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# Volunteering to combat illiteracy : using a whole school approach. The case of the prevocational sector

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## **OVERVIEW OF THE PREVOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN MAURITIUS**

Prevocational education is understood as a comprehensive term involving general education and study of technologies and sciences, the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors (National Curriculum Framework, 2009). Considered as an orientation stage, provisions are being made to prepare Prevocational learners for the world of vocational education and this stage is considered as an orientation stage. An inclusive, holistic, integrated and comprehensive approach is preferred with specific focus on developing functional numeracy and literacy, learning to manage emotions and developing positive self esteem, promoting creativity, artistic dispositions, physical and health fitness and Mastering relevant technical skills.

The approach that is preferred is in favour of (NCF p. 195) “a process-based and project-based approach”. Its benefits being manifold include assets such as providing interdisciplinary links and concrete examples from daily life which would be more relevant to the prevocational learner. This approach should normally enable more prospects for collaborative learning and the development of the communication and life skills. It is also hoped that such approaches would involve the neighbourhoods and communities which will act as motivating factor and will influence cross disciplinary incursions and allow learners make valued contribution to the class (NCF 2009).

## **RATIONALE FOR STUDY IN PREVOCATIONAL STREAM**

Statistics from the National Report on the ‘The Development of Education’ by Ministry of Education, culture & Human Resources (2008, p. 26) reveal that although provision is made for the secondary schooling of all children, the enrolment rate only reaches 75%. Furthermore about 30% of primary school children do not get through the end of Primary cycle examinations and only around

72% of a cohort completes the CPE Examinations successfully at their first or second attempt. Of this cohort, only 55% successfully complete their school Certificate and only 35% access the Higher School Certificate. Still, only about 28% of every cohort is successful at HSC making them ready for university.

The statement for the prevocational is alarming since to enter the prevocational stream pupils' requirement are 'to fail twice...' given that those who are eligible are those who have failed CPE after a 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt and thus are not eligible to admission in secondary schools (mainstream) after their CPE. (See figure 1 below). This is especially complicated in the PVE context where learners in the PVE sector can develop a negative self perception and identify themselves as non academic performers. This labeling and stigma is thus not only present in their daily life as they struggle to develop a positive self image, but they are also present in the perception that some stakeholders hold against them. Others act as a looking glass which enable learners to see themselves as 'achievers' or 'non-achievers'.

To face such challenges, the attention to be given to the PVE sector has to be more comprehensive and doubled. Instead of focusing on a content based approach, a project based approach as spelt out in the NCF, would do more good than expected if rightly led and if the school personnel walk the extra mile.

#### Pathway of the education training system in Mauritius – focus on the prevocational sector;

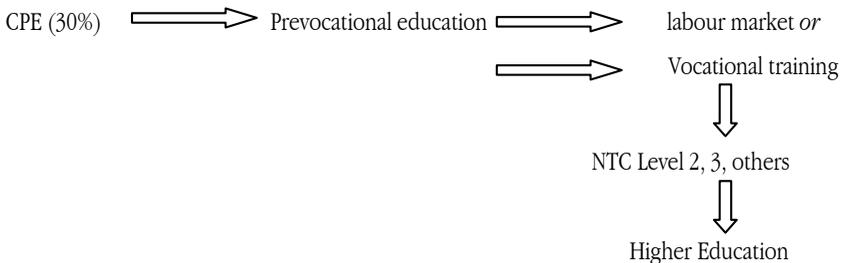


Figure 1: Pathway for double failures at CPE

Education being compulsory in Mauritius till the age of 16 has not only forced less dropouts from the system but has equally reinforced the efforts in the Prevocational sector in 2001, leading students to join the mainstream infra-structures. The question which therefore arises is what happens to these students during the years, are they literate and adequately prepared to move to the vocational training after their period of schooling in a pre-vocational stream? What dispositions do teachers put in place to enhance the literacy achievement of

