



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Family Literacy Programme in Namibia

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Namibia

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Sanet Steenkamp

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Family Literacy Programme, learning gaps Literacy promoters, community advocacy, strengthen school-community relationships

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The programme offers a platform for consolidating and reinforcing classroom lessons with lessons at home. Given the current dynamics of changes associated with the disruptions caused by outbreaks of pandemics and other natural disasters, the FLP concept becomes necessary tool to mitigate learning and provide the necessary support to learners at home.

Description of the best practice

7.

Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues :

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved?*

i)

With the realization that there are learning gaps at foundational grade levels at post-independence, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in Namibia set out to provide "Education for all" under the guiding principles of improving access, quality and equity. One of the initiatives to achieve this was the family literacy programme. The Family Literacy Programme under the Directorate of Adult Education in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture targets parents and guardians for Grade 1 learners based on the understanding that a parent is the child's first teacher. It is rooted in the thinking that education is a shared responsibility among various stakeholders (government, public and private sectors and parents).

Before launching the family literacy programme, a study was conducted in a school in each of the thirteen regions. The aim of this study was to establish what school principals, teachers, children and their parents (caregivers) believed to be the ways in which parents support their children in the first year of primary school. A total of 229 children, 48 teachers, 13 principals and 89 parents were involved in the study. The main findings were: that principals and teachers experience a lack of confidence/shyness/fear, lack of parental support, lack of kindergarten/pre-school experience when children start school. The study also showed that principals and teachers expected children to read and write their names, speak in their mother tongue, hold a pencil, draw pictures or sing or tell stories when starting school. The study also revealed that parents do not help children to read or do homework, or ask them about schoolwork once they start school. Finally, the study indicated that children liked reading, writing, counting, singing and playing with friends at school (Kasokonya & Scheffers, 2008, p. 9). It was on the recommendation of such study that the FLP was developed to address the aforesaid learning gaps.

Following the pilot of FLP in 2004, the full implementation started in 2006 in five centres per region. In ensuring uniformity in the FLP implementation, the training of family literacy promoters was based on the "The First Teacher" Training Manual; and it covered the skills and competencies that are expected from learners in the first year of school. The main purpose of the training was to equip the promoters with an understanding of the importance of the role of the parents and caregivers in the development of early literacy skills in their children. (Kasokonya & Scheffers, 2008, p. 9).

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?*

The main activities carried out in the FLP implementation are:

- A three-week training of FLP promoters carried out by the DAE Regional Staff Members
- A Community Advocacy for the FLP in the immediate communities in all districts of every region. This is done under the auspices of District Education Officers (DEOs).
- An actual enrollment of the FLP participants (parents and guardian) is carried out by FLP promoters, enrollment statistics are collated and tallied at regional offices; and then forwarded to DAE head Office for compilation.

To ensure a wider and easier access to the programme, the FLP implementation takes a decentralized approach where the DAE regional staff members are fully involved in the above – mentioned ongoing activities. The program is an ongoing that runs for four months (January-April) every year.

The FLP implementation is solely the mandate of DAE of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture which that makes all the necessary budgetary provisions for the resources pertaining to the training, teaching and learning. Furthermore, the delivery of FLP is in line with the Universal Primary Education that enable the provision of free teaching and learning materials to the participants (parents and guardians). This is done to enhance and strengthen parental participation in the programme. The FLP lessons are conducted at primary schools with takes Grade 1.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

At present, FLP was developed to promote interactions within families and communities and to enhance literacy and life skills development. Whilst they may be not recorded tangible impact on policies and impact management processes; FLP has over the years shown notable impact on delivery arrangements and education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities. To date, FLP has shown to be an excellent way to promote literacy and encourage adults and children to learn for a lifetime because it connects academic and informal learning. It was evidently shown that FLP was instrumental in providing parents and guardians with skills to adequately partake in the learning process of their children during Covid-19 lockdowns. In order to enhance cohesion in the FLP implementation, monitoring and evaluation is conducted at the regionals level through regular family literacy classes visitation to provide the necessary support to the facilitators.

A study conducted by Kasokonya and Scheffers (2008) there are significant achievements that speak to the impact on teachers, learners, and the communities at large particularly in strengthening the relationship between the schools and families.

- The relationship between parents and teacher has been strengthened, with Grade 1 teachers reporting that participating parents are more interested in what is happening in the classroom. They communicate by letter if there are issues they are not sure of.
- The relationship between parents and the school has been strengthened and, following the course, the parents show more interest in the activities of the school.
- Grade 1 teachers report an improved confidence in learners in topics like storytelling, which is an important activity at this level. Parents tell children stories that the children then share in the classroom.
- Many of the activities done in the class are done at home again, because the Family Literacy Programme curriculum included activities from the Grade 1 syllabus. Grade 1 learners engage in many of the same activities both at home and at school, thus reinforcing learning.
- There has been an appeal from communities for the programme to be extended to more schools, especially areas where there are no pre-schools. These appeals could be the result of the perceived benefits of the programme.
- Certificates are awarded at the end of each course. For many of the parents participating in the course, this is encouraging and recognizes their achievements, which is all the more important as many of them are illiterate.
- Parents discovered dance and drama as a tool for communication of important issues. They found this both entertaining and valuable, and see it as a skill they can also use in other areas of their life, for example in church activities.
- Parents appreciated the knowledge and skills acquired in specialized topics -i.e. HIV/AIDS, nutrition, child protection - that they received during the family literacy programme (Kasokonya & Scheffers, 2008).

