

Jamaica Language Project: Final Report reflecting the outcome and agreements made at the initial feedback meeting with the Jamaica Teaching Council on Friday 28th February, 2014.

As part of the Government of Jamaica's Transformation for Education, the Ministry of Education and the Jamaica Teaching Council invited the British Council to work alongside them to focus on improving the teaching of English in their schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this consultancy is to collaborate with JTC and the relevant stakeholders to design a programme that will advance and accelerate the learning of the English Language through improvements in the programme of learning and the competencies of teachers. Stage 1, a fact-finding exercise to determine a draft programme 23rd-28th February.

Stage 2, to implement the recommended approach through a phase 1 programme with two Quality Education Circles.

Aims and Objectives:

- To clarify the English language/literacy requirements for improved pupil performance.
- To identify the professional training needs of teachers and Regional Specialists
- To plan and implement a peer training schedule for English subject specialists and their advisors.

Methodology and approach

- The team were provided with curriculum books, policy documents and professional standards draft policies as a framework to understand the context of the Jamaican education system.
- The team visited and spoke to representatives from 6 High Schools, 1 Primary School, 1 Traditional High School, 2 Teacher Education Colleges, the Jamaica Teaching Council, The Core Curriculum Unit and the Regional Literacy

Specialists. In addition the team were invited to meet the Hon Rev. R Thwaites, the Minister for Education, Jamaica.

- The three team members observed teaching, spoke to Heads of Department, pupils and Principals. Within the areas of leadership, subject knowledge and pedagogy and the learner experience, these discussions and interviews formed the basis of the 'fact-finding' week to gather evidence to inform how best the team could support Jamaican schools.

During the visit the team encountered common themes expressed by many of the teaching professionals regarding the decline in pupils' performance in English:

- Non-reading culture
- Boys see reading and language proficiency as effeminate
- Creole/patois/nation language as a refuge against Standard Jamaican English and conformity, particularly for boys
- The invasion/infection of creole into a variety of domains?
- *"Creole is invading a lot of domains", "It's a different culture, children come with their culture"*
- *"It's a cultural problem, a societal problem; we are not a reading society".*
- *The children are bilingual with Jamaican creole as their first language, should the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language be the approach?*

What we found as part of our 'fact-finding':

- Teacher confidence: There are issues with teachers' subject content knowledge which hampers their ability to scaffold the teaching of a variety of genres of writing to an effective pedagogy i.e. the teachers refer to 'the writing process' but the structured progressive journey of speaking and listening (vocabulary), reading and writing is not always clear to the teachers and therefore not constructed for children.
- Concentration on the use of workbooks and worksheets doesn't always provide opportunities for extended learning. Where we saw good teaching, the workbooks were used to supplement the teaching rather than forming the main nutrients of the curricular diet.
- Teachers need the technical language to problematize the text and to challenge the children to use such terms.
- Limited questioning so higher-order thinking is not fully realised.

- A need to rationalise the different curricular approaches, the policy drivers and draft and proposed approaches.

A suggested outline to address some of the challenges that our fact-finding revealed:

We recognise that there are existing models of peer school support – QEC, NATE, Operation Turnaround, Regional Language clusters. We suggest a specific learning community around effective pedagogy in Language that would sit within the existing Quality Education Circles. This focus within the QEC could be called Quality Language Circles (QLC). Given our understanding of the current structures, this could be facilitated by the Regional Literacy Specialists and driven by key school partners. These QLCs might have the following characteristics:

- A QLC is where all schools subscribe to the ambition of eligible pupils attaining at or above the national average for Language CSEC and GSAT score 70 and above for able students.
- Identification of training needs in response to pupil performance data
- Impact and tracking evaluation attached to QLCs
- A key focus on subject–knowledge and pedagogy and sharing of resources

Roles

- Regional Specialist - Working in consultation with the Core Curriculum Unit to facilitate and mobilise knowledge within and outside the QLC; constructing with stakeholders a framework for agreeing what is good practice; working with the QLC to identify the key drivers for each grouping.
- School – prepared to release staff members and to share good practice and resources
- Teachers’ Colleges – possible external stakeholder partners attached to QLCs within their locality. Their role could be negotiated to keep the QLC abreast of the latest research data and effective practice. They could also be providers of bespoke CPD programmes in response to discussions and shared ideas emerging from the QLC.