learners since a number of teachers complain about the lack of literacy skills of their learners until the final year. Indeed, the challenges of the PVE sector are manifold in the Mauritian context. While more and more concerns among teachers in the PVE dread the home or the peer factor as immediate barriers to effective literacy learning, some stakeholders are also becoming more and more conscious of the assets rather than the liabilities of this sector. The present research focuses mainly on a training based initiative with the practicing teachers in the prevocational stream, during a taught module. It seeks to analyse some pertinent issues which can be addressed at school level and focuses on the relevance of a whole school approach as a sociological model, rather than adopting a psychological approach in addressing literacy in the prevocational sector. It sheds light on the merit of using a project based approach to implement a whole school project that engages learners, teachers as well as the community members, thus bringing them closer to praxis. Further it argues that literacy achievement is not only a 'class business' and literacy instruction cannot be dissociated from collective efforts and the school environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **THE LIFE WORLD AND THE SCHOOL BASED WORLD**

It is important to look at literacy from a global rather than a merely classroom based perspective. In the book entitled 'Building literacy practices in the social sciences' Ogle et al, (2007) strongly supports community engagement that links the lifeworld and the school based world. In this context, literacy practices are thus inextricably linked with social and cultural life and experiences as they reflect the socio-cultural processes and knowledge of the learner. Literacy practices are not static but dynamic and ever changing (Tusting 2000).

Linking literate practices to life experiences, Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000) state that life experiences provide everyone with a repertoire of resources about literacy and literate practices and that these contribute to each person's overall identity. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) identify these different domains or identities collectively as discourse worlds and suggest that students draw on two in particular to make meaning, the lifeworld (everything that exists outside school) and the school based world. Anstey and Bull (2004) supports that these domains or discourse worlds also help to form person's literacy identity.

Therefore there is a need to develop the learner's literate practices not only inside the classroom but by enabling the environment to contribute intensively to make meaning between the lifeworld and the school based world.

## THE CLASSROOM AS A SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The classroom is a distinct social context that has particular routines and ways of interacting. And if learners are to learn successfully it is essential for them to understand these routines especially since the teacher-students interaction has a significant effect on student learning. Research on literacy pedagogy since the 1990's (Baker, 1991, Baker & Freebody, 1989, Edwards-Groves, 1999, 2003; Freebody, Ludwig, & Gunn, 1995; Freiberg & Freebody, 2001) reports that the way talk, routines, and interactions around literacy learning occur sometimes prevents effective literacy learning from taking place. They suggest that literacy teaching is often too implicit and too random in focus.

Additionally the implicit and social nature of classroom talk and student-teacher interactions suggests that because of the diverse cultural social and learning backgrounds of students, teachers need to be more explicit in the ways in which they conduct their pedagogy and concentrate on explicit literacy (Bondy, 1984, Brown & Kane 1988). This implies conducting classroom talk and interaction that provides explicit information about literacy and literate practices.

Anstey and Bull (2006) therefore argue for a dynamic pedagogy that would therefore be functional and goal directed with the functions and the goals explicitly stated. It would be made relevant to students by explicitly showing and exploring links to their school-based world and life world. Additionally it would develop and enhance concepts about literacy and literate practices as well as skills, that is deep learning and understanding. This would contain explanations and demonstrations that provide students with a metalanguage for talking about literacy. The results would include encouragement to self-monitor their learning and apply it in different ways with other resources that they have at their disposal. More importantly it would acknowledge students' individual literacy identities, the social, cultural and technological characteristics of their community in the selection of content and teaching strategies and the conduct of classroom routines and interactions. It would enable learners to incorporate opportunities to consume, practice, apply, and transform learning, use materials that are best suited to the learning outcomes and that resemble or are a part of life outside the classroom. A dynamic multi-literacies pedagogy therefore is concerned with making decisions about learning that are based on the relationships between the desired learning outcomes, what teachers know about their students and what teachers know about the way in which successful pedagogy is conducted. This implies making use of all information around them including media, prints and literate practices that lead to an enrichment of their experiences.

