



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
LUSAKA PROVINCE

Final Report on the Child Rights, Classroom and School Management Course Project
Being Undertaken At Lusaka Girls' Basic School in Lusaka District.



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December 2007

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

We wish to sincerely thank all those who supported us in one way or the other before and during the implementation of our project. Special thanks go to the following;

Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), for funding the Child Rights, Classroom and School Management training programme we have been privileged to attend.

Lund University management and staff involved in the Child Rights, Classroom and School Management training programme for equipping us with the necessary knowledge and skills in the CRC

Ministry of Education, for granting us permission to attend Phase I and II of the programme in Sweden and Vietnam respectively, and also giving us time for phase III in Zambia.

Our immediate supervisors for taking keen interest and participating in the project, as well as allowing us to attend to it.

Head teacher, staff, PTA and pupils of Lusaka Girls School for allowing us to implement the project in their school

Families and friends for support and encouragement

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The project concept was derived from the desire to build on the foundation laid by earlier groups of Change Agents. The team was inspired by the work done by a Zambian Change Agent Gertrude Kasuba, on guidelines for establishing Class and School Councils.

The target group for the pilot project included school management, staff, pupils and members of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) of Lusaka Girls' Basic School. Lusaka Girls' School is a single sex school that was opened in mid 1950s during the colonial period. The School has a total pupil enrolment of 1 200 with 62 members of staff. It runs from grades 1 to 9, with 6 streams at grades 1 – 7 levels and 3 at grades 8 – 9 giving a total of 48 classes as illustrated below;

Table 1 Class Pattern:

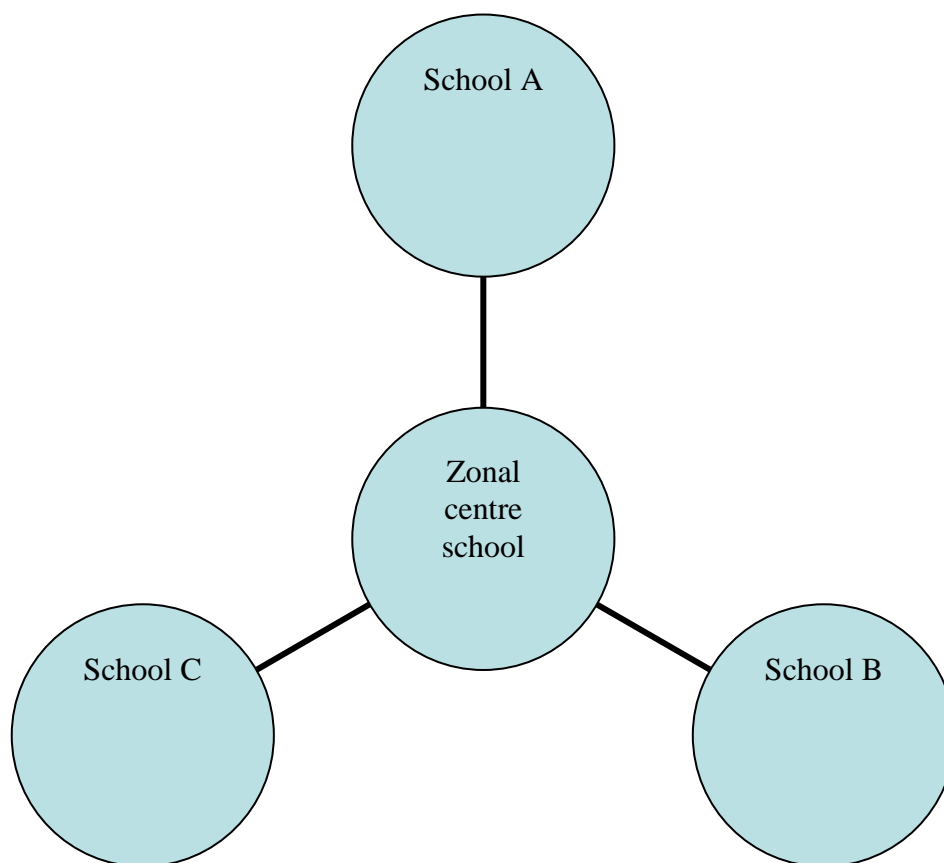
Level	Grade	# of Classes
Lower Basic School:	1	6
	2	6
	3	6
	4	6
	Sub total	24
Middle Basic School:	5	6
	6	6
	7	6
	Sub total	18
Upper Basic School:	8	3
	9	3
	Sub total	6
Grand Total		48

The nature of the School, i.e. single sex, Government school and Zonal Centre School, attracted our attention.

