

Evaluation of the

Library Practice for Young Learners Project

The evaluation was directed at the Provincial Heads of Education, Library and Information Services and representatives of the Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education (CETDE). The initial aims and objectives of the Project (as listed in the *Project information pack* of 1998) provided the basis for the evaluation and the questions therefore related, in the main, to those aims and objectives. It was believed that by adopting such an approach one would be better able to get a better sense of the success, or otherwise, of the project as a whole albeit from the perspective of the heads and representatives.

The aims and objectives were listed largely in their original wording. As these were at times quite broad more specific questions were provided and respondents were asked to respond to these questions. **Respondents were asked to specify whether these aims and objectives of the project had or had not been realised.** "Yes", "No" and "Not sure" response categories were provided in each instance. Respondents were also asked to elaborate on any response given.

A questionnaire and covering letter was faxed to each provincial head as well as the two representatives of the CETDE. Three reminder letters were sent as well as phone calls made to ensure that all participated. Responses were received from all the provinces as well as both representatives - a total of 11 respondents. One provincial head was overseas at the time and the questionnaire was completed by a representative.

This report comprises the aims and objectives (and questions) as listed in the actual questionnaire. These have been put in bold. The "Yes" "No" and "Not sure" responses (also in bold) have been tabulated and the results are provided under each aim or objective. A "Yes and no" response category has been added as some respondents used this response rather than stating that they were "Not sure". Most respondents provided elaborations and these ranged from one or two lines to something more substantial. These elaborations have been summarised and where respondents expressed similar views these have been aggregated to provide some indication of support/agreement for a particular view.

All text in quotations marks is that of the respondents themselves.

The report ends with some concluding remarks.

Athol Leach

(9/12/99)

Results

1. To address and highlight the lack of learning resources in disadvantaged communities (see also objective 2 below)

Yes - 8

No - 1

Yes and no - 2

Nine respondents elaborated, including the one who replied in the negative and the two respondents who answered "yes and no". Two of the respondents who answered "yes" pointed to the localised impact of the project - effecting only the schools in the vicinity of the school which was a part of the project. Four of the respondents (including the one who said "no") agreed that highlighting the lack of learning resources had taken place but that, according to two, the addressing of the lack was not done - reasons given were the failure of stakeholders to "prioritise correctly" and secondly, the fact that "the project did not aim to provide resources." The booklet was seen as a solution to both the localised impact and the addressing issue by one respondent who felt that "Once schools receive the booklet, this will be workshopped across district boundaries [and that] lack of resources can then more adequately be addressed." Two respondents referred specifically to the national and provincial education departments being made aware of the lack of learning resources. This in the context, as one of the respondents noted, in which the lack of learning resources "had never been prioritised on any of the provinces' lists of requirements to support teaching & learning."

2. To specifically improve the provision of learning resources to provide support for the OBE system

Yes - 7

No - 3

No indication - 1

Ten of the eleven respondents elaborated. One of the three respondents who answered in the negative pointed out that the project did not improve the provision of learning resources but "enhanced awareness of the need for resources." The second "negative" respondent referred to the lack of financial support for provisioning to take place while the third noted that "Textbooks are still seen as the main resources [and that] other library based resources are still regarded negatively." The lack of funds being a problem was also commented on by a further two respondents one of whom pointed to positive developments in this regard, namely that "In at least two provinces funding has been improved dramatically ... [and that] creative ways of accessing alternative resourcing ... & by implementing some of the models at provincial level, are resulting in a steady improvement in the situation in many provinces." The localised impact was again pointed to by one respondent who said that the school library playing an integral role in OBE delivery "has happened in schools around the central point." The collaboration between national and provincial departments was also noted which it was felt that this collaboration would result in initiatives/strategies which would lead to better resource provision in schools.

3. To support democratic principles in education and in the provision of learning resources

Do you think that activities such as consultation and including School Governing Bodies in library planning have been implemented as a result of the Project?