## **THE ACCULTURING FACTOR IN THE CLASSROOM**

Baker and Heap (1985) suggest that the classroom discourse has an acculturating function for it transmits not only general knowledge but also knowledge about how the culture of the school and its community operates.

If some students come from minority social or cultural groups it is possible that they will be excluded and could give rise to problems of adaptation and acculturation. Students therefore need to be able to operate in a range of contexts and understand social and cultural influences on literate practices. Teachers should think about how to conduct interactions and whether the routines of their classrooms are excluding some students. This implies engaging in less formal and didactic interactions and efforts made to understand how teachers' own literacy identity can influence teaching and then engage students in exploring and discussing how their literacy identities were influencing their learning. In this way learners do not only develop learning in terms of the subject specific learning, such as a subject areas but also in terms of understanding more about how literate practices operate in different settings and are influenced by culture and fosters multi-literate citizens.

## **ON PARENTS AND COMMUNITY**

Foertsh, (1992) argues that students who reported home environments that fostered reading activity had higher reading achievement. Reading and sharing conversations both in school and at home improves reading performance. In addition, as Jim Trelease (1995) discovered, children who experienced reading alouds, whether at home or at school, had higher scores as well. Parent involvement in education also has the benefit of greater academic success for children and increased parent support for teachers and schools gains such benefits as higher grades, improved behaviour. Also enrolment in postsecondary education programs has been noted for students whose families are involved in their education, and that is true regardless of family background or income. (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Becher (1984); Kellaghan et al. (1993); Rutter (1990) additionally argue that when families talk about television programmes, newspapers, magazines and books, children's minds are treated to the delight of verbal inquiry. The drama of unfolding events and the clash of differing opinions open doors to intellectual pursuit for children. Curiosity is kept alive. Stimulating the child's desire to discover, to think through new situations and to vigorously exchange opinions, is fostered also by family visits to libraries, museums, historical sites and cultural

events. Therefore parental contribution cannot be under-stressed in favour of a home school community approach.

### **A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH THAT ENGAGES THE COMMUNITY**

In the light of the above contributing factors, then, we suggest a whole school approach that engages the community. This is because ongoing conversations in the schools that are ongoing have the potential to bring commonalities in beliefs about what school is doing and about literacy teaching and learning in particular. Joyce Epstein's (1995) framework, suggests that a whole school approach or a home/school community partnership should consider as much stakeholders as possible for effective instruction at classroom level and for a shared vision of the school. In this research we view the community as the immediate actors: teachers, parents, the community in the vicinity of the school and/or NGO. The figure below illustrates the key aspects of the whole school approach.

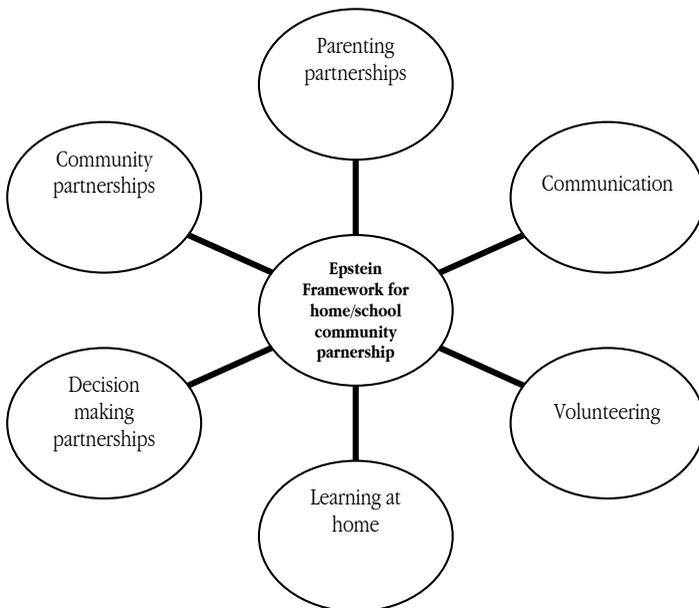


Figure 2: Epstein's Framework for community involvement

Parent partnerships is here viewed as the support between the home environment and the school and includes workshops on relevant issues and information sharing on issues ranging from classroom performance and support to

