



# Quality Teaching: Building a Flexible and Dynamic Approach

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AED GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER  
ACADEMY FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## About the AED Global Education Center

The AED Global Education Center (GEC) seeks to improve the economic livelihood, social well-being, and civic empowerment of the poor through education and training. The Center is a leader in increasing access to and improving the quality of education worldwide for children, youth, and adults.

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Founded in 1961, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to solving critical social problems and building the capacity of individuals, communities, and institutions to become more self-sufficient. AED works in all the major areas of human development, with a focus on improving education, health, and economic opportunities for the least advantaged in the United States and developing countries throughout the world.

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# Executive Summary

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Good basic education depends on several factors working in harmony. Among them are healthy students who are ready to learn, an enabling policy environment, and effective management practices. However, more and more, research on quality education has determined that the most important factor is the quality of teachers (ADEA 2004; Anderson 2002; Boyle, While, and Boyle 2003; Lewin and Stuart 2003; USAID 2002). This paper, *Quality Teaching: Building a flexible and dynamic approach*, focuses on strengthening the quality of teachers and teaching through ongoing professional development at the local level and is derived from AED's twenty years of experience in addressing quality in education.

AED has found that the content and structure of preservice and inservice teacher education programs have been profoundly affected by the trend toward active learning and learner-centered education in the national reform efforts of many countries. These reforms go beyond ensuring that teachers learn new techniques to ensuring that they understand and implement the techniques being promoted. For teachers to truly grasp the new teacher-learner paradigms, inservice professional development must actively engage teachers in the learning process and provide them with opportunities to experiment, process, reflect, discover, and construct their own expert knowledge (Leu 2004).

Building on its experience, AED has developed a set of best practices and lessons to use in working with governments to design school-based professional development programs which allow teachers to do just that. Our approach is to come to the table with a wide range of examples of what has worked well in other countries and then to work with each country to build a model of professional development tailored to the specific context, priorities and local circumstances of that country. Our approach depends on developing strong ownership of the program by local authorities and teachers and building strong parent and community involvement.

Although programs vary widely, the following building blocks appear crucial for success:

- *Communication at all levels is essential* in order to reach understanding and agree on the reasons for and modalities of a school-based inservice program;
- *Design an appropriate program* that fits the circumstances, needs of teachers; geographic conditions and budget;
- *Pilot the program* to test the best way to structure the program and carefully monitor and evaluate the process prior to expanding it regionally or nationally;
- *Develop an adequate number of good support materials*;

- *Ensure local ownership* by integrating the school-based inservice program with ongoing education programs already in place from the very beginning; and
- *Advocate for budget and sustainability* to ensure long-term support for the program.



# Quality Teaching

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Good basic education depends on several factors working in harmony. The first is that students be healthy, safe, and ready to learn. Other essentials include an enabling policy environment and transparent management; a curriculum that reflects the society's values and aspirations for learning; and community support for education and parents' involvement in the lives of schools (UNESCO 2004; UNICEF 2000). The most important element of all, according to much current research and program experience, is the quality of teachers (ADEA 2004; Anderson 2002; Boyle, While, and Boyle 2003; Lewin and Stuart 2003; USAID 2002).

Over the last two decades, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) has worked extensively with programs that address all of these crucial areas of basic education. This paper focuses on our approaches that address the heart of education: strengthening the quality of teachers and teaching through ongoing professional development at the local level. AED's work has both built on and contributed to evolving international trends in teacher development and has been important in testing and refining innovative ideas in remote rural schools and other challenging, resource-poor circumstances. Our approach has been successful in supporting and empowering teachers as they develop sustainable programs to break down isolation and develop learning communities at the

local level, improve their understanding and use of active learning and student-centered teaching, increase professional commitment and morale, and promote student learning.

The following sections summarize the context and rationale for evolving approaches to teacher professional development, describe AED's early programs in this context, and outline a basic framework of AED's flexible and dynamic approach to decentralized, school- and cluster-based teacher professional development programs. The final section consists of six case studies showing how the approach has been adapted to strengthen teacher skills, morale, and professional commitment in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Uganda, Ghana, Namibia, and Ethiopia.

## **Evolving Approaches**

Programs in basic education implemented by national governments and donor agencies have evolved over the past two decades in a rapidly changing environment, with a growing emphasis on quality in the midst of accelerating quantity of educational provision. As outlined above, the determinants of educational quality encompass a myriad of interwoven factors that are mutually supporting. The focal point for understanding the interplay between these

factors has shifted in recent years. Previously, studies concentrated on the one-to-one relationship between input and output factors: e.g., do more textbooks and desks, or higher teacher qualifications lead to better test scores or school completion rates? Currently, the focus has shifted to the complex interactions and processes that occur when these factors combine within schools and classrooms (ADEA 2002; Anderson and Nderitu 2002; Ball 1998; Fuller and Clarke 1994; Kraft 1998; Nielsen and Cummings 1997; World Bank 2002).

Many recent studies, therefore, have attempted to understand the role of a variety of teacher characteristics as the main determinant of the quality of classroom process. The most commonly used descriptors of quality education are that students can demonstrate academic achievement and strong personal growth. According to a study of effective teaching in developing countries (Craig, Kraft, and duPlessis 1998, 12), teachers whose students meet these criteria exhibit a good mix of the following characteristics:

- Knowledge of the relevant subject matter
- Use of a range of pedagogies appropriate for the content
- Competence in the language of instruction
- Ability to create and sustain an effective learning environment
- Recognition of and response to the needs and interests of their students and communities
- Habitual reflection on their teaching and students' responses and changing the learning environment accordingly

- Development of a strong sense of ethics and professionalism and commitment to teaching
- Caring about their students

These teacher characteristics thrive in a supportive environment. Many studies identify positive school and classroom climate as a leading factor in promoting good teacher and student performance. A good school climate, made up of positive attitudes, teamwork, and constructive professional energy, grows directly out of teachers' sense of competence, professionalism, and high morale, supported by strong school leadership and vision (Darling-Hammond 1995; Farrell 1989; Froemel 2000; Heneveld and Craig 1996, 34–42; Sunal 1998).

Developing good teachers and a supportive school climate is an extremely complex process. The complexity is increased by today's circumstances of rapidly expanding enrollments at the primary level, declining adequacy of resources available per student, decentralized authority and accountability, and active-learning reforms of curriculum and instruction that demand far more of teachers than traditional chalk-and-talk approaches to teaching and learning.