Lusaka District Education Board is divided into 8 Zones for administrative purposes. Each Zone is comprised of a cluster of between eight (8) and sixteen (16) schools. Each

Zone has a Zonal Centre school which is the link between the District Education Board and the rest of the schools in that particular Zone as illustrated in the chart below. Lusaka Girls' Basic School is a Zonal Centre School. As a Zonal Centre School therefore, the location of the project was going to serve as a model to the cluster schools.

Diagram 1: illustration of Zone concept.



It is however worth noting that the school has introduced boys at the lower primary. The boys are from a nearby school (formerly Lusaka Boys' Basic School) which has been upgraded to High school level (now Lusaka High School).

This report therefore aims to report, to explain and share experiences with fellow change agents and other stakeholders.

2.0 TITLE OF THE PROJECT: “IT IS OUR CHANCE”

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT:

The purpose of the project was to test the practicability of the proposed guidelines for the establishment of school councils in Zambian schools taking into account the prevailing education context. This being a new innovation in the school, it was imperative that ownership and sustainability were facilitated. This was achieved by sharing information about the project and involving all the stakeholders in the planning and implementation processes, e.g. the Parent Teachers’ Association (PTA) was in attendance during the first school council meeting. This created project awareness and advocacy for support; the Provincial Education Officer (PEO) District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) attended the second school council meeting and participated by encouraging the girls to open up without fear of being harassed. This in itself facilitated appreciation of the project on the part of the two senior officials from the ministry of education. Ultimately project sustainability was assured because there was a strong indication from them that the project is taken to other schools as well.

2.2 AIM OF THE PROJECT:

The main aim of the project was to establish and highlight implementation factors affecting the successful establishment of a school council in a public school, as well as its impact on the pupils and teachers involved.

2.3 OBJECTIVES:

- ✚ To test the proposed guidelines for the establishment of school councils in Zambian schools
- ✚ To establish and highlight factors affecting the successful implementation of school council
- ✚ To highlight the experiences from the concerned pupils and teachers
- ✚ To show the impact of the school council on pupils and teachers
- ✚ To bring out the implications of the school council on the school
- ✚ To involve all stakeholders engaged in education provision
- ✚ To share experiences with all stakeholders

3.0 TARGET GROUPS:

- ✚ Grades 4 and 6 Pupils at Lusaka Girls’ Basic School (6 classes in total, 3 at each level)
- ✚ Teachers handling Grades 4 and 6 classes

- ✚ Guidance teacher
- ✚ Link teacher
- ✚ Headteacher
- ✚ Parent Teachers' Association (PTA)
- ✚ Education officials

4.0 METHODOLOGY:

4.1 MEETINGS:

4.1 .1 Administrative Meetings:

Two planning meetings which targeted the Headteacher, Teachers and the PTA were held in order to discuss the project and raise awareness for the purpose of acceptance and ultimate ownership and institutionalisation, to discuss the project cycle so as to come up with a plan of action, and lastly to discuss project fears so as seek clarifications on implementation vis-à-vis school climate.

4.1.2 Class Council Meetings:

Prior to the class council meetings, the Link teacher and one of the class teachers attended a school council meeting at Lake Road PTA School, one of the very few schools in Zambia that are implementing school councils, in order to learn from them. During these meetings the girls were given the chance to raise issues affecting them as pupils.

4.1.3 School Council Meetings:

Pupil representatives from the piloting classes had an opportunity to make submissions to management with a view to finding solutions to the challenges they were facing.

4.2 Focused prompts:

In order to establish the girls' impressions about the class and school councils, all pupils from the participating classes were given two focussed prompts;

- a) "How I feel about the class and school councils"
- b) "The advantages and disadvantages of class and school councils"

4.3 Interviews:

Interviews with the Headteacher, staff and the PTA representative were held to establish the possibility and suitability of establishing class and school councils at Lusaka Girls' Basic School

4.4 None participant observations:

In order to have a feel of the mood of the class and school councils, the team played the role of participant observers. This helped to see how the girls were discussing their issues, how management reacted to the concerns raised by the girls, and the issues raised.