health and social services. Scott & Eber (2003) press for a collaborative rather than an expert stance, focusing on student success, the establishment of a truly respectful, trusting, caring, and reciprocal relationship in which teachers and family members believe in each other's ability to make important contributions to the process. The second type of home community partnership in Epstein's Framework is communication that should ascertain that the needs of families are met and includes visits to neighbourhood by educational stakeholders to establish trust in the community involved. A third type i.e. volunteering stresses on the ability to recruit and organize parent help and support. This involves meeting place, field trips, support with projects or making banners or murals for fairs as well as mentoring services that could be offered to the school community. Learning at home would enable parents to provide tips and advice on how to help with school work without doing the work themselves. This implies that families too have an input in the curriculum and their needs are thus communicated on individual or group basis.

Decision making partnerships would involve more than the parent and the teacher as in this case more stakeholders from the community could be needed. This can give rise to family advisory committees, networking between families and members of the community for collective decision making. The last one is a Community partnership that integrates resources and services from community to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning and development. This is especially effective as it offers possibility for exploring service learning and gives rise to stakeholders in general to engage in civic activities. (Ogle D, 2007).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The case study/research is based on a taught module with 42 practicing teachers from the Teachers' Diploma Prevocational Part-time course in 2010. The teachers were engaged in a taught module on Home/School/Community Partnership which spanned over 45 hours from August 2010 till November 2010. All the data obtained was analysed from a qualitative perspective.

## **MAIN SOURCE OF DATA**

The primary data was obtained from selected whole school projects which relate to literacy practices in either a direct or an indirect way. The whole school project formed part of their assignment question where they were requested to identify an authentic issue in their school to which they could propose a solution.

### Specific projects selected for the research

All the students submitted their projects and those which were selected for this research are listed in table 1 below. These were partly or fully implemented and are classified either in projects that focused directly or indirectly reach out to literacy practices.

Table 1: Selected whole school based projects

| <b>Projects that focus directly on literacy practices</b>  | <b>Projects that reach out to literacy practices</b>  |
|--|---|
| 1. An appropriate library for the prevocational stream     | a. Visiting a home for elderly people   |
| 2. Family and community partnerships for literacy programs | b. Improving adolescents eating habits through community based interventions<br><br>c. Posters in the context of Sex Education introduced to learners in the Prevocational sector |

### Additional sources of data

The research was supported by the focus group discussions during the tutorial weeks. To facilitate the flow of information Email communications became very regular and were facilitated by the Class captain. Students always wanted the tutor to give feedback or encourage them during the class, when we next met.

Data was also obtained from at least 5 socratic discussions which were organized in the class. These were mainly led by teachers themselves and pertinent issues were addressed. Teachers were encouraged to be optimistic about their ability to lead the project and find collective and reliable solutions to problems that were identified.

Additionally individual and group interviews with teachers were also conducted to get more information about their dedication to the project and their level of engagement. Interviews also allowed one to one discussion where teachers expressed their feelings and clarified doubts about the challenges. It also enabled us to get critical information from the prevocational sector and the common challenges.

The conversations with inspectors and stakeholders in the prevocational sector were also obtained to generate a better understanding of the context. Additionally teachers' weekly comments and reflections in their coursework were rich sources of data which enabled the whole class to learn continuously and revisit their perceptions about their intended projects.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The data were analyzed from a qualitative perspective. One of the main findings is that there are clear benefits for teachers undertaking whole school approach to engage literacy activities in the school activities. Projects undertaken show that teachers were successful in using a whole school approach to address existing issues in their school environment. The whole school approach impacts not only on the community and stakeholders but also on learners and their involvement in literacy activities, although these projects were not initially intended to do so. This is strongly in favour of the argument that literacy activities cannot be addressed only from a purely implicit or class based perspective. A whole school approach that favours a multiliteracy approach, and concentrates on linking the lifeworld and the school based world is essential.

