

4. THE KENYA HEADMASTERS' IN-SERVICE PROGRAMME 1968-1972

Background

In the early 1960s Kenya initiated a major effort to modernize its primary education - the so-called "New Primary Approach" (NPA). As this movement became more widespread, with large numbers of schools involved, the need for an in-service teacher training programme became a matter of urgency. In 1966, therefore, two major in-service courses were launched, one for primary headmasters, of whom there were about 5,000 in Kenya, and the other for unqualified teachers - about 8,000 in all. A new, comprehensive primary school syllabus was introduced in 1967.

Aims

As the Tutors' Handbook for the course puts it: "Too often the Headmaster of a Primary School considers that his responsibilities do not go beyond teaching a senior class, collecting school fees and distributing supplies. This In-Service Course is designed to challenge him to accept responsibility for the total programme in his school, and to provide the leadership required to make that programme an effective one ... and to work with determination towards becoming an enlightened leader in the educational affairs of his school and his community."

Needs and priorities

As plans were developed to improve the quality of primary education, the key role of the headmaster as a professional leader, especially in a period of curriculum change, was increasingly recognized. Thus the need was clear to upgrade his professional expertise to meet the challenge of a modernized educational system.

An in-service training programme for headmasters thus became a matter of high priority. The need, however, was on such a scale that a long-term plan with external assistance was essential. Further it had to be such that there was a minimum of disruption of normal school activities.

Resources

The agencies involved included the Ministry of Education and the Canadian Government through the provision and funding of an in-service training "team", 1966-1972.

The staff involved formed two main groups:

(a) a Canadian team of five who organized and designed the course including the preparation of course syllabuses and radio broadcasts in consultation with the Ministry of Education and tutors at Teachers' Colleges.

(b) a selected group of college tutors (local and expatriate) who were responsible for conducting the course, with one of their number at each of the eight colleges used, acting as Course Director.

In addition, contributions to the course teaching were made by Education Officers and Inspectors, whilst the Canadian team acted in a general advisory and consultative role.

The costs were shared by the Kenya Government (all local costs) and the Canadian Government.

Participants

The two courses were designed for primary school headmasters and unqualified teachers.

Content of the course

This comprised work in supervision, administration, and school management; also child study, and methods of teaching English, mathematics, science, history and geography. A daily

20 minutes radio broadcast supported the programme.

Modes and
methods of
training

Each tutor was provided with a detailed Handbook with timetable, course outlines, suggestions for methods of work in each subject, lists of useful reference books, audio-visual aids, etc. The course, as conducted in each of the 8 colleges, was thus fairly closely structured, although clearly in practice much depended on the competence and experience of the tutors involved.

Detailed suggestions were made in the Handbook for the tutor's guidance, both in general terms and also specifically in each subject area.

Tutors were advised to interpret their "lecture" periods as situations in which they demonstrated methods, and provided opportunities for the teachers attending the course to carry out practical exercises, to engage in discussion, make things and learn through experience. The principles explicitly emphasized were:

(a) for tutors

- having a clear purpose
- organizing carefully
- demonstrating practical processes

(b) for teachers

- learning by discovery
- participating actively in discussion and in other ways

The Headmasters' course was one of professional training spread over one year and comprising two residential periods at the selected Teachers' Colleges: one week during the April school holiday and two weeks during the August holiday. Additionally, each headmaster was required to complete a written assignment between the two residential periods and in this he was assisted by a series of sixteen radio broadcasts of 15 minutes duration each geared to the course. At the end of the August session each participant wrote a

"culminating exercise", which was graded. If successful, he was awarded a "Certificate of Attendance". By the end of 1971 over 4,400 headmasters had successfully completed the course.

There was emphasis, too, on the production of teaching aids and the fullest possible use of such college facilities as the Library and the Art and Craft rooms. The teachers were encouraged to make use of their extra-curricular time by organizing debates and discussion groups and inviting local government and community leaders to the college.

Follow-up and
evaluation

There has been no formal follow-up as such to these courses. However, Education Officers and Inspectors regularly visit schools in their areas and there appears to be general agreement that the programme has been valuable in raising the professional competence of the headmasters and giving them a heightened sense of vocation. Meetings of headteachers with supervisory staff have also been held at local, district and divisional level.

Special
features

By the end of 1972 very nearly all Kenya's primary school heads had completed the in-service courses and during this period some 8,000 unqualified teachers had also followed a somewhat similar programme, but extending over 2 years in all and including both professional and academic work, leading to the award of a teacher's certificate.

From 1973 the course was offered to deputy headteachers as well as to newly appointed heads, but continued in much the same form.

The courses for heads and unqualified teachers, held during two of the three annual school holidays, placed a considerable burden on the staffs of the teacher's colleges. On the other hand the involvement of college tutors in the courses brought them into closer contact with school staffs than would otherwise have been the case.

They were also considerably helped by the provision of the detailed Tutors' Handbooks and the availability of members of the Canadian in-service team in an advisory capacity.

The large-scale nature of the programme (without any disruption of school staffing) and thus the necessarily fairly brief residential training periods, argue for a continuing follow-up effort, especially as the numbers of field supervisory staff increase. Individual advisory school visits and locally-based short courses/conferences would seem to be a necessary extension of the 1966-1972 programme.

References

1. RITTER, A.C.E. - Kenya's Teacher Training Programme. Commonwealth Education Newsletter Vol. 2 No. 11 November 1970.
2. Kenya Institute of Education - Tutors' Handbook for Headmasters' In-service Course. Revised edition 1972.