5.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- ✚ To test the proposed guidelines
- ✚ To establish class and school council
- ✚ To lobby for support from key stakeholders

6.0 REAL OUTCOMES:

6.1 PROPOSED GUIDELINES:

a) Composition of Class Council:

Chairperson
Secretary
The rest of the class

b) Composition School Council:

Chairperson
Vice Chairperson
Secretary
Treasurer (where necessary)
Class Council representatives (Chairperson and Secretary)
Link teacher

The proposed guidelines were tested and found to be appropriate. However, we observed one major challenge that could hinder the successful implementation of the school council; the guidelines suggest that the link teacher should be a person with authority and respected within the school environment, and further that the Headteacher could be a link teacher. Basing on the current demands on the Zambian Headteacher, it is not practical to have the Headteacher as Link teacher, hence the need to have another person other than the Headteacher. We feel that the link teacher should be either the School Guidance teacher or someone in the school that has passion for children, as is the case with the link teacher at Lusaka Girls' Basic School who happens to be a teacher for children with special education needs (refer to .

The Headteacher should however be part of the School council. This is particularly important to enhance the position of the Link teacher who stands the risk of being misunderstood by school management.

6.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF CLASS AND SCHOOL COUNCILS:

Class councils were established in six classes, three at Grade 4 and another three at Grade six, at Lusaka Girls' Basic School. Each class had a Class Council Chairperson and Secretary. Only two Class and School Council meetings were held as follows;

Class Council Meetings; 23rd February and 29th June 2007

School Council; 16th March and 20th July 2007.

These council meetings revealed the following;

- ✚ Untapped potential in terms of communication skills such as clarity of expression, respecting each others views, negotiating, persuading and probing.
- ✚ Pupils appreciated the opportunity to be heard as they had issues to discuss but had not been given chance to speak out
- ✚ There were so many things going on in the school, affecting pupil welfare which management were not aware off
- ✚ Partnership between the pupils on the one hand and management, staff and PTA on the other would greatly improve social relations and the development of the school
- ✚ Pupil leadership qualities
- ✚ Management showed signs of having felt that pupils challenged and threatened their positions by the submissions from the pupils
- ✚ Pupils' participation during the school council was affected to some extent not by the presence of management but by the way the responses to their first set of submissions were given.
- ✚ PTA member present during the School Council meeting appreciated the council made meaningful contribution
- ✚ The School Council meeting served as a wake up call to management, staff and the PTA

It was very clear from the issues raised during the Council meetings and the girls' voices that the underlying factors were the need to address the three "P's" namely, Protection, Provision and Participation if education was going to be more meaningful to them, as illustrated below;

A. CLASS COUNCILS

- ✚ "This meeting is good because we have everything we want from the Head teacher" (**Provision**)

- ✚ “I think the meeting was good and will help us to change Lusaka Girls School. I think Lusaka Girls School will be better because of the class / school council meetings I feel it was successful and will go far” **(Participation)**
- ✚ “I like class council because everybody has chance to talk about things which you do not like at school” **(Participation)**
- ✚ “I like class council because everybody has chance to talk about things which you don’t like here at school” **(Participation)**
- ✚ “We can talk about this school which is affecting us on this school like us children. There are so many things which are affecting us. But children don’t want to talk. I want to talk on a teacher who like beating us” **(Participation and Protection)**

B.SCHOOL COUNCIL:

- ✚ “I think having a school council is very important to us pupils, because it is when we say the problems that we are facing. And if they keep on doing this, us pupils won’t be afraid to say our problems. We can’t be afraid because we are allowed to speak in any language” **(Protection and Participation)**
- ✚ “Without having a school council we may be thinking about evil things e.g. stealing, jealousy, and so on. Others may think that having a school council is a bad idea but having a school council is when others learn that what they were doing was bad. Even us pupils must obey the rules that are made during the school council” **(Participation)**
- ✚ “A school council is important because it helps us to work together to solve that problem we are facing” **(Participation)**

The advantages are;

- ✚ “To be united/cooperative” **(Participation)**

- ✚ “It helps people to bring more ideas on how things can be solved” (**Participation**)
- ✚ “In order to solve problems” (**Participation, Protection and Provision**)
- ✚ “Things are solved fast” (**Participation, Provision and Protection**)
- ✚ “It also helps to solve not only class problems but also school problems” (**Protection and Provision**)

The disadvantages are;

- ✚ “There will be misunderstanding among other people because they don’t like what other people have discussed, like how things should be done” (**Protection**)
- ✚ “School council is nice. We learnt many things about school council and I like school council very much”