## **Teacher Preparation**

Teachers' initial preservice teacher education courses remain an important determinant of how teachers learn and thrive in the dynamic circumstances of actual schools and classrooms. Increasingly, however, education systems throughout the world look to ongoing career-long inservice professional development as the key to ensuring that teachers 1) understand the reforms they must implement, 2) know new subject

content, 3) learn and practice new teaching skills, 4) develop communities of learning among groups of peers, 5) develop professional identity, and 6) enhance morale and earned status. Evidence from both industrialized and non-industrialized countries suggests that the most effective way to develop good teachers in a dynamic, changing education environment is to begin with a sound preservice program and continue with frequent career-long learning opportunities (Craig, Kraft, and duPlessis 1998; Riddell 1997; Uganda Government 1999; World Bank 1995).

In recent years the content and structure of both preservice and inservice programs have been profoundly changed by the trend toward active learning and learner-centered education that underlies national education reforms in many countries. These reforms signal a shift in basic paradigms of knowledge and learning and go far beyond simply ensuring that teachers gain new teaching “techniques.” Their foundational assumptions make the new approach to teaching and learning radically different from the previous rote-memory approaches. The result, however, is that teachers in many countries are now mandated to understand and implement active-learning reforms about which they have little knowledge and no experience.

While student-learning paradigms are changing, teacher-learning paradigms are changing in parallel ways. It is becoming apparent that teachers, like students, particularly in inservice professional development programs, learn best in an active manner, when they have a chance to experiment, process, reflect, discover, and construct their own expert knowledge (Leu 2004). The traditional passive teacher-learning inservice

approaches of lecture and exhortation are only minimally effective in encouraging teachers to change their practice and to understand and use active-learning approaches in their own classrooms.

The present trend toward decentralization of authority and accountability to more local levels has also affected how we think about teacher learning and teacher professional development. Decentralization gives teachers and institutions more responsibility for inservice programs at the local level, but it also promotes a sense of empowerment and agency. Teachers no longer have to attend centralized workshops where desk-bound “experts” tell them how to teach well. Based on communal study of their own practice, combined with new knowledge of reforms and new models of practice, teachers become the experts in constructing effective practices. This process of ongoing and local professional development is taking root in countries all over the world.

## **The AED Approach**

Working within the rapidly evolving context of educational reform, AED has developed a flexible and dynamic approach to ongoing, decentralized teacher professional support that has been implemented in many countries, with variations that respond to different program and local needs. The development of this approach has been informed by trends described in the international literature and knowledge drawn from our own activities in the field about what teachers, communities, and governments want.

AED has identified many of the core characteristics of what works best for

teachers and for students in resource-poor environments. A key point, consistent with the literature and other international experience, is that teachers' effectiveness and morale increase when they gain content knowledge and teaching skills along with a strong sense of professionalism, community, empowerment, and accountability. Our programs are most effective when we listen to teachers and structure programs around their needs and aspirations.

### **Listening to Teachers**

Perhaps above all, we have learned that teachers want to be respected as professionals and need to acquire the skills and attitudes that foster their sense of professional identity—the commitment, responsibility, and accountability that earn respect within their schools and communities. We concentrate, therefore, on building practical and realistic active-learning teaching skills, promoting reflective practice, and encouraging professionalism, positive attitudes, and a sense of community among teachers. Because improving access, and especially, retention of girls is a priority in many countries, our programs emphasize teaching approaches that encourage the success of girls in school. We also build skills and confidence so that female teachers stay in teaching and rise to leadership positions within schools and education systems.

In some of AED's earlier programs, we developed activities that focused on teachers' performance and morale as the keys to improving quality. Seventeen years ago, for example, AED basic education specialists worked with the Ministry of Education of Lesotho to design and implement a teacher support program that has evolved over the years and is still in use. Ministry officials, AED

specialists, and teachers worked together to develop the initial program. When exploratory teams first asked teachers in Lesotho about their needs, they identified professional isolation as a major problem.

As a result of these consultations, the Lesotho program was built around the following ideas: 1) teachers perform best when treated as professionals; 2) programs conducted at the school level are most successful; 3) teachers need practical assistance to deal with realities such as large classes, lack of instructional materials, and multigrade teaching; 4) teachers are effective in teaching each other through systems of peer exchange and peer mentoring that recognize and encourage excellent teaching; and 5) teachers' professionalism is enhanced when their isolation is reduced and contact among them is increased through the use of teacher circles, school clusters, and other means that foster and support teacher-to-teacher exchange. Based on these ideas, we designed a variety of activities to put teachers in touch with each other and provided materials to give systematic support to inservice activities based on teachers working together, primarily at the local level.

The Lesotho teachers responded very positively to the program, and many waited expectantly for workshops, conferences, and other activities that brought them together—the only chance most of them had ever had for a true exchange with peers. This was one of the early steps in building our approach. The importance of peer exchange provided us with an important lesson in what teachers want and what motivates them to perform well, and we built it into subsequent programs. Lesotho also used “resource teachers” or “master teachers” as school-based, inservice facilitators, another

element built into many of our subsequent programs. This project formed the basis of a long-running program that Ministry of Education officials in Lesotho still identify as a great success. It has served as a model and been visited by officials from other African countries.

### **Flexible and Dynamic Professional Development**

Building on these beginnings, we developed a set of lessons and best practices from which we draw discussion points and promising practices to use in working with governments to design teacher professional development programs. Rather than promote the application or replication of an existing model, we come to the table with experience and a knowledge of a wide range of examples of what has worked well in other countries. However, each new model is built separately and is determined by the context, priorities, and local circumstances of each country we work with.

The approach usually locates the majority of teacher inservice support in schools or clusters of schools rather than in large-scale, centralized workshops in which knowledge acquired by the few is meant to “cascade” down to the many at school level. Perhaps the most important attribute of a school-based teacher professional development activity is that it is ongoing and provides frequent, comprehensive learning opportunities in which all teachers participate, rather than the occasional, random learning opportunities that often characterize cascade models.

The school-based approach depends on developing strong ownership of the program by local authorities and teachers

as well as strong parental and community involvement, both of which are key elements of sustainability. This approach encompasses four parts: 1) basic concepts—the ideas that drive localized or school-based teacher development programs, 2) organization—variations on the structure of basic programs, 3) content of programs—learning plan and instructional/facilitation materials required for effective programs, and 4) outcomes—what can be expected from well-structured and well-facilitated school-based teacher development programs.

#### ***Basic Concepts***

- Teachers in many countries are implementing active-learning reforms with little understanding or preparation.
- Teachers themselves learn more effectively through active learning and learning-by-doing than through lectures and exhortation.
- Change in teachers’ practices and increase in morale and professional identity are most likely to occur when teachers work collaboratively in supportive groups with peers and school heads.
- Decentralized school- and cluster-based teacher professional development programs are more likely to create this environment than centralized cascade workshops characterized by passive learning.