Next steps and implementation

- Phase 1 implementation in Kingston, St. Andrew and St. Thomas (April, 2014)
- Meeting with the Phase 1 Quality Language Circles

- Leading on 2 specific topics (to be agreed) , modelling how a cluster meeting could work
- Impact evaluation of the Quality Language Circles (from April 2014 – July 2014)
- Roll- out of Quality Language Circles as part of all the Quality Education Circles in light of the findings of the impact evaluation

Next Steps

- Regional Specialist – to sign up cluster schools and invitation to Heads of Department and reading specialists (Primary)
- Consultants to send an invitation and feedback form to QLC Phase 1 schools regarding initial support requirements **at the beginning of April**
- Regional Specialists to circulate the invitation, advise schools how to respond and ensure that the feedback is returned to the consultants by **Friday 18th April.**
- Stage 1 launches and modelling of how a QLC can be established along with support in response to feedback and analysis of data

Date	Activity	Aim	Representatives
28.04.14	Meeting with Regional Specialists, JTC and Impact Evaluation lead person	To clarify the outline for the launches, the roles of the people involved and to confirm the systems of accountability regarding the QLC's future sustainability.	The Jamaica Teaching Council, Regional Specialists A tertiary organisation/ Evaluation provider The British Council
29.04.14	Launch of the QLC in Kingston and St Andrews	To identify the Terms of Reference, Accountability and to model how examples of good practice and peer development can be established.	Dr Christine Callender Dr Tony Sewell Regional Specialists and JTC will provide input on scaling up the project and sustainability.
30.04.14	Launch of the QLC in St Thomas	To identify the Terms of Reference, Accountability and to model how examples	Dr Christine Callender Dr Tony Sewell Regional

		of good practice and peer development can be established.	Specialists and JTC will provide input on scaling up the project and sustainability.
01.05.14	Support meeting for Regional Specialists and Key drivers	To meet with the Regional Specialists involved in the launches to discuss their support needs and to provide guidance for next steps	Dr Christine Callender Dr Tony Sewell Regional Specialists
02.05.14 09.00-12	Feedback to the Ministry of Education, the Jamaica Teaching Council, the British Council and H.E Tertiary education partners.	To confirm the outcomes, provide feedback and to confirm the commitment of all parties regarding the scaling-up and sustainability of the project.	The Jamaica Teaching Council, A tertiary organisation/ Evaluation provider The British Council

Sustainability and “Scaling up”.

For the project to have the impact we all desire, it is important that the QLCs have an infrastructure that enables the phase 1 groups to be sustainable models that can be replicated across the island.

Ideas for JTC consideration :

- Who will be engaged to lead on the impact evaluation of phase 1 and what will be the terms of reference for the exercise?
- How will the impact evaluation results be shared with the participants and the other QECs in order that the model can be refined and then shared with others?
- How will Regional Specialists be supported to fulfil their role?

Suggested developments with the British Council

- Bespoke study visit to the UK to see good practice in Quality Assurance, in English language teaching and in professional learning communities. This visit could include opportunities for partnering such learning communities for sharing good practice and beginning benchmarking buddy systems
- Review of British Council learning materials that could support the QLCs to model good practice through training, peer development and the use of e.resources.

- Bespoke study visit to another island in the Caribbean, possibly Barbados to see how consistent practice in English language teaching ensures high expectations and achievements.

Source materials

Teachers' Manual (Government of Jamaica/World Bank Reform of Secondary Education)

Curriculum Guide (Government of Jamaica/World Bank Reform of Secondary Education)

A Comprehensive English Course Books 1-3 and CXC English A (not used)

Curriculum Guide – Language Arts Language Across the Curriculum

Draft Language Education Policy (September 2003) Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture

Draft Professional Standards for Educators Jamaica – Jamaica Teaching Council

Proposed Professional Standards for Teachers of English in Secondary Schools, (April, 2012)

English for All books 1-3

Language Education Policy September 2003

The British Council would like to thank:

The Minister for Education, the Rt Hon Rev. R Thwaites

The Jamaica Teaching Council led by Dr. Winsome Gordon

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