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

Naturally, children first learn from their parents, as such there was a need to expose parents and guardians to the Grade 1 curriculum and this is where the analogue of a parent being the first teacher stems from. It was deemed necessary to boost the confidence of parents and guardians in supporting their children in Grade 1 with school work. FLP also played a pivotal role in narrowing the gap in between the content learnt at school and the children abilities. The other trigger for transformation in FLP implementation DAE mandatory commitment to promote functional literacy to adult learners and as such for acquired literacy skills to be meaningful and relevant at home level. When a parent has undergone FLP they are better equipped skills irrespective their level their educational background or socio-economic status.

Emvula (2020, p. 82) underscores that through their participation in FLP parents and caregivers have a responsibility to be respectful to school personnel and to make efforts to engage in activities that will improve their parenting skills and ability to support their child's healthy development. Parents' role also includes providing their children with a home environment conducive to learning and personal development. Parents are expected to promote healthy behaviour in the home and to adhere to the principle of positive discipline.

In the Namibian context of FLP implementation, what worked well was the significance number of parents and guardians have enrolled and are exposed to the Grade 1 curriculum, therefore they are able to assist their children at home. During Covid-19 lockdowns, children heavily relied on their parents' guidance in completing homework activities received from schools. There is a good relationship between political, religious and general communities during advocacy for FLP because many parents and guardians understand the importance of education in the early childhood developmental stage of a child's (physically, socially, emotional and cognitively). Since FLP is decentralized, there is a greater degree of responsibilities in terms of the programme ownership; participants in the programme has shown contentment with the value-added benefits accosted to the programme deliverables. Partially, the honorary incentives given to FLP promoters has served as a factor in encouraging these young professionals to take up the task and deliver as per FLP course expectations.

The retention of FLP promoters remains an inevitable challenge because promoters keep leaving for better paying jobs with longer duration of employment period. There has been calls for extending the FLP duration, however, due to budgetary constraints this call could not be successful. The other notable impediment to the FLP participation, is the issue of skewed representation, as most participates are mainly women. This is despite the fact that the programme was meant for every parent irrespective of their gender.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

The notion of a parent being the first teacher of a child during critical developmental stages requires greater understanding of parental involvement so that they can willingly participate in their children’s education-related matters. FLP has strengthened relationships between schools and communities. There is an improved collaborative synergy among parents and guardians of Grade 1. FLP an opportune for learning various learning styles that are suitable for learners at that age group. The programme offers a platform for consolidating and reinforcing classroom lessons with lessons at home. Given the current dynamics of changes associated with the disruptions caused by outbreaks of pandemics and other natural disasters, the FLP concept becomes necessary toll to mitigate learning and provide the necessary support.

- Furthermore, it can be recommended that commitment to monitoring and strengthening the FLP is in place.
- More sectoral partnerships should be established with stakeholders involved in the provision of integrated early childhood development and skills development for life, work and sustainable development.
- It can further be recommended that the program duration be expanded to a longer duration than currently is to retain skilled promoters.
- It is also imperative for any country to consider embarking on advocacy focusing on mobilisation and sensitization of men on the importance of participating in FLP; as there are clear indications of misconceptions FLP is for women.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

Emvula, H. N. (2020). The type of support that family literacy programme graduate parents give to their first graders of formal school in Oshana Region. Unpublished Masters. University of Namibia. Windhoek.

Kasokonya, S. M. & Scheffers, I. (2008). Family Literacy in Namibia. Book chapter in Family Literacy: Experiences from Africa and around the world. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning dvv international.

13. Organization *

14. Focal Person/s *

(Prefix/ First Name/ Last Name)

15. Email ([example@example.com](#)) *

16. Website (URL) of the best practice if any *

Disclaimer

17. Do you agree with the following statement?

* I grant UNESCO the worldwide non-exclusive rights to reproduce, translate, adapt, publish, perform, broadcast, and communicate to the public, in any language and in printed and electronic format, the whole or any part of the responses provided and to authorize other publishers or co-publishers to exercise any of all of these rights. I also grant UNESCO the worldwide irrevocable rights to deposit the whole or any part of the survey responses in its multilingual Open Access Repository in electronic form. This entails the right of access to copy, usage, distribution, adaptation, for lawful purposes, with specified constraints. UNESCO uses Creative Commons CC BY SA 3.0 IGO license in line with its Open Access Policy.

Please state YES or NO in the box below. *

 Yes NO