#### ***Organization of Programs***

- Program structure is determined by local priorities and realities, leading to local ownership. Overall organization, supervision, and support of programs are in the hands of local education authorities.

- School- and cluster-based teacher professional development is organized in single schools (good), pairs of schools (better), or clusters of three or more schools (best), depending on school location and proximity.
- Clusters have a central point in a cluster-center school or a teacher resource center through which programs can be organized and resources for teachers made available.
- Cluster workshops take place at the cluster-center school or rotate to all of the schools.
- Cluster activities usually take little or no time from the teaching schedule and often take place on weekends.
- Teachers facilitate their own programs with support materials and occasional co-facilitation with project, education office, or teacher college staff.
- Payment of per diem and travel expenses for teachers is an important sustainability issue to be decided by local education authorities.

### *Content of Programs*

- School and cluster inservice programs have a systematic and comprehensive learning plan or curriculum.
- Content is designed in response to teachers' expressed needs combined with the requirements of system-wide reforms in curriculum and instruction.
- Numerous support materials are needed to guide and support interactive and participatory facilitation of the inservice professional development programs. These materials can be developed by teams of education officers, teacher college staff, and excellent teachers working together with skilled instructional materials developers.

- Content of the program and suggested approaches should be realistic about the overcrowded and under-resourced circumstances in which many teachers work.

### *Outcomes of Programs*

- Cluster programs can be very popular with teachers.
- Cluster programs improve subject-matter knowledge, active-learning teaching skills, confidence, professional identity, and morale.
- Learning communities develop within schools when teachers and school heads emphasize participatory and cooperative learning.
- Observed results include improvement in student engagement, increased student enthusiasm, and gains in student learning.
- Cost is an issue: cluster programs that include all teachers in an ongoing activity are more costly overall than occasional, centralized inservice workshops.
- When project support comes to an end, many programs are sustained, especially when developed with local ownership and realistic costs.

The lessons and best practices described here have guided our work with teachers and school leaders in many countries, including Guatemala, Nicaragua, Uganda, Ghana, Namibia, and Ethiopia. The programs in these six countries share core characteristics, but each has its own emphases or unique points, a sign that the approach is a dynamic, flexible guide to action, not a rigid model. As indicated in the country case studies that follow, there is strong evidence that these programs, all

of which are continuing either as ongoing projects or as government programs, create a positive difference in teachers' subject-matter knowledge, classroom approach, and morale, as well as in school leadership, community participation, and student learning.

## Case Studies

### Guatemala and Nicaragua

AED programs funded by USAID and implemented in cooperation with the Nicaraguan and Guatemalan governments have been based on many of the above concepts, particularly teacher empowerment, active-learning pedagogy, reflective teaching, and parent involvement. Both of these programs are remarkable for the changes that occurred in teachers and in students within a short period of time.

Guatemala's *Nueva Escuela Unitaria*/New Multigrade Schools (NEU) and Nicaragua's *Escuela Modelo*/Model School are multigrade school programs in the tradition of the internationally acclaimed *Escuela Nueva* program, started over 20 years ago in Colombia. Although they do not precisely replicate *Escuela Nueva*, they were informed by its activist teaching and child-centered philosophy. Both have been advised, long-term, by Oscar Mogollón, founder of the *Escuela Nueva* model in Colombia.

In Guatemala, NEU was established under the USAID-funded BEST Project (Basic Education Strengthening Project) managed by AED, with a central vision that evolved into a general approach over the years of the project. BEST, starting in 1989 in several rural areas of Guatemala, grew by 1994 to include 283 government schools and more than 1,000 privately funded

schools. The project responded to myriad challenges, including low primary enrollments and completion, a highly traditional, often irrelevant curriculum dominated by rote learning, few instructional resources, and little parent involvement in schools.

NEU entrusted teachers with changing their own behavior. As Richard Kraft wrote, NEU demonstrates that "when teachers are deeply involved in all aspects of the reform, can put theory into practice, are provided with supervisory, peer and instructional support, and are respected as professionals, they can and will change their pedagogical behavior" (1998, 8).

"Teachers' circles" were formed in participating schools as well as resource centers where teachers held professional development meetings, had follow-up meetings, and produced learning materials for their teaching. This professional assistance was supported by interactive teacher learning modules developed under the project.

The program employed a professional development system centered on a "diagnose-reflect-act" approach that featured teachers working with other teachers, exchanging and processing understanding of new ideas and skills relevant to their realities as well as engaging in the peer support they so craved. The philosophy was to treat teachers as professionals and reflective practitioners who knew their own needs and how to address them better than anyone else. They collaboratively defined problems and shared solutions. Monthly "teachers' circles," composed of teachers from neighboring schools (a form of cluster schools), provided an opportunity to exchange ideas with other teachers. Teachers visited each other's classrooms,

observed each other's classes, and shared new teaching techniques. Additional support was available to some teachers through resource centers where they followed up on training and received other professional assistance.

This model entirely rejected the traditional notion of teacher education as the one-way transmission of knowledge from an "expert" (with a degree) to a teacher (without a degree) assumed to be capable only of a mindless "follow-the-numbers" method of teaching. The NEU approach assumed that the teachers were the experts capable of professional decision-making. It enabled teachers to generate knowledge from their own practice, thus empowering them and promoting their professionalism.

NEU schools, widely described as models for replication, reflect the results of the school-based, teacher inservice program. Students are the focus in the student-centered learning activities, and they actively participate in exchanges with teachers and each other. Student governments play an active role in the lives of the schools, a further indication of student interest and a strong indicator of the democratic participation encouraged by the program. One observer wrote:

*Visitors to an NEU school immediately know that they are in a different educational institution. Classroom walls are covered with children's work. Hands-on materials for science, mathematics, language and social studies fill the corners of the room. The teacher is not in front.... Students work cooperatively in small groups scattered around the room, in the hallway, on the porch or in the schoolyard. From time to time, the teacher consults her handbook, a practical guide written by teachers to*

*ensure its relevancy. At snack time, some parents help the children's food committee prepare milk and crackers (Kraft 1998, 1).*

Impressive student-learning results are a powerful argument for this approach: 30 percent of NEU first graders advanced to fourth grade, but only 10 percent advanced in comparison schools; 54 percent of NEU students advanced to fifth grade, but only 25 percent advanced in comparison schools. NEU students' learning achievement was higher than that of students in traditional schools, particularly in reading.

