

EvSum511

BASELINE STUDY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING, GUINEA

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The Project

The shift in 1984 from a socialist to a liberal government in Guinea-Conakry led to changes in education policy, and the re-introduction of English into the secondary school curriculum. This project aimed to help satisfy the resultant demand for trained teachers of English. It supported secondary, tertiary and adult English Language education, including teacher training. During 1989/90 to 1991/92, project expenditure was £1,058,000.

The Evaluation

The evaluation is based on a baseline study of the project, undertaken by a Language consultant from the University of Reading. An Evaluation Department economist assisted in the drafting of the report. The study evaluated the effectiveness of a pre-service English as a Foreign Language teacher-training course.

The Main Findings

- Baseline study tests were undertaken by students of trained and untrained teachers. There was no significant difference between the performance of the students of the trained, but new and inexperienced, teachers, and that of the students of the untrained, but experienced, teachers.
- Teachers were observed to provide evidence on whether, after training, the trained teachers implemented their training. Significant differences were found between the teaching practice of trained and untrained teachers.
- A tracer study of former trainees was undertaken. Despite their general satisfaction with the training, it was found that the methodological training provided had been inadequate.

Lessons

- An educational baseline study can determine the effect of different training inputs, in terms of performance gains.
- The baseline study has shown that it is feasible to mount an evaluation of this type even in a country with very limited communications networks.
- Where difficulties arise in forming a suitable control group, or attrition rates from the control group are high, alternative baseline designs might be considered.

- Such studies should be initiated as close to the start date of a project as is feasible.
- The involvement of counterparts in such studies provides them with a valuable learning experience in research methodology. It is also cheaper to use local project staff to conduct baseline studies. If, however, local institutions are involved, it may be necessary to supervise their involvement with external consultants.
- Baseline studies are more likely to be acceptable to the recipient country if benefits for them, as well as for the donors, can be identified. The use of language test data to monitor gain in student language achievement provides training benefits for the teachers concerned.
- A baseline study may be most useful where a project is ongoing; it can then inform subsequent project phases and the costs of baseline studies relative to the project cost would then be lower.
- The results of a baseline design are most meaningful if the measured gains made can be assessed against a benchmark set by local needs.
- An analysis of the role of English in the local economy should precede any substantial ELT project and baseline study.
- Given the likelihood of attrition of staff from study samples, sample sizes should be large enough at the outset to sustain the study through its length.
- The design process underlying the construction of a range of valid, reliable and practical tests requires very clear project objectives.
- It is necessary to obtain, through observation, data upon teacher practices. Teacher training projects should specify the measurable changes in teacher classroom performance that the training is intended to achieve. The observation checklist, the observer training manual and the use of self-report data, offer a tried methodology for monitoring teacher-training projects.