Yes - 8

No - 2

Yes and no - 1

Ten respondents elaborated. Of the two respondents who said "no" one referred to the lack of a formal school library infrastructure [in the particular province?]. The second said that while governing bodies would support libraries in principle, "the reality is that sport and other related social activities are still

regarded as superior to libraries." The "yes and no" respondent referred to the school governing bodies being involved with the pilot schools but that the other schools "are still in the 'old education system mode' [and that] it is sometimes difficult to get the cooperation of the SGB." The remaining seven respondents were positive in their elaborations. One referred to the first time involvement of school governing bodies in library planning as a result of the project, a second to "active participation", a third to a specific instance of parental involvement, a fourth to discussions having taken place "at all levels" and a fifth to the "very democratic" process of identifying suitable schools for the project which involved all role players. The sixth respondent again raised the issue of localisation of the project saying that while consultation occurred in most schools which participated in the project this, in general, did not happen. The final respondent who elaborated also pointed out that democratic principles were "really encouraged" in her province since the return from Sweden pointing to the areas of learning resources selection and library planning in which various stakeholders are participating.

4. To advocate multicultural principles

Do you think the principle that learning resources should reflect all "cultures" (in all respects - including race, gender, disabled ...) in South Africa and the world has been highlighted as a result of the Project?

Yes - 8

No - 1

Not sure - 2

Eight respondents elaborated. The one "not sure" respondent who elaborated referred to multiculturalism being "still a discourse" and pointed to the need for teachers to be first "sensitised to the concept." Of the seven remaining respondents who elaborated five, while not referring to learning resources specifically, pointed to the positive role the Swedish visit had played in exposing them to multicultural principles/practises in the library which, as one respondent put it, could be implemented/promoted in South Africa. Three of the respondents also referred to the participants in the project reflecting, in the words of one respondent "a fair spread of multi-culturalism, multi-lingualism & both genders."

5. To promote life-long learning

The importance of the concept of life-long learning is being increasingly recognised. Do you think that the concept was sufficiently promoted by the Project?

Yes - 8

No - 1

Not sure - 2

Ten respondents elaborated. The "no" respondent stated that the emphasis was on the school library community, that "Little emphasis was placed on life-long learning" and expressed a wish for there to have been "more active planning and approaches to lifelong learning." One respondent who replied in the affirmative said "In theory yes" but pointed to the lack of the necessary resources in the practical situation, a view echoed by another respondent who added that "A seed [of life-long learning?] was however planted." A second respondent pointed to the "best practices" focus of the project and that the

skills acquired through this would result in independent use of resources which in turn would result in librarians, media advisors, educators and learners becoming lifelong learners. One of the "not sure" respondents was in fact positive in the elaboration saying that "the project itself did address that principle sufficiently." Finally, three respondents referred to the positive impression the Swedes, who were committed to the concept of life-long learning, had made.

6. To promote "best practice" teacher librarians and school library advisors/facilitators through human resource development.

Yes - 8

No - 1

Yes and no - 1

Not sure - 1

Ten respondents elaborated. The respondent who replied in the negative acknowledged that the "issue was highlighted during the Project itself, but could not be implemented." Five respondents referred specifically to the exposure to practices in Sweden in this regard. On the one hand this "empowered" the teacher librarians and advisors and on the other "left an impression on what and how much we still have to do to improve the situation." The exposure to best practices especially for those participants from formerly disadvantaged areas and institutions was viewed by a respondent as contributing "enormously to human resource development ..." Two respondents mentioned that workshops were being conducted with one pointing out that "school library advisers were conducting workshops to all teachers in the area including parents (governing body)" while a third stated that "People are motivated and want to do more." The respondent who was "not sure" referred to the fact that "There are too many systems presently being implemented" in the province and that "Best practice needs to be seen in context in what is best for a specific community and school." The issue of local impact was again pointed to when the same respondent considered the objective to have been a success in the participating school and environment.

7. To promote equity of access to learning resources for young learners

Do you think that the sharing of learning resources within and between schools has been promoted as a result of the Project?

Yes - 8

Yes and no - 1

Not sure - 2

Ten respondents elaborated. The two "not sure" respondents both agreed that the objective had been highlighted but "implementation" still had to occur and "mechanisms" still had to be worked out. The "yes and no" respondent said that sharing was promoted between the pilot schools but beyond that it was difficult due to logistical problems. Three respondents referred to specific instances in which sharing had taken place - one instance being the formation of a community resource centre to which all school contributed and which became the resource all schools shared. A fourth respondent mentioned that the sharing of teacher librarians and school libraries is at a proposal stage. One respondent did, however, point to the lack of resources in schools which "does not allow for a great deal of resource sharing" and a second, while acknowledging that the principle had been highlighted by the project pointed out that "a number of problems were encountered during attempts

at implementation."

8. To ensure the continuation of relationships with the Swedish partners long after the initial study tours have taken place.