The USAID-funded *Escuela Modelo/Model Schools* in Nicaragua use a similar approach and have shown similar results. The key approach of Model Schools was respect for the ability of all teachers, even the most poorly prepared, to diagnose the difficulties they face, reflect on possible solutions, and act to change their reality. Since 1994, AED has managed a sequence of two programs aimed at improving the quality, efficiency, and equity of primary education through the Model Schools program. The reform centerpiece of the USAID-funded Nicaragua Basic Education and Training Program, "BASE I" and "BASE II" Projects, is informed by many of the NEU approaches, reshaped to the realities of Nicaragua. Nicaragua, in fact, faced challenges similar to Guatemala's in providing better quality basic education: a highly rural population with relatively high enrollment rates but low retention and completion rates; a curriculum that did not prepare students for productive lives; passive, memory-based learning; and meager resources.

Through a national network of 170 Model Schools, most of which have multigrade classes, inservice teacher development



focusing on active-learning methods was provided to 20,000 primary teachers and administrators. A core of 120 master teachers developed teacher guides, study guides, and learning materials for piloting in Model Schools and eventually for use in schools nationwide. Model Schools developed strong student governments and strong community participation. Each school served as a hub for an inservice teacher development network. Model Schools established strong alliances with teacher education institutions responsible for preparing primary school teachers. A cadre of master teachers and municipal and departmental supervisors collaborated to develop interactive teacher education modules and guides that support teacher learning. As a part of the project, a grants program for school-improvement projects—both academic support and infrastructure—has led to active community involvement, a boon to classroom teachers.

The Model Schools teacher education program is notable for promoting equity and democratic practices at all levels: teachers share with students, and students have formed active school governments. Classrooms are marked by teachers' and students' respect for each other's views. Students listen to each other, respond to, and build on each other's points, thus creating dynamic dialogues. This is a dramatic departure from the usual one-to-one, teacher-student, question-answer mode of classroom exchange that consists of teacher as "knower" and arbiter of all knowledge with student input consisting of fill-in-the-blank-type, one-word responses—a format that does not require of students even the most rudimentary form of analytical thought, higher-order thinking skills, or effective communication.

The Model Schools approach in Nicaragua, as with NEU in Guatemala, is bottom up. Teachers in these schools teach other teachers, and they exchange teaching ideas and materials with each other. Evaluators observe that the large cadre of Model School teachers teach in radically different classroom environments and in new, active ways. There are significant positive changes in teaching behavior, classroom organization, teacher attitudes, and involvement of students, parents, and other community members. Research findings indicate that these schools increase retention, achievement, and girls' attendance and participation. They promote community involvement in education and democratic practices in the classroom.

According to USAID:

*The program in Nicaragua has changed the way teachers teach, the way children learn and how primary schools are run. Classroom interactions initiated by students, the availability and use of textbooks and materials, and participation in student government all increased in single-grade and multigrade classrooms from 1998 to 2000. Bilingual classrooms also made impressive gains in the first year after project activities began in bilingual schools. In almost all categories, girls showed greater improvement than boys (USAID 2002, 28).*

Evaluators cite a number of factors contributing to the success of Model Schools in Nicaragua, many of them related in one way or another to the teachers themselves and the classrooms they have created as a result of their inservice support. The reform is integrated and coherent, and it interweaves major components such as student-centered

approaches, involvement of teachers and principals in all aspects of the reform, and active teaching and learning in small and large group settings. The reform is decentralized and stresses both process and product. Teachers and administrators are involved at each level in the production of classroom learning materials and teacher manuals. Inservice teacher development programs effectively use micro-training centers and informal teacher circles. Training topics at both locations are based on teachers' assessment of their needs.

The support teachers receive from parents and the community is remarkable. School councils (school director, one or two teachers, parents, and one or two students) coordinate parent/community activities, and parents and teachers are very enthusiastic about the support they receive. Parents and communities provide a variety of services, ranging from help in preparing teaching materials to forming study circles after school, assisting children with learning difficulties, fixing classroom roofs, building school kitchens, and preparing school lunches. In many cases, NGOs assist parents in carrying out their projects.

One mother described an important change in her child's school and in her community's accountability for student learning: "Within the first couple of months, the teacher evaluates each student. If she sees that one or more are falling behind, we form study circles to help them."

A vice president of a school council remarked:

*We have formed commissions, each with a different role. Members of the commission in charge of learning*

*circles work out of their houses over the weekends. With groups of children, they go over what the children have learned during the prior week. This is a help for the teachers as well as the parents themselves.... This experience has motivated the community to participate and to help our children; there is more unity between the teachers and students.*

Programs in Nicaragua and Guatemala implemented in partnership with AED have earned respect from the community and praise from clients, international funding agencies, and Latin American and international educators for their dynamic transformation of teachers, students, and classrooms. A USAID official wrote, "Congratulations on your wonderful work in Nicaragua. I was so impressed during my visits to the schools." In Guatemala, an international evaluator noted, "I was astounded to see indigenous fourth-grade girls leading a full school meeting with such confidence."

The World Bank, UN agencies, USAID, and university researchers have spotlighted these reforms positively for more than a decade. *The Economist* cited *Escuela Nueva Unitaria* as a program with very promising results. According to Noel McGinn, it is "a highly innovative reform.... The method is both effective and cost effective" (McGinn 1996).

## **Uganda**

Uganda is a forward-looking nation in many respects, with solid accomplishments in educational reform, guided by a forceful president with a powerful vision for the country's development. Uganda's educators spent

years studying, planning, and developing policies for a comprehensive reform of the education system. Drawing on many of the principles outlined in our model above, AED played a role in the reform, particularly in helping Uganda transform its teacher education approach into a system that provides continuous, practical support to teachers as they increasingly use active learning and student-centered approaches in their classroom practice. Today the effects of the seven-year USAID-funded SUPER Project (Support for Ugandan Primary Education Reform), 1993–2000, extend to every government primary school in the country. USAID considers SUPER one of its very successful interventions, as does AED (Engels 2001).

SUPER was designed to address the country's overwhelming challenges in the early 1990s in rebuilding its once-strong education system after social and political upheavals of the 1970s and '80s. Decentralization was a major part of the reform, planned between 1987 and 1993. SUPER helped decentralize Uganda's education system, forging collaborative relationships at all levels: schools, district offices, inspectorates, and teacher training colleges. We worked with educators to create a school-cluster system anchored by teacher education colleges. Whereas at one time all inservice activities occurred at the colleges—teachers went to the colleges for occasional workshops—now they are based in schools.