6.3 SUPPORT FROM STAKEHOLDERS:

- ✚ School management identified the Link Teacher and selected classes for the pilot project.
- ✚ Teaching staff in conjunction with management created time and space for the councils.
- ✚ Pupils embraced the ideas of the pilot project
- ✚ The PTA created time from their busy schedule to participate in the school council
- ✚ Our supervisors developed interest in what we were doing and gladly allowed us to attend to the project
- ✚ Our progress report was used by the Ministry of Education during a meeting with Save the Children Norway

7.0 FACTORS AFFECTING SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLASS AND SCHOOL COUNCIL:

- ✚ Cultural influence on relationships between adults and children, e.g. adults are the ones who should make decisions on everything affecting children.
- ✚ Nature and type of school administration and management style, e.g. it would be easier to implement class and school councils in a school where the Headteacher was open minded and democratic and not authoritative.
- ✚ Mistrust among the pupils and staff, e.g. it would be difficult if teachers suspected that pupils were telling on them

- ✚ Space on the school time table, e.g. if not appreciated space for the council meetings would not be found because time tables are already packed.
- ✚ Teacher motivation and work culture, e.g. if teachers were not motivated they would not find it necessary to be involved or support the councils.
- ✚ Clarity of the concept of Class and School Councils.

8.0 IMPACT OF THE CLASS AND SCHOOL COUNCILS;

8.1 ON SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, TEACHERS AND OTHER STAFF

AND PARENTS:

- ✚ Realisation by School Administration, teachers and parents that they were partners with the pupils in school development
- ✚ Realisation by School Administration, teachers and parents that they were accountable to the pupils and so would not take them for granted anymore, but rather be more careful about how they managed the affairs of the school, e.g. prices of commodities in the school tuck shop, quantities and the kind of food
- ✚ Realisation by School Administration, teachers and parents that there was need to involve pupils in appraising staff in the school
- ✚ School admin had began to implement some of the councils' suggestions such as buying padlocks to doors
- ✚ School staff would change their attitude and work culture, such as the tuckshop assistant or the lady that cleaned their toilets
- ✚ Appreciation of the value of looking at issues from child based approach (refer to 11.1)

8.2 ON THE PUPILS:

- ✚ Pupils realised that they had the right to talk about issues affecting them in school.
- ✚ Pupils would adopt positive behaviour knowing their friends would not support them (e.g. pupils were aware that some problems were as a result of their own behaviour such as throwing litter
- ✚ Pupils in the course of discussion would be able to be aware of their rights and this would spread even to their homes
- ✚ Teaching leadership roles
- ✚ Confidence building

9.0 WAY FORWARD:

Having successfully implemented the project, the focus will now be on the gradual scaling of the project to other schools within the Zone first and then to other Zones. The scaling of the project is going to be implemented in the year 2008. Project sensitisation meetings shall be held during the first term of 2008.

As we scale the project, our observation on the structure of the School Council shall be taken into consideration. Therefore the Headteacher shall become a member of the school council, together with at least two members of the Parent Teachers Association.

We shall have to enhance partnerships with other stakeholders such as Save the Children Norway, other Changes Agents based in Lusaka, Ministry of Community Development, and Zambia Civic Education Association, to mention a few.

The following strategies are cardinal for successful scaling:

- ✚ To encourage active participation by all pupils
- ✚ To help the pupils understand that it is ok to talk about issues affecting them in school
- ✚ Class councils should be given feedback from school councils as soon as possible
- ✚ Teachers to trust the pupils and give them enough room and opportunity to actively participate in their day to day school activities and experiences.
- ✚ Administration, teachers and other staff, and pupils to implement issues from councils as soon as possible in order not to discourage pupils
- ✚ The school to have a programme for the class and school councils meetings

10.0 CONCLUSION:

Our experience in implementing the project has clearly brought out the value of community, pupil and school partnerships in school governance. The pilot phase has received overwhelming support from different stakeholders, giving us the hope that if well implemented and sustained, the concept of class and school councils could facilitate world change which we believe starts with educated children. We are therefore encouraged to spread to other schools without reservation, the concept of class and school councils. It is evident that the proposed guidelines can be applied to different schools with minimum challenges.