The findings also show that a project based approach is an effective way to bring out the best of teachers collectively. They felt more comfortable to share and address authentic issues, during the class discussions and were able to engage the community stakeholders, which would not have been the case with a traditional assignment. The projects clearly illustrate that they were able to identify a topic of relevance to their schools and were able to propose solutions to it.

Some of them preferred to take individual projects and most of the teachers opting for literacy projects preferred group approach. This helped them to motivate each other when they were at different pace of implementation and supported others to do the project. Two groups had already fully implemented their projects while others looked forward to repeat the project for next year in the prevocational schools. One group had obtained the permission for photographs and one group had even shot video clips on ways in which literacy related activities could be explored, although this was not the primary aim of the project. Few ventured in areas which are uncommon to them in the prevocational area for instance two projects were submitted on sex education and teenage pregnancy. Teachers reflected that they could not try out the project in another context and that this initiative gave them the opportunity to address an issue which was meaningful to them. These topics were considered as an important hindrance to engagement and commitment of learners in the prevocational sector.

Most groups had used their preferred template for the presentation of the written assignment instead of the suggested one. This clearly suggests that the whole school project enabled teachers to challenge their isolation and existing barriers to collaborate with teachers across classroom and school borders. It is definitely a potential that boosts up their professional development and pulls in their sense of belongingness, their practical and reflective engagement in schools activities.

Feedback from teachers shows that the weekly discussions and final presentations encouraged their efforts to improve their projects. The tables 2a, 2b, 2c detail the way in which the project impacted on the literacy practices from the following perspectives; firstly how the whole school project involves the community and, secondly how the whole school project details literacy practices, and thirdly how the literacy activities influence learners engagement at school. This is further sustained by figure 3. Below:



Figure 3: Project works that impact on literacy activities in schools

Table 2 a. Whole school based project's influence on the community

| <b>Projects initially thought to be directly related to literacy</b>   | <b>Projects which were not initially thought to be related to literacy</b>  |
|--|---|
| <p>Teachers, students and PTA agree on project to buy books</p> <p>Teachers and parents donate funds / volunteering</p> <p>Letters sent to sponsors and response</p> <p>Manager of school supports projects and take calculated risks</p> <p>Group of Teachers shop around for bookshelf</p> <p>Colleagues in library asked to observe reaction of pupils prior to new books and after new books</p> <p>Creating a model unit that illustrates how home school partnership can encourage literacy achievement</p> <p>Church to volunteer in programme by providing books and help identify sources</p> | <p>Involve school staff</p> <p>Involvement of head of institution and PTA</p> <p>Letters sent to parents</p> <p>Parents donate some ingredients or contribute financially</p> <p>Parents contribute to obtain the ingredients required</p> <p>Complete involvement of the home for elderly that the learners visited</p> <p>Care person at the home brainstorms with students</p> <p>Back to school with an altered mindset</p> <p>NCD Nurse to school to brainstorm on topic – parents present at school</p> |

