

5. THE UGANDA/UNICEF TEACHER UP-GRADING PROGRAMME 1967-1970

Background

There was a considerable development of in-service teacher training work in Uganda following independence in 1962, notably in relation to a new primary school English curriculum. Such work was boosted by the setting up in 1964 of the first full-time In-service College and in 1965 by the advent of the National Institute of Education.

However, most of the courses planned were of short duration and some, perhaps, of rather doubtful value. In 1967, however, with the offer of external financial aid, a much larger, longer-term programme was planned, of which the Grade I up-grading scheme was the biggest single element.

Aims

The main aim was to up-grade to Grade II status as many as possible of the 4,000 Grade I ("Vernacular Grade") teachers in the primary schools in a phased (9 year) plan, the first 3-year period of which would provide for about 1,000 teachers.

Needs and priorities

A new, modernized, primary school syllabus was introduced, on a phased basis, beginning in 1967. The new syllabus placed great emphasis on the teaching of English (the national language) from the first year of school and this put the Grade I ("Vernacular Grade") teachers at a disadvantage. However, many of these teachers were very experienced and competent within their limits and could, it was felt, benefit from further professional and academic education, and so play an essential part in a developing, changing, educational system.

Resources	The two agencies involved in the programme were the Ministry of Education and UNICEF; the latter providing printing machines and paper, teachers' textbooks and reference books, costs of the residential courses and payments to course tutors. The personnel involved included the staff of the correspondence unit which consisted of a full-time head of unit, and part-time writers and markers. They also included teacher training tutors who were engaged for teaching on residential courses during holiday periods and members of the Ministry Inspectorate who visited teachers in their schools during the programme.
Participants	As the programme was specifically designed for Grade I ("Vernacular Grade") teachers, the only participants were from that group.
Content of the course	Both the need to improve the Grade I teachers' own English and the priority being given to the teaching of English in the schools meant that priority had to be given to this on the course. In fact, the first year was devoted almost entirely to intensive English study with emphasis on teaching method during the residential periods and on subject content in the correspondence sets. During the second and third years the other subjects of the Grade II pre-service teacher training syllabus were studied, the intention being to ensure as far as possible that the up-graded teachers would be recognized as in all respects equivalent to those who had followed the normal pre-service training course.
Modes and methods of training	The 1,000 teachers in the first group selected by written examination, followed a 3-year programme during which, in eight Teachers' Colleges, they spent 2 to 3 weeks in each vacation period on residential courses. Each selected College thus provided places for about 120 teachers from its region, usually working

in 4 groups.

Each teacher was also required during term time - while doing his normal teaching job - to study by correspondence, sending in written work for marking each month and receiving in return printed answer guides. Regular weekly radio broadcasts supported the correspondence lessons.

The residential courses were conducted along fairly traditional lines, with the lecture/discussion approach generally used, but with opportunity also for some group and individual work.

In order to provide individual assessment, cumulative records were kept for each teacher, showing results achieved in correspondence work and also in the tests given at the end of each residential course. A final examination was set and marked by the National Institute of Education, the body which administers all teachers' examinations in Uganda.

Of the 1,000 teachers who began the courses in August 1967, 876 finally completed the course and passed the final examination in December 1970.

Follow-up and evaluation

This was informal, with members of the Ministry's Central and Regional Inspectorate seeing in the time available what they could of the teachers in their schools during the 3 years of the course.

The weekly radio broadcasts helped to keep teachers in touch, and it was sometimes possible for visiting inspectors to arrange short local group meetings with the teachers involved in the programme.

A major evaluation exercise was undertaken with UNICEF assistance. The plan was for small teams of evaluators, after a period of training, and of working to a carefully prepared observation schedule, to visit the teachers in

their schools at different stages of the programme observing their teaching performance.

The programme called for very considerable sustained effort on the part of the teachers, giving up the greater part of their holidays for 3 years and continuing correspondence studies whilst doing their normal teaching duties. Nevertheless morale was high and the fall-out very low for a course of this kind. Clearly the incentive of being up-graded to a higher status and so better pay was effective.

Work in the teachers' schools was not disrupted in any way as all the residential courses took place in school holidays.

Very few full-time staff were needed specifically for the project or for the correspondence unit. All the teaching on the vacation courses was done by existing training college tutors who, for the first time on in-service work, received payment for their extra duties.

This economical staffing arrangement meant, however, that those directly responsible for the course teaching were unable, because of their normal term-time duties, to follow up the teachers in their schools. This responsibility had to be undertaken by the Ministry of Education's inspectors as part of their normal field supervisory work.

The major evaluation project undertaken with UNICEF assistance ran into a number of serious difficulties and the report was delayed.