Former teachers, selected for their experience and excellence, become “outreach tutors” based at colleges. Each one is responsible for working with a cluster of about 20 schools. The outreach tutor program was designed as part of the colleges' new mandate, under policies of decentralization, to provide capacity-

building programs to teachers and schools in their geographic areas. Performing a modern supervisory role that emphasizes teacher support, group facilitation, cooperative problem-solving, and mentoring, outreach tutors travel from their college base to bring inservice activities to teachers in their schools or clusters. They regularly visit classrooms to observe and help teachers improve their practice, cope with large classes, and create learning materials. They also help facilitate and give guidance to teacher discussion groups, although these groups meet regularly whether the outreach tutor is present or not.

As part of their outreach mandate, teacher training colleges now deploy their own academic staff as tutors to train headmasters for certification in basic management and to provide continuous professional development through refresher courses and workshops. These tutors also work with teachers and headmasters to shape their professional development and exchange information about teaching and learning concepts and practices. Head teachers or school principals play an increasingly important supportive role at the school level as instructional leaders, expanding their mandate well beyond purely efficient administration.

One of the biggest changes AED helped bring about in Uganda was introducing community participation in education. Outreach tutors trained community mobilizers to acquaint parents and other community members with their opportunity—and obligation—to support schools, a new concept in most locales. Before SUPER, “the community never knew that it had a role to play in the school,” said one principal. That has changed. Parents are becoming more

engaged, attending school meetings, becoming members of school management committees, providing building materials for schools, and creating environments conducive to their children's studying at home.

The government of Uganda believes SUPER has significantly increased the quality of education by providing teacher support. "The investments in...improving quality are very visible, and these will maintain the reform's popularity. We'll continue to sustain what we've done," said one government official. The Ugandan government's evaluation of SUPER's teacher development system articulates what is important to them:

*Perhaps one of the most valuable additions to the teacher education system of Uganda is the idea of outreach programs and networks as delivery mechanisms for support to the teacher. The network of coordinating center tutors, resource centers, and outreach schools has become an urgent necessity in view of the...expansion of primary school enrollments and the threat to quality in primary schools today. Teacher training college outreach must be seen as the lifeline of the primary school and must remain an indispensable feature of the primary school support system (Uganda Government 2000).*

The Uganda SUPER Project is a good example of a program in which we both drew from our accumulating experience about teacher quality and added to it by experimenting with and learning from new models of teacher-support design, especially through the multiple uses of the outreach tutors.

## Ghana

In Ghana, we drew from the teacher professional development support model in designing the Improving Learning through Partnerships (ILP) Project, a part of the larger USAID-funded QUIPS (Quality Improvements in Primary Schools) Project initiated in 1997. QUIPS/ILP works with partnerships of teachers, principals, community members, supervisors, and local government officials to provide educational support and help decide what happens in the primary classroom. QUIPS/ILP was designed in the context of multiple challenges: very low student achievement, reflecting poor quality of teaching and supervision; traditional whole-class teaching based on rote memory; high teacher turnover reflecting low status and morale; and little parent or community involvement in the educational lives of students.

Although QUIPS/ILP draws on many ideas from our approach, it also incorporates distinctive characteristics, especially appreciative inquiry, that help inform the growth and dynamism of the model. In Ghana, we systematized teacher involvement around a practical philosophy that promotes reflection, affirmation, and change (O'Grady 2000).

Improving Learning through Partnerships combines three techniques to produce positive results in teaching and learning:

- *Master teaching:* The project hires a cadre of "master teachers"—experienced teachers that the project prepares in new approaches. The master teachers visit classrooms and demonstrate effective teaching practices in English and mathematics for poorly prepared or untrained teachers of grades 1–6. This form of

professional development for teachers will eventually be taken over jointly by teacher education institutions and district education offices.

- *Appreciative inquiry:* Rather than simply identifying problems and trying to solve them, or focusing on weaknesses (which leads to demoralization), the appreciative-inquiry methodology systematically starts with positive aspects of an organization, then helps members create an empowering vision and plan for the future (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003). Children, teachers, educational administrators, and community members are benefiting from this strengths-and-assets approach, adapted from programs first used in the private sector that promote self-esteem and belief in the ability to succeed. (A fuller discussion appears below.)
- *Community empowerment:* In Ghana's recently decentralized education system, dialogue involving parents and other community members in decisions about school quality and school infrastructure projects effectively engages communities in support for basic education. Through the Community School Alliance (CSA) component of QUIPS/ILP implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC), the community develops a school improvement plan and assumes responsibility for certain actions, such as improvement of school grounds, provision of housing for teachers, or classroom assistance to teachers, and eventually reaches the stage of feeling empowered to influence what occurs in schools. A small grants program further encourages community members to compete for funds to improve their schools

QUIPS/ILP has been active in at least three "model schools" in 86 of the country's 110 districts. In more economically deprived districts, additional schools have been selected, bringing the total to 275 schools, surrounding communities, and school districts. The project provides quality-building inputs in the schools, including support for more effective teaching and supervision. Six school-based workshops are held at model schools over a period of two years, with ongoing teacher support organized in each school rather than clusters of schools. The interventions introduced through QUIPS/ILP will eventually be mainstreamed into all government schools.

The underlying principles of the Ghana program are that 1) reinforcement of new ideas through repeat visits is more effective than short, one-time training, and 2) teamwork at the school level is essential to understanding and carrying out innovations. Master teachers, in three-person teams, visit each school three times a year to demonstrate good teaching practices. They conduct a mathematics lesson and an English lesson, one lesson in a lower primary class and the other in an upper primary class. They help teachers arrange classes into groups of four or five children, replacing the traditional rows with tables or desks placed around the room. They demonstrate to teachers such things as how to move about during a class, interact personally with and assist children, and design simple and effective learning materials and posters. In these classes, children learn to help each other in their groups. By the end of the project in 2004, approximately 2,000 teachers and more than 60,000 pupils will have benefited directly from the demonstrations.

Immediately after the classroom demonstrations, in sessions similar to focus-group discussions, the teachers comment on what they observed about the master teachers as well as the students in the classroom; they also ask questions and receive advice. They sign a “learning agreement,” committing themselves to specific actions before the next visit. For example, they might agree to try two new teaching methods each week before the end of the term and to use two different teaching aids, one in English and one in mathematics. They also agree to share information with their colleagues about useful new teaching practices. Some observers have commented on a remarkable change in teachers from one day to the next as they learn new pedagogical approaches.