11.0 APPENDICES:

11.1 LINK TEACHER'S THOUGHTS ABOUT CLASS & SCHOOL COUNCILS

- ✚ It helps to sharpen the skill of problem identification and that of problem solving in the pupils
- ✚ It helps to highlight whatever problems that might be existing in the pupils' environment
- ✚ It gives a child a voice in the day to day running of the school affairs as they are the key stakeholders. Without pupils, a school cannot exist.
- ✚ It provides a platform for leadership training for the pupils.
- ✚ Today's shrubs are tomorrow's forest. This programme therefore will help in having a generation which is empowered.
- ✚ As they come together to speak with one voice, the programme also helps to build the spirit of teamwork in them
- ✚ It inculcates a sense of belonging in them as they know that they are not alone in the problems
- ✚ Although the programme has triggered some fears in some teachers, it is beneficial as it helps to create a conducive environment as it focuses on the well-being of all.

How has it changed me personally?

- ✚ The programme has changed me in various ways as follows;
- ✚ It has helped me to be more focussed and alert as every new programme has its own challenges
- ✚ The programme is helping me to be more open-minded as to accept views in diversity
- ✚ It has also taught me even when things look good, they are not really good
- ✚ I have learnt that for a long time, the school has robbed these children of their right and freedom to be heard
- ✚ An additional tag of problem solver has been given to me
- ✚ The programme has suddenly brought me closer to the office of the District Education Standards Officer

11.2 ISSUES RAISED BY PUPILS:

- ✚ Dirty toilets
- ✚ High cost of commodities in the tuck shop
- ✚ Negative attitude and slow service by Tuck shop Assistant
- ✚ Banging doors
- ✚ Door without handles
- ✚ Lack of adequate textbooks
- ✚ Floors need tiles
- ✚ Dirty taps
- ✚ School uniform made out of cheap material that fades easily
- ✚ Litter in School
- ✚ Need for a school bus
- ✚ Inadequacy of garden taps
- ✚ Introduction of boys' classes at a girls' school

11.3 Headteacher's report.

LUSAKA GIRLS BASIC SCHOOL

SCHOOLS COUNCILS REPORT

The programme began on the 30th January, 2007 when the teachers who were to be involved as stake holders were oriented . These were the guidance teachers, the link teacher and the Grade four and six teachers whose classes were to be involved. The rest of the members of staff were informed about the introduction of class and school councils on 2nd February, 2007. Emphasis was on the need to give the programme the support it deserved in order to succeed. The programme was launched by the District Standards Officer (Mrs Simuchembu) and The Headteacher for Lake Road School (Mr Phiri).

Alter the launch, teachers planned for meetings in which the pupils were guided on what was to be done. According to reports received, these meetings were fruitful. The first school council was held on the 20th July 2007. During this council, the District Standards Officer, the Senior Education Officer, the Headteacher for Lake Road School, the Lusaka Girls P.T.A. Treasurer, the Deputy Headteacher and all the teachers from the pilot classes were in attendance. During the 1st Council, we were all amazed at how the pupils conducted the session. The pupil chairperson was able to control the deliberations and pupils were free to present their problems without fear.

The second council was held on 20th July 2007, this council was well attended. There were visitors from Sweden, the Provincial Education Officer, the District Education Board Secretary, The District Education Standards Officer ,the Education Standards Officer, the PTA Treasurer just to mention a few. Even during this council, inspite of the big number of visitors, the pupils were able to present their problems and to ask questions openly. From the administrative point of view, the programme is an empowerment one which is training pupils in self responsibility and enhancing the freedom of expression.

Pupils were bringing out issues they wanted to be improved on. For example, the issues of the tuck-shop, the toilets and the taps to mention just a few. We are convinced as

administration that pupils are indeed a channel through which problems are highlighted. Some of the issues raised could have been overlooked if they were not brought to light by pupils. The pupils are very happy with the programme because of the following reasons:-

- i. they feel that they are now partners in the governance of the school since the programme has given them a say in the running of the school.
- ii. Pupils are aware and conscious of their environment both inside and outside. They are aiming high in terms of cleanliness and in performance
- iii. They are happy to be given the opportunity to present their problems to the administration, and the manners in which the administration is responding to their concerns. For example more tapes have been installed as per their request and the small gate is open as the pupils come and go home.

School management team is happy with the self-responsibility and openness shown by the learners. There is co-existence between learners and management. We recommend that the programme be extended to other schools.

R M BOWA (MRS)
SCHOOL MANAGER

11.4 REFERENCES

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