Table 2b: Community involvement reaches out to literacy practices

| <b>Projects initially thought to be directly related to literacy</b>   | <b>Projects which were not initially thought to be related to literacy</b>  |
|--|---|
| <p>Availability of books which are more appealing to learners in the pre-vocational stream<br/> learners select books to be bought<br/> List them and agree on list<br/> Voting for budget<br/> Books are used and read in the library<br/> Enthusiasm for reading is present,<br/> Students look up to next library sessions – 90%<br/> Develop interest in reading,<br/> Slow but gradual commitment in completing syllables and write appropriately<br/> More conscious efforts from learners,<br/> Interaction and questions asked more frequently to teachers<br/> Communicating about books read and generating peer conversations<br/> Initiate school based reading programme that is followed up at home<br/> List children’s literature book series,<br/> Collaborate with local book clubs,<br/> Reading out recipes, diary keeping,<br/> Writing invitations and thank you notes to parents stakeholders<br/> Communication and interpersonal skills are developed<br/> Appropriate books according to level of competency, interest and ease of reading are provided<br/> Teachers and learners select books to be bought</p> | <p>Making shopping list<br/> Shopping and finalizing ingredients using literacy and numeracy skills<br/> Identification of tools and procedures in the kitchen (English language encouraged)<br/> Writing and reading out recipes to prepare food items<br/> Communicate to peers and teachers on specific topics<br/> Communicating to elders in the home<br/> Integration of subject areas – home economics, language skills, values and citizenship<br/> Making of posters on specific topics (sex education)<br/> Engaging in Multiliteracies – mind mapping and creating meaning after having watched audio visuals<br/> Posters and media on the topic of sex education<br/> Mind mapping and identification of dangers, implications<br/> Contribution of multiliteracies, use of media and prints<br/> Learners dare to communicate on sensitive issues which are more meaningful to them</p> |

Table 2 c: ways in which literacy involvement influences learner engagement and commitment in PVE

| <b>Projects initially thought to be directly related to literacy</b>  | <b>Projects which were not initially thought to be related to literacy</b>   |
|---|--|
| <p>Learners select books<br/> Learners select books to read<br/> Look up to library periods to read fascinating books<br/> Learners participate in food day for fund raising<br/> Develop self esteem, build confidence and show better disposition to learning<br/> Respond more favourably to multiple tutors<br/> learners learn to have multiple tutoring<br/> learners become regular readers<br/> develop engagement and commitment</p> | <p>Absenteeism decrease<br/> Previously violent and hyperactive learners find meaningful tasks<br/> overcome personal differences<br/> More interest is generated to discover new worlds and news ways of learning outside traditional setting<br/> Frequent communication held more often between stakeholders<br/> learners involve in the development of multiliteracies, as sketch use of media etc.<br/> learners involve in the development of multiliteracies</p> |

The findings in table 2 a, b, c clearly illustrate that the whole school project enhances learner participation and offers them the possibility to develop their own understanding about the way language and literacy can be active and about the way literacy practices could function in the school by linking the real life to their school life. This involves action and reflection which supports a sociological approach to literacy practices. This is also supported by Comber (2001) who supports that critical literacies involve “people using language to exercise power, to enhance everyday life in schools and communities, and to question practices of privilege and injustice” (p. 1).

### **BENEFITS OF A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH FOR LITERATE PRACTICES**

Literacy in the prevocational stream or the fight against illiteracy cannot be dissociated from a whole school approach being given the specificity of its curriculum. In other words it is essential to adopt an integrated whole school approach that is premised on parental contribution or community engagement for enhanced learner participation. Secondly on intrinsic or internal school pupil

engagement that values the quality of pupil interaction and thirdly on teacher voluntarism or dedication that truly needs to be valued and channeled to motivate stakeholders.

Further analysis on teachers feedback is equally insightful. Traditionally these teachers usually stick to their class business and this research which includes teachers who have been teaching for up to 30 years in the sector gives us an interesting insight about the perception of stakeholders while they were trying to implement the projects. Teachers were doubly concerned with the prevalent 'feeling of marginality at school', rather than the lack of infrastructure at school. A feeling of awkwardness was experienced by many as they set out to making meaningful and relevant improvements for the learners. This can be attributed to the fact teachers are usually regarded as implementors rather than initiators of change or enablers from a school wide perspective. In some schools, a proposition, a change was therefore more often doubted than welcomed for consideration.