The new approaches to teacher professional development are based on appreciative inquiry, a philosophy similar to *Nueva Escuela Unitaria’s* “diagnose-reflect-act” approach (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003). It shapes the ILP process being adopted to support both inexperienced and experienced teachers as well as administrators, parents, and other community members to improve the learning achievements of the children. The process encompasses a “4D cycle”:

- Discover:* Identify the good things we already do at our school.
- Dream:* Imagine the best school we can have by working together.
- Design:* Think how students, teachers, other educators, and the community can collaborate to make the dream a reality.
- Deliver:* Follow through with plans that build on the strengths and talents we have.

Appreciative inquiry energizes teachers and school leaders because it treats them as professionals, capable of assessing their own work and taking steps to improve their practice. Combined with master teaching and community participation, appreciative inquiry is helping to improve learning achievement by strengthening teachers’ awareness of and critical reflection on their instructional approaches and increasing positive and supportive teacher-student classroom interactions.

Learning achievement depends on many factors within and outside the education system. In this project, teachers, head teachers, local government officials, and community members use appreciative inquiry to work in partnership to introduce new teaching and learning approaches, provide educational support, and make decisions about what happens in the classroom. By reaching mutual understanding on new educational goals and approaches to teaching and learning that are active and participatory, involving parents in the lives of the schools, and providing positive support and encouragement to students in school and at home, parents and educators are proving that they can have an impact on their schools. The remarks below reflect perspectives on the program from a parent and a teacher.

“For a while, there was a drastic decline,” a father of two school-age sons said, speaking about the school his children attend where new active-learning, student-centered, and participatory approaches were being initiated. “But now things have changed. I can see the difference in the classrooms since this new program started. I can tell that my children are learning.” This is an evaluation that the parent could make only because he participated in activities at the school, observed classes,

discussed educational goals with teachers, and supported his sons' learning at home.

The visionary head teacher at the same school encourages parents to visit classrooms and participate actively in their children's education. As a result, they understand that their involvement is essential for their children to succeed. "I ask parents to provide a lantern, a small table, and a stool for children to do homework at," the head teacher said. "Even if the parents can't read, at least they can give their children a place to study and a light." Although this might seem only a slight contribution, in many impoverished settings it represents a greatly increased sensitivity to and support for students' learning.

QUIPS/ILP's approach to improving classroom conditions and strengthening home support for student achievement showed positive results. Several assessments conducted as part of the project showed increases in test scores in English and mathematics. In addition to rising test scores, teachers reported an increase in lively and participatory student-teacher interaction. They attribute the change in classroom atmosphere primarily to two factors: the new teaching and learning materials they have been taught to create using active-learning approaches and the rearrangement of their classrooms into small groups so that students can spend part of the day working independently and learning from each other.

## **Namibia**

The USAID-funded Basic Education Support (BES II) Project in Namibia (1999–2004) is active in the six densely populated northern regions of the country near the Angola border. During the apartheid era these regions, where over

half of all Namibians live, were allocated very few resources. Primary education was of very low quality. Classes were overcrowded and under-resourced, and teachers used very traditional rote-memory methods to teach.

BES II, which focused on grades 1 to 4, builds on central elements of the AED approach. The distinguishing feature of the approach, as adapted for BES II, is the "circuit" support team that brings professional development to teachers in groups or clusters of schools. Each member of the circuit support team—circuit inspector, advisory teacher, and resource teacher—collaborates on the design and implementation of school-based support for teachers (LeCzel and Liman 2003).

In the past, advisory teachers, who are Ministry inservice education officers, were responsible for teacher development for thousands of teachers in hundreds of schools. The usual procedure was that they would attend national training sessions on some aspect of curriculum reform or policies regarding implementation of learner-centered education and continuous assessment. Then they would hold large workshops to pass the information along to teachers. In this cascade model, the advisory teachers had little time or incentive to work with teachers in schools. Thus, despite policies calling for change in the nature of both teaching and learning, little changed in the classroom and rote-memory approaches persisted.

To alleviate the burden on advisory teachers and establish more effective school-based support, Namibia created the position of "resource teacher," drawn from skilled teachers who were heads of departments within primary schools. After a special training program, resource

teachers and advisory teachers worked together to provide learner-centered teacher development to schools within their circuits. The program works on two levels: groups of teachers working together within their own schools and groups of schools within the circuits that meet to learn and share experiences. Regarded as a pilot, the program is being developed with a view to eventual national implementation.

BES II is beginning to produce very promising results. Advisory and resource teachers are becoming skilled at working directly with teachers, observing them, meeting with them after school to discuss the lesson just taught, presenting demonstration lessons in the teacher's classroom, and meeting again to discuss the demonstration and the techniques. "It has taken a lot of effort to get to this place," one BES II team member commented, "since the only training model anyone here knew was the usual cascade with no classroom-based follow-up." For so many teachers who work in isolation, this interaction with other teachers makes a world of difference and opens their eyes to the value of learning from their peers. "We didn't know we could learn from each other," a teacher in the program remarked.

Learner-centered education, a hallmark of BES II, is contributing to a favorable classroom climate. It helps teachers develop some basic ways to manage often very large classes and to engage students in intellectually active learning. In workshops following classroom observations, teachers learn, for example, how to design effective group work (making it genuine active learning, including the use of higher-order thinking skills, not just a rearrangement of furniture), use a variety of questioning

techniques to stimulate thought and communication, encourage students to help other students to foster participatory and democratic values, give frequent feedback to enable students to improve, use games and play for learning to encourage creativity and energy, and learn to make decisions methodically to improve the quality of education. School principals attend the workshops, which helps them undertake their new functions as instructional leaders with increasing effectiveness.

BES II is not testing students (because government policy reflects lingering sensitivities about apartheid and the association of testing with discrimination). Instead, it has instituted a powerful and innovative self-assessment system based on the Heneveld-Craig research findings on effective schools (Heneveld and Craig 1996). The Namibia assessment system, which is providing reliable data on changes in teacher behavior, asks schools to set their own goals and measure both teacher and student performance against those goals. AED has found that the range of teacher behaviors we are promoting and assessing can be affirmatively tied to improved learner performance.

The self-assessment for teachers and principals includes four categories with 11 measures of school quality:

- *School management:* school climate, management and leadership, professional and staff development, school planning
- *Teaching/learning practices:* teacher attitude, classroom management, learner-centered education, continuous assessment
- *Parent involvement:* school support for parent involvement, parent activities



- *Outside support:* education system inputs

The self-assessment uses certain techniques similar to the appreciative-inquiry approaches used in Ghana. Discussing school climate, for example, teachers and principals first ask what aspects of school climate they are most proud of. After that they consider what aspects of school climate they most need to work on. Third, they list actions they can take and the types of assistance they need (LeCzel and Liman 2003).

