations

Even while we have argued that the given structure supports even less motivated and responsive teachers, seven areas were identified through our analysis where improvement could take place. These gaps are: *explaining/teaching content; questioning; repetition; individual attention; differentiation; lack of individual textbooks and supplementary readers.* In the hands of the really good teachers we observed, they made all the difference to the engagement and enjoyment of the pupils and as such they represent the parts that make up the highly effective sum of the whole Speed School pedagogy. The curriculum as it stands is appropriate and relevant for meeting the learning needs of OOSC. However, the curriculum only has effect through the way in which it is enacted. In this case, it is the pedagogy in practice which revealed much about its potential but also some of its challenges, and therefore what needs attention to bridge the gap between the Speed School curriculum and how it is translated in the classroom to achieve the desired learning goals.

Judging from what the researchers observed in the Speed School classrooms and the one training observed, both the curriculum and the training of facilities should place greater emphasis on the seven areas that have been identified as needing improvements.

Explaining/teaching content and questioning:

While the curriculum is spiral, at some point new material has to be taught, and some teachers were better able to represent this new content in ways that pupils could grasp easily, through verbal explanation, diagrams, simple teaching and learning resources or actions. If the explanation is missing, partial or poorly done, some or all pupils will not grasp the content, and although there are opportunities for relearning, the pace that the teacher has to get through the curriculum may mean that some pupils fall behind. With these more vulnerable groups, failure to grasp content may lead to them feeling dispirited, and eventually dropping out. Developing better quality of questioning by the teacher will support pupils to grasp the intellectual content, and vice versa, for pupils to be taught and encouraged to ask questions themselves. When the teacher asks more open questions, the physical and social set up of the classroom and the pedagogic framing gives time for pupils to think, especially the 30 second slots planned especially for this. Furthermore, the group set can very ably support pupils to construct their own questions, almost as another 'media' along with cards, games and music.

Repetition

This spiral curriculum can, as has been argued, ensure learning over time, but can also mean repetition of content in the hands of some weaker teachers. Getting the balance between consolidation and repetition is difficult. Paying closer attention to individual pupils by teachers would provide knowledge of how much has been learnt, and so what needs to be consolidated, or retaught, or indeed, signal to the teacher that she/he can move onto new material more quickly. Similarly, such close attention will support teachers to differentiate further, and this may take place as new teachers learn about their pupils and the pedagogy over the ten months. *However, teachers will need to again balance the collective nature of the learning against breaking this up at times to allow some pupils to learn at a faster pace, and the others to learn more slowly.* It may be advisable for the Speed School programme designers to think of introducing individualised enhancement activities as part of the teaching and learning process. This could be in the form of tasks that stretch from easy to the more challenging, and a system for recording progress with respect to the different tasks, undertaken by the pupils.

Differentiation

Differentiation is hampered further by a lack of textbooks, meaning that all pupils have to turn to the teacher for content, rather than the textbook, and therefore all learn at the same pace. If each pupil had a textbook or photocopy of it, this would support differentiation, allow greater cognitive challenge for classwork, and support families and pupils in understanding homework. Supplementary readers would greatly help to differentiate, with older pupils taking home longer more age appropriate books to read if available, and younger pupils easier books to read aloud at home. The programme should encourage the sourcing of a variety of supplementary materials to enrich teaching and learning.

The demands made on teachers to carry out all these pedagogic practices and strategies, however, are immense, and these skills are those perhaps only possible for more experienced teachers. On the other hand, the pedagogy is flexible enough to support differentiation in the group work, or even altering groups at times, perhaps the end of the day.

Facilitator Training

Facilitator training is so intensive that covering all the practices may well not be possible and much of the actual teacher learning will have to be on-the-job. The practice where the training is phased and facilitators are given the opportunity to work through the curriculum in stages is good practice that should be encouraged.

Using video clips of really dynamic teachers in Speed School classes would give new teachers the example of the pedagogy in practice, and how the different parts add up to the whole. In this, the training becomes a study of the practice. Teachers may already be able to go out to observe teachers as part of their training, and this is another way of studying the practice. Ensuring individual attention to children could also be further highlighted and planned for, with a transaction between each child and teacher possible in most lessons, and with five children a day identified for close attention. Keeping an eye on the individual and the MLCs they are supposed to achieve may help teachers to work out how to close the gap between their current level and the level they need to attain to transition to the government primary school.

Minimum prerequisites needed to enact the curriculum via the pedagogy are the intensive training, small classes and the textbook. Further prerequisites to maintain and improve teacher practice are the regular and frequent in-

class monitoring and coaching by the CM and refresher training. This in turn depends on the quality of practice of the CM. Additional requirements that may in fact turn out to be central are the motivation and commitment of the teacher to attend class regularly, plan and teach for 7 hours for each of five days plus Saturday mornings and in parallel the regular attendance of the pupils. From our limited observation, this appears excessive and quite demanding for teachers, and which eventually could cause burnout.

The contribution of the mothers' Self-Help Groups may well be central to ensuring the attendance and learning of the pupils and this is part of the larger ongoing piece of research. Improvements to strengthen the pedagogy lie in educating teachers to differentiate content and tasks for the different ages and abilities of the pupils, to pay more individual attention, to encourage pupils to pose questions and talk in extended discourse and to provide textbooks per child and ensure the supplementary readers are collected, safely displayed, taken home and read each day/week.

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