Additionally teachers complained and felt discouraged that overall their needs and demands were considered at a second level for priority was mostly given to the main stream. It therefore leads to an important consideration in the fight against illiteracy. For it is clear that if students in the prevocational sector need to succeed, accessibility to resources, the environmental set up as well as the relevance of resources provided should be constantly sustained. In this research it was obvious that most schools were ill-equipped to maintain a literacy culture that would englobe a whole school approach to education and literacy. Teachers themselves had to walk the extra mile and volunteer to look for additional books or find appropriate methods to encourage literacy.

### **READING AND LIBRARIES IN THE PREVOCATIONAL STREAMS**

One of the reflections during the implementation of the project by one of the teachers read :

"Children lag behind because of lack of reading skills whenever their class mates read they just listen to them without being able to follow in their text books as they get difficulty in identifying the words...teachers are in a hurry to complete their syllabus or books...so pupils are often ignored and teachers allow only those students to read who are fluent enough in reading..."

Language deficiency and lack of library resources can be regarded as a serious impediment to language proficiency and communication skills in the prevocational sector. This is directly in disfavour of the aims of the NCF (2009), where general communication skills are given much importance. While all teachers admit using the 'creole language' in the daily instruction, teachers admit that they

refrained from the use of English or French to make sure students understand. Teachers say that these language deficiency skills impact negatively during learning process and also during end of term exams. The projects implemented clearly shows that students were not usually engaged in meaningful literacy activities and that library period were not used in meaningful ways either. However if efforts are undertaken to initiate meaningful actions, stakeholders can obtain interesting results as illustrated in the table below:

**Table 3: Library and books for enhanced literacy practices**

| <b>Before the project starts</b>  | <b>After the project</b>  |
|---|---|
| <p>Appropriate and adequate books not available for prevocational sector<br/>           Twice per week students – look at books, keep them in front of them and day dream (6 periods wasted for 3 classes)<br/>           No development in reading skill<br/>           Books reported to have difficult words<br/>           Lengthy sentences, Letters too small and uninviting to read<br/>           No additional bookshelf for new books<br/>           Do not read on their own<br/>           Parents misunderstand letters asking for financial help<br/>           Observation and survey of students show that learners were very passive and not responding to reading</p> | <p>Funds made available for 50 books are selected in English and French<br/>           50 books bought<br/>           readiness<br/>           Build self confidence in reading<br/>           Use reading materials to develop oral skills in second language<br/>           Make students discover the pleasure of reading</p> <p>Develop autonomous reading<br/>           More scaffolding was present to help peers to read in classes</p> |

Creating a reading culture and linking it to real life situations can therefore be boosted by a whole school approach in a prevocational institution. It is a must to interpret investment in schools not only in terms of teacher training and strategies, that invest in learner related infrastructure, but it is more important to sustain services offered.

As illustrated in tables 2 and 3, the creation of learning opportunities which combine class and out of class activities have important influences on learner participation. Not only it engages learners, have the potential of reducing absenteeism, but they also provide learners with innovative and meaningful learning oppor-

tunities (see annex 1). Bonds are strengthened and influences on behavior of learners are even positive and become the basis for greater positive changes to occur again. If such activities are repeated and learners in PVE are made to feel equally important as other learners in secondary stream, it would already be an important leeway to improve schooling and get more positive results.

### LIMITATIONS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS

While the teachers were engaged in their projects, we were also able to track the limitations and the barriers encountered by teachers, who mainly interpret perceptions held by other teachers as stumbling blocks. Some of them are illustrated in table 4:

Table 4: Barriers encountered by teachers

| Some common beliefs held by other teachers where projects were implemented  |
|---|
| <p>'whatever type of books will be given to the prevoc students, they will not show interest in reading... a waste of time and money to make provision for books for them..'</p> <p>One teacher who recorded the sentence from her student: " I am thirteen years old and have never read a book"</p> <p>teachers expect learners to develop their reading skill during library class, which they have twice per week"</p> <p>"Children lag behind because of lack of reading skills whenever their class mates read they just listen to them without being able to follow in their text books as they get difficulty in identifying the words... teacher are in a hurry to complete their syllabus or books..."</p> <p>'young teachers' viewed as threats in some schools and are discouraged</p> <p>Some parents desist from participation - some acknowledge having had no education and therefore the school 'is not the right place' to be... considered as 'school business'</p> <p>Some students are prevented to participation in events as they will 'cause disturbance' are 'hyperactive' and 'will definitely misbehave' and bring 'shame' to school's reputation</p> <p>Difficulty in finding appropriate books since teacher had themselves not inquired into the type books that learners read... no initial contribution for library</p> <p>Parents misunderstand why school asking for financial help to buy books</p> <p>More time taken for setting up of library</p> |

Further limitations also lies in the fact that we could not contact the parents directly for additional information. It would be interesting to follow up the present research and concentrate on feedback from other community stakeholders as well.

Further research could establish long term impact of whole school approach on learner in prevocational stream and implications for prevocational and mainstream relationship. Simultaneously sustainability issues would also have to be engaged in the projects if they are to make longer term impacts.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research confirms that a Whole school projects positively influences the literacy practices of learners in the prevocational schools where they have been implemented. Projects that are intended to impact directly on literacy practices are more effective and all the proposed projects have inherent value in promoting interdisciplinary literacy practices and exposure to rich experiences. This could be an essential consideration for stakeholders in addressing community based initiatives in the prevocational sector. As Allen (2007) puts it, creating welcoming schools implies that all stakeholders become fully aware of their common goals in making the institution become an inviting place. This research is an equally essential source of information for teachers and stakeholders seeking to address authentic issues in their schools.

Additionally learners' encouraging response to informal learning approaches that occur outside classroom situations are to be viewed as opportunities rather than threats to achievement in the prevocational stream. Learners who learn in informal settings are as well very prone to civic actions and service learning. This strengthens the need to view the classroom as a vibrant social and acculturating context. It creates room for explicit dimensions of literacy practices that caters for a myriad of community stakeholders.

Further, well equipped libraries, which match students needs and potentials are a must for learners. Also, the collective efforts create more synergy and strengthen bonds among staff members and learners. Efforts to fight against illiteracy should equally consider home school partnership and areas of adult literacy are equal areas of research to be explored. Schools must thus strive to sustain their contact with parents for sustainable and continuous development.

Another essential consideration lies in the fact that literacy achievements should not be the toil of the classroom teachers only. A sociological approach that reaches out to motivate classroom pedagogies or community engagement is a binding drive to reach out to all stakeholders in a school. This is a definite asset if we are to bring multiliteracies, explore critical literacies that bring out the freedom to explore an act on our past, present and future (Shannon 1995).

In their efforts to generate achievement and participation, prevocational schools need to engage parents on other days than PTA meetings mainly, for a number of parents do not attend meetings because of their own negative self

perception rather than a lack of concern for their kids. Schools should equally reach out more to communities for bonding and teacher led contact with parents are promising avenues which need to be supported.

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## ANNEX 1

| Discussion and arguments based on findings   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Libraries at school could be the source for advance marginalization of the prevocational sector</p> <p>Reduces gap and creates opportunity and access</p> <p>Role and purpose of school library defeated for the prevocational sector in specific schools</p> | <p>How the projects influences learner behaviour at schools</p>   | <p>Inherent value of bring school community project accessible to stakeholders- parents</p>   |
|  | <p>Learner behaviour can be improved through community based and school based projects</p> <p>Learner engagement in school based projects increase active participation and encourages literacy activities for learners</p> <p>Learner engagement in school based projects encourage exposure to meaningful activities which include literacy experiences</p> <p>Learner engagement create real life exposure and encourage experiences of learners</p> | <p>Parents and community</p> <p>Parents are given the opportunity to interact in the learners' world and support them</p> <p>Builds trust in the school system and enlarges scope of influence for learners</p> |