Through this and other aspects of the project, teachers and principals are learning to shape their own professional development. We cross-reference and validate school self-assessments with school-observation forms completed by members of the circuit support teams. The indicators on both assessment forms are directly related. Both groups, for example, are asked to rate school climate indicators regarding 1) the respectful atmosphere for teachers, learners, parents, and principal; 2) high expectations for learners; and 3) recognition of learner achievement.

Both groups also rate professional development and school management practices on indicators such as 1) teachers regularly consult with each other and exchange informal advice; 2) teachers and school leaders are committed to improving their professional skills; 3) the principal, teachers, and school board explain school goals to parents and learners; and 4) managers regularly visit classrooms.

A number of categories also assess parent involvement, a relatively new approach for Namibia that is showing positive results. In many schools, parents now relieve teachers in the classroom by teaching students about indigenous crafts and local

history or otherwise assisting in the teaching-learning process. In this way, even illiterate parents have become empowered to participate in their children's education (LeCzel 2004).

School and teacher self-assessment in Namibia is an excellent example of a program innovation built on elements of the AED approach, but that takes those elements a step further, thus helping the approach to grow, change, and improve. In this way, we maintain its flexibility and feed its dynamism.

## **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is vast in size and population. While it has some areas of concentrated population, schools, and teachers, there are large regions in which schools are widely scattered over rugged terrain and teachers are very isolated from each other. AED faced a range of challenges and opportunities when drawing from our teacher development approach to support school-based, inservice programs in the USAID-funded BESO I (Basic Education System Overhaul) Project in Ethiopia (1995–2002). This program has been continued in BESO II (Basic Education Strategic Objective) (2002–05).

When BESO I started in Tigray Regional State, a survey indicated that the cascade model of occasional expert-driven workshops for teacher updating was providing the average teacher with about two days of professional development every 10 years. Even this dismal figure masked the true picture that the great majority of teachers, particularly females and males with little seniority, had never participated in a single day of inservice professional development.

During the 1990s, a major educational reform took place in curriculum and instruction as well as in decentralized education management. With the new curriculum focused on active learning, teachers were expected to use learner-centered, problem-solving approaches with no preparation or support for doing so. Teachers were criticized for continuing with “chalk and talk,” but the regions, newly responsible for teacher professional development, were neither prepared nor able to help them change their practice. During the same period, school quality and teacher morale were plummeting while primary school enrollments skyrocketed: teachers were facing 100 or more students crammed into small classrooms or temporary grass-covered shelters, with no desks, chairs, or textbooks; the entirety of available instructional resources might be one small square of blackboard, one piece of chalk, and one textbook.

AED’s approach seemed promising as a discussion point for introducing change in these difficult circumstances. In Ethiopia, as elsewhere, bringing inservice programs to teachers in their own schools, working with them to define and explore approaches to their real everyday problems, providing information about new educational paradigms, and empowering teachers to think and act as professionals, seemed the best way to start building quality in a rapidly expanding, resource-poor school system (Gidey 2002, Leu 2002).

Moving forward, however, was not easy. Ethiopia had little experience with decentralized, school-based, inservice programs, and instead relied substantially on the paradigm of one-way transmission of new knowledge to teachers through centralized, expert-driven, cascade or “multiplier” workshops. Although it was

widely recognized that this approach was costly and in the past had led to little change in teaching and learning, it was thought that expansion of the cascade system through a substantial input of donor funding, would solve the problem and lead to increased teacher understanding of the reforms and changed practice.

At first, the idea of introducing a new model to supplant massive cascade workshops was rejected. Our challenge was to demonstrate that school-based, inservice programs that emphasize teacher knowledge would be more effective in changing the practice and morale of teachers than workshops based on transmitting to teachers the often-abstract knowledge of office-bound “experts.”

In the two regions where BESO I was active, Tigrai Region and the Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples’ Region (SNNPR), we took our case to the regional education bureaus (REBs). In the recently decentralized system of Ethiopia, REBs are authorized to design their own curriculums, approaches to instruction, and programs of teacher support, within a mutually agreed-upon national framework. After many discussions and much skepticism, the two REBs agreed to a very limited pilot of the school-based model, with schools organized into clusters. In both regions, we agreed to support at least a few of the large-scale workshops that the bureaus favored while simultaneously piloting the school-based program. Tepid REB approval of the first year’s program (although teachers liked it from the start) led to an expanded pilot in the second year, accompanied by growing REB enthusiasm. By the third year, both teachers and REB officers were so enthusiastic that, in the case of Tigrai, all the schools in the regional state were

assigned to clusters, and school-based teacher professional development became regional policy.

In 2001, based on the positive experiences of school-based, cluster inservice programs carried out by BESO I in two regional states, the Ministry of Education (which initially had been adamantly opposed to this form of teacher inservice) was now convinced that the AED program was effective; the school-based and cluster model thus became national policy. This sequence of events powerfully illustrates the results of decentralization, wherein regions experiment with new ideas and persuade the central Ministry to follow suit. BESO II, which started in mid-2002, is supporting all 11 of the country's regions in building their own school-based and cluster inservice programs, drawing on lessons learned from BESO I.

Popular and effective components of the school-based, cluster inservice program in Ethiopia contain many core elements of the AED approach:

#### ***Program organization and content***

- Programs are based primarily on teachers' expressed needs, combined with understanding and implementing the new curriculum.
- Programs combine general theory and approaches that help teachers understand and implement the new reformed curriculum with practical approaches to teachers' most pressing problems—overcrowding and lack of teaching/learning resources.
- Teachers are learning effectively from each other, supported by materials developed to facilitate inservice workshops and other activities.

#### ***Results***

- Teachers are starting to use more active-learning, student-centered approaches, including the use of higher order thinking skills, in their teaching.
- Teachers' classroom approaches are more gender-sensitive since they are now more aware of classroom practice that encourages the success of girls (a major feature of the inservice program).
- Teachers are learning to reflect on practice and make informed professional decisions.
- Teachers work together more frequently in groups in their schools and clusters to help each other and build "learning communities" at the school level.
- Female teachers are learning to be more assertive and are assuming more leadership positions.
- Teachers are integrating HIV/AIDS material more effectively into their teaching and into school activities such as clubs, theater, and awareness groups, the epidemic being an important topic of the inservice program.
- Teachers are carrying out action research in school- and cluster-based groups, studying their own practice and communicating about good practice and new ideas to each other.
- Morale is improving as teachers feel growing empowerment: a greater sense of professionalism and greater control over their practice.
- Teachers' work with communities is spurring greater community involvement in schools. Building the two-way relationship between communities and schools is earning teachers more respect, thus helping increase their pride in their work and their morale.