Do you think that this will be achieved?

Yes - 9

Not sure - 2

One "not sure" respondent again referred to the absence of a school library structure in the province but that the "continuation of the relationship with the Swedish partners would be mutually advantageous..." while the second "not sure" respondent anticipated contact being maintained on an individual basis, pointing out that on an official basis "there has not been any further contact with BIS and SIDA in Sweden." One respondent was of the opinion that "Motivation, monitoring and continuous evaluation will help." In similar vein, and while answering in the affirmative, one respondent cautioned that unless "continuous monitoring of resources and development of school libraries take place and are constantly interacted upon by both parties" the relationship would not be sustained. It was also noted that all participants in the project had indicated that they would like to get together again in order to share experiences relating to the project. One respondent pointed to the "Practical implementation of strategies within the context of [the] South African school situation [and the hope that] a seminar could be arranged" while a second respondent stated that "People are keen that the project should go on to phase 2, and that the Swedish partners remain." One of the respondents had a longer term view of the relationship saying that "The relationship started should never be ended [and that] we still need to learn more from one another." Finally, it was noted that "friendships and colleagueships" had been formed and were being nurtured.

9. To bring together major national and provincial role players and to enable them to work from a common base

Yes - 9

Yes and no - 1

Not sure - 1

Ten respondents elaborated. One respondent considered this "the most successful reaction to the project ..." having resulted in "a wonderful working relationship between provincial heads and a sharing of resources, ideas and a sharing of expertise." Similarly, a second respondent considered this as being the "highlight of the project." Four respondents mentioned the Standing Committee of Heads of Education, Library and Information Services (SCHELIS) which was started through the project while a fifth respondent stated that "We see problems from the same perspective." The one respondent who was "not sure" did view the getting together of all role players as "good", "especially in establishing a common base of delivering a service ..." The "yes and no" respondent mentioned being visited by the national office but that "We never got feedback from other provinces, learned from each other" and again repeated the suggestion for a meeting of all the delegates.

10. To empower the school librarian, school library advisor/facilitator, the governing body, provincial representatives (e.g. school managers, district managers) and other stakeholders

Yes - 10

Not sure - 1

Nine respondents elaborated. One respondent, who answered "yes" considered the empowerment "limited" noting that while both the school manager and library advisor were "empowered" the latter was "now partially utilised elsewhere." Two respondents referred to the fact that the project had brought the stakeholders together with the one stating that the school library, prior to this being "something they hardly talked about before." The "not sure" respondent stated that eyes and ideas "were opened ... to work that still needs to be done." One respondent referred to a specific instance of empowerment in which a school library advisor had won two international awards as a result of her work with disadvantaged communities and the development of a mobile library model, the inspiration for which came from her visit to Sweden.

11. To produce a written plan for the improvement of a school library service for nine primary schools or nine secondary schools distributed among the nine provinces in South Africa.

As you know each province has produced such a plan. Do you think that the production of such a plan has been a worthwhile exercise?

Yes - 9

Yes and no - 1

Not sure - 1

Ten respondents elaborated. Some respondents emphasised the "worthwhileness" of the exercise referring to it as "definitely" and "very" worthwhile. Six respondents provided reasons and these included the plans forming "the basis for future library development", the plans providing the possibility for all to learn "from the experiences of one another", the plans reflecting the "unique characteristics" of each province, the plans making "the participants develop a structured and controlled approach to their implementation of the project" and, from one respondent, the plans having "helped them to focus on the problems they have and come up with ways of solving them ... [and also helping them] to understand their role in supporting the curriculum and how to work close with other school structures such as the governing body." The respondent who was equivocal ("yes and no") did consider the exercise "worthwhile" but qualified this by saying that "one must have the support and infrastructure from the provincial offices." The respondent who was "not sure" pointed out that "It/the plans have not been devolved to all disadvantaged schools ..." but also pointed to the positive but localised impact that the plan had had.

12. To use the project information as success stories and to raise awareness around the critical role of learning resources in improving the quality of education within the framework of the new curriculum.

This has been and will be ongoing. Do you think raised awareness has already been/will be achieved?

Yes -9

No - 1

No indication - 1

While responses were largely positive some of the eight elaborations were cautious. One respondent considered that raised awareness "Will be achieved if it [the project?] continues." Two respondents referred to the raised awareness being localised and that, according to one, "a lot of work, motivation is still needed to achieve more." In this regard, the potential of the booklet in raising awareness beyond the actual participants in the project was pointed to by three respondents. In one extremely positive elaboration it was stated that the project had "enhanced the role of librarians" in the province and it was also pointed out that a budget had been implemented "and devolved to each school for the purchase of library resources." In similarly positive vein it was pointed out that "The project has further empowered and facilitated the development of the national school library policy & the process of developing an implementation plan for that policy" and that, also emerging as a result of the visit to Sweden, was the possibility of closer cooperation between heads of education and provincial library services. One respondent mentioned the need for sustainability suggesting that in order to ensure this "The fires of awareness have to be kept burning..." The final respondent stated that "most of the schools" were contacting media advisors concerning their inability to get OBE underway due to a lack of learning resources. She referred to the fact that the department of education has since started buying learning resources.

13. What do you consider to be the positive aspects of the Project? (If you have more than 2 please list what you consider to be the 2 most important. We accept that there may well be some repetition of what has been said above.)

A number of the respondents provided more than two responses. Five respondents mentioned that an "awareness" had been created about school libraries. Two of these respondents were more specific - one stating that awareness had been created at a "managerial level" the second at the community level. Responses from six respondents indicated that a greater cooperation at various levels (including district, provincial and national) had emerged as a result of the project. Six respondents referred to the exposure, the gaining of first hand experience (in Sweden) of "best practice" skills with one of the six pointing to "the valuable information that has been disseminated based on the ... experience." One respondent's final comment again underscores the positive views of the project: "I feel that the project has really mobilised the cause for school libraries in South Africa such as has never been the case before, & provided a common base for an operational tool."

14. What do you consider to be the negative aspects of the Project? (If you have more than 2 please list what you consider to be the 2 most important. We accept that there may well be some repetition of what has been said above.)

Eight of the eleven respondents listed negative aspects. The most frequently reported aspect, mentioned by five of the respondents, was the lack of support with regard to resources (one respondent specifically mentioning materials and/or finance). As one respondent remarked, "The project assumed that once stakeholders are exposed then they will automatically provide resources" or, as a second respondent asked "After attaining best practice what happens next?" Time limitations were mentioned by two respondents with one referring to the short period of exposure and the fact that "A lot more could have been learnt with more time."

Finally, the demise of LIWO which meant that another role player was needed if the project was to continue, was noted.

15. Any other comments relating to the Project that you would like to make?

Eight of the eleven respondents made comments. Comments included the need to "Focus on

sustainability", the need to ensure the continuation of the relationship with the Swedes (a further visit for provincial heads to Sweden being, perhaps not unsurprisingly, called for as well as a visit by the Swedes to South Africa "to help us more at a practical level") and, finally, the need for "the South African delegates [to] come together and sort of discuss the implementation of the project in the different regions." One respondent considered that the decision to have one site of "best practice" (instead of two) "has been affirmed over & over again as having been the correct one." The same respondent again ended on an extremely positive note saying that "the principle of synergy had been let loose in the school library sector for the first time in South Africa as a result of the Project ... [and that] the ball has been set rolling to involve many others to co-operate in addressing the provision of learning resources for our schools ..."

Concluding remarks

Given the above and the table and figures below* it is quite apparent that project has been evaluated in a positive light and that according to the eight provincial heads and the two CETDE representatives the aims and the objectives of the Project have been emphatically realised.

The approach adopted above has not been on a province by province basis. However listed in the table below is a breakdown of the responses according to provinces (and the CETDE) Each figure is out of a possible 12 (with the exception of the figures for the CETDE which are out of 24).

Table: Responses according to province

<u>Province</u>	Yes	No	Yes and No	Not Sure	No Indic.
Northern Province	7	2	-	3	-
Eastern Cape	11	-	-	1	-
Northern Cape	2	5	-	4	1
Mpumalanga	12	-	-	-	-
Gauteng	8	1	1	2	
Free State	5	1	5	1	-
KwaZulu-Natal	9	1	1		1

Western Cape	12	-	-	-	-
North West	12	-	-	-	-
CETDE	23	-	-	1	-
Total	101	10	7	12	2

** Of the 132 possible responses to whether the aims and objectives of the Project had been met or not, 101 (77%) were "yes", 12 (9%) were "not sure", 10 (8%) were "no", 7 (5%) were "yes and no", and 2 (1%) were not indicated.*

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