- Program assessments find that when teachers use more active-learning methods, students are more responsive in class; in addition, teachers who participate in the program score better in teacher-administered assessment.

The cluster programs in Tigray and SNNPR are organized somewhat differently because of particular regional needs and conditions. The Tigray Regional State, in the north of the country, is made up largely of rugged mountains, and many schools are very distant from other schools and from roads. Teachers come together in clusters approximately once every six weeks and often walk for hours to reach the school where the cluster is meeting. Their two-day workshops are always held on the weekend because time cannot be taken from teaching.

The education bureau insists that teachers not be paid per diem because the region would be unable to sustain this rate when project support ends. The teachers do receive tea and lunch on each day of the two-day weekend workshops. Overnight accommodation on Saturday is a problem when teachers are too far to return home after the all-day sessions, which often run into evening by teachers' demand. Teachers often bring blankets and sleep in the school or in houses in a nearby village, and some find themselves slightly out-of-pocket as a result of participating in the program. Although they frequently demand per-diem reimbursement from the REB or the project, they also make it clear that they like the sessions enough to attend with no payment.

The point about payment highlights an often contentious issue in implementing school-based teacher inservice—the question of teacher payment and overall financing of programs. Although the

Ethiopian kind of ongoing program that reaches all teachers is more effective, it is not necessarily less costly than occasional large-scale workshops. Any program that seeks to involve such a large number of people on a regular basis will inevitably be expensive. Governments, national or regional, accept without difficulty the idea that investing in teachers is necessary for increasing quality. Following up that conviction with action and budget lines is another question when different interest groups compete for scarce resources and almost all basic needs in the system are unmet.

At the very least, disparate multiple factors must be balanced: 1) exploring the most cost-effective ways of running the system, supplying teacher resource centers, and producing instructional materials; 2) ensuring that, if teachers are not paid, they at least do not have to pay their own expenses in order to participate in the program; 3) developing a way of recognizing or even certifying teachers for participation, or including participation in pay-scale ranking or promotion (in itself costly); 4) planning for a phased-in allocation of budget and personnel dedicated to teacher inservice.

Another financial challenge is providing enough instructional materials to support workshop facilitation. Although teachers coming together to share experiences is of great value in itself, the workshops must also constitute a systematic, comprehensive learning experience for the teachers. Because the comprehensiveness of the program is just now being developed, the REB has not yet agreed to provide any form of certification, or consideration on pay scales, for teacher participants. BESO I worked with the Tigray REB to produce a large volume of instructional materials for the cluster program, using various specialists from the

bureau and the project, and frequently using “excellent” teachers to develop materials. In the future, material developed at the regional level may be augmented by other media such as radio programs as well as centrally designed materials in the form of multimedia “kits.”

are now designing inservice, school-based cluster programs that best fit their needs, ongoing programs, and geographic conditions.

School heads and area supervisors always play an active role in the weekend workshops but do not always act as facilitators. At first, when the pilot involved only a few schools, the workshops were facilitated by outsiders—officers from the REB or from BESO—sometimes co-facilitating with teachers. As the program grew, teachers themselves took over this responsibility and often proved to be excellent facilitators. Just as meeting places can shift among schools, facilitation in a cluster also shifts among teachers thought to be “good” at a certain topic.

The clusters are being used for other purposes as well. Athletic competitions are organized among cluster schools, as are academic competitions (question-and-answer “matches” in preparation for examinations), science fairs, and HIV/AIDS awareness activities such as plays depicting the devastation caused by the virus. The REB is using the clusters to channel official information and other messages to and from schools. The REB has now devoted its own staff and budget to the program, promising to sustain the program in the future.

In BESO II, the project is disseminating to the other regions the “lessons learned” from the BESO I cluster inservice programs in Tigray and SNNPR (Gidey 2002). The lessons learned form part of the discussion about programs that the regions will develop but are not viewed as a model to be applied rigidly. The regions

# Concluding Remarks

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Over the last 20 years, AED has developed an approach to school-based, inservice teacher development that has become the basis for effective programs in many countries where we have worked. Each of the programs described was successful or had significant successful elements. This came about not only because of the flexible and dynamic approach adapted to local circumstances, but also because of intense communication, trust, and hard work on the part of local partners and project staff. Although programs vary widely, several steps seem to be essential building blocks of success:

- *Develop understanding:* Communication at all levels (national/regional/local, including education decision makers and teachers) must be actively pursued in order to reach understanding and agree upon the reasons for and modalities of a school-based, inservice program.
- *Design an appropriate program:* There is no best way to conduct school-based, inservice teacher development. Program structure varies from country to country, region to region, and even cluster to cluster. The design must fit the circumstances, needs of teachers, geographic conditions, and budget available.
- *Pilot and evaluate:* The program should be started in limited areas to test the best ways of structuring/administering the program and identifying the best workshop content and methodologies. It is best to monitor, evaluate, learn, and communicate, then expand the program from this tested knowledge base.
- *Develop an adequate number of good support materials:* School-based workshops conducted by teachers in their schools need help with facilitation: they need organization, structure, and good facilitation guidelines. From the first stages, facilitation guidelines must be available to accompany the very complicated on-the-ground administration of the program.
- *Ensure local ownership:* The program will be most effective when local education authorities take ownership and primary administrative responsibility for the program. To achieve this, it is best to integrate the school-based, inservice program with ongoing education programs or structures already in place from the very beginning.
- *Advocate for budget and sustainability:* Many programs of this nature begin under project budgets with personnel support and outside funding. The “project effect” of these inputs can

mask the government's intentions concerning long-term support for the program, or it can encourage local education authorities to postpone coming to grips with the personnel and budget implications of the program. Constant dialogue on these issues is useful.

Teachers are consistently the best advocates for and constructive critics of professional development programs. Over AED's two decades of experience, we have found that teachers have the best ideas for content, know what is most relevant to their practice, and know what is needed for organizing and administering school-based, inservice programs. Our programs are most effective when we heed what teachers say and construct programs around their needs and aspirations.

The spark of education takes place between teacher and student, so that systematic teacher professional development is essential to improving education. The AED approach of providing teachers with ongoing local learning opportunities through flexible, dynamic programs has proved over the years to be sustainable and cost effective in a variety of settings. Our programs change the way teachers teach and the way students learn; they increase student retention, achievement, and active participation; they change the structure of schools and attract support from the community. Everyone learns more, and they learn longer.





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