

School-Language Academy - Zambia

1. Introduction

The School-Language Academy Zambia project focuses on supporting primary schools in remote areas in East Zambia. With specially developed teaching materials, teachers receive tools for the development of school language skills to substantially increase the educational success of pupils. In the past, a significant proportion of children (1 in 3) in Zambia came from school as functionally illiterate; only a small proportion of the students could move on to secondary education. Success in the labor market is reserved for a small proportion of school-leavers in the region; youth unemployment is high.

The project cooperates intensively with schools and with other NGOs in the region to change this (Chipembele Wildlife, Project South Luangwe, Catch Up, and others).

The educational material that is being used, has been successfully used in disadvantaged schools in the Netherlands for a number of years. In Zambia, the teachers are now periodically trained to successfully use the materials. An organization is set up locally to support the schools. Outcomes are accurately mapped (via assessments per term). The project is being monitored by the Ministry of Education of Zambia, Mambwe district. There are requests to join the project from many schools in the region concerned.

In 2015 this pilot was started with two schools; currently five schools are participating in the pilot project. Up to now, we have worked with our own financial resources and voluntary contributions from those directly involved. Because there is so much need and the pilot has demonstrated success, we now have to change to a fixed and sustainable design and a larger scale of work. And new resources.

Donations are requested in the project to make a complete package available for each school that enables the school to work independently and sustainably on a long-term improvement. The donor adopts a school in this project. Primary schools in this region usually consist of 500 to 1100 pupils.

The project also asks for financial support in Holland for designing and preparing all materials for Zambian use, for the local project organization and for the teacher training sessions. We are aiming at setting up a local support structure and putting together a network of school heads, parent-teacher-committees.

2. Background and objectives

In the Netherlands, the learning materials of LOGO 3000 are very successful, especially in schools with many non-native speakers. LOGO 3000 consists of materials, designed for vocabulary lessons, that enable teachers of toddlers, preschoolers and children in kindergarten, to develop in a short time the basic school vocabulary of 3000 words. This vocabulary list is the result of research at Amsterdam University; it lays the foundation for a school language vocabulary that children need in order to fully comprehend the daily lessons and after that to successfully read and understand school texts in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6. LOGO 3000 teaches the children this vocabulary with sophisticated didactics, based on scientific principles (see: website Rezulto). Children acquire a large oral vocabulary with little effort.

For Zambian use, the material has been translated into English. A new wordlist has been prepared to fit the Zambian educational context in primary education. 2000 basic and school words have been selected. All images and graphic material are taken from the Dutch package, but on parts adapted to the African situation. The three pillars of this Zambia LOGO 2000 package are:

- a. the word materials (semantic clusters and word families) on posters and wall charts,
- b. the teacher cards in which all lessons are worked out in steps and scripts,
- c. background information about didactics and lots of teaching ideas to enlarge the teachers repertoire.

A significant structural change in language policy in primary education was implemented in Zambia some years ago. Previously, children learned to read and write in the English language; English is the official school language in Zambia and all textbooks of the school subjects are in English. Research has shown that many Zambian children did not properly master the reading and writing proficiency in this foreign language. A large proportion of the children left primary school as functional illiterates (Unicef: 25 to 30%).

This problem also occurs in other African countries. That is why it was decided that initial reading and writing instruction should take place in the pupils' mother tongue. In Zambia education is now offered in the lower classes of primary schools in one of the seven different home languages. After three years, students step by step switch to English; school books (mathematics, biology / physics, science, etc.) are usually in English.

This language policy is strongly promoted by UNICEF. A fair amount of research has been done to show that this change was necessary. Nevertheless, the original problem shifts considerably to a later stage in the school career of the children. When the pupils start reading in textbooks in grades 4, 5 and 6 they are supposed to benefit from a higher reading ability (in their own language), but they will have to apply their reading skills to English. Most children manage to read in English as well, but their low English vocabulary will stand in the way of sufficient text comprehension. (There are hardly any school books available in the native languages.) The current grade 4, 5 and 6 textbooks for school subjects (biology, science, etc.) have been written for (English) students with higher levels of English word knowledge. Pupils can therefore not further develop their reading skills to a higher level – they cannot develop the necessary reading fluency - and they read texts that they barely understand. Teachers are currently slowly developing the habit of paraphrasing the contents of the textbooks in their own native language and testing the students orally in their own language. That seems helpful, but it actually increases the backlog in reading comprehension and text comprehension

If students in the years of grade 2, 3, 4 and 5 with LOGO 2000 orally develop the English basic vocabulary, they could be able to use their higher literacy level plus their large English oral vocabulary at the same time from the moment they start reading school texts in English. This could provide a significant boost to their ongoing reading skills development; a lot of reading (with understanding) leads to a higher reading speed, more text comprehension, extension of the word knowledge and thus more school success. This upward spiral is often demonstrated in reading research and research in text comprehension.

The Dutch linguists Simon and Marianne Verhallen (co-developers of the Amsterdam basic school vocabulary and of LOGO 3000) saw these opportunities for children in Mfuwe when they visited Zambian education and they have set up a pilot with firstly two, and then five schools. To test the feasibility. Three times a year they train the teachers and bring the (self-) translated teaching materials from LOGO 2000 to the schools. The pilot started in 2015; in a short time the project could expand to 10 and then to 15 schools, if the financial resources were available. In the future an annual expansion with 10 schools could be realised. The evaluations of the schools (teachers, managers and

parents) are very positive; there are high expectations of the proceedings of the project. There is much support from the district representative of the Ministry of Education of Zambia.

3. The goals of the project

1. Students at the participating schools acquire a large English vocabulary in a relatively short time (2000 basic and school language words in a period of three or four years) and this provides a solid basis for the reading of textbooks and school texts. They achieve a demonstrably higher literacy level at the end of primary school, demonstrable in higher scores on the national literacy tests. We assume that pupils will also show higher scores in subject tests. There will therefore also be more transfer to secondary education.

2. The training will work on the professionalism of the teachers. An expansion of the didactic repertoire is achieved. Teachers acquire more insight into the functioning of language acquisition processes in relation to school success. They become proficient in new didactic methods. They improve their own proficiency of English (in LOGO 2000 there is a lot of attention for correct pronunciation).

3. A local structure is to be set up to support and to train the teachers. Dutch and English tools are used for this. Trainers are trained on the spot. There will also be a facility for administering the periodic end of term tests. Testing papers are being provided.

4. Activities and working method

The activity schedule follows the Zambian school year. There are three terms in one school year. Each term (12 weeks) is concluded with a testing week. This is followed by five or six weeks school holidays. For each term comes a package with teacher cards, cluster posters, word posters and a timetable. Every third week is a repeating and assessment week. At the end of each term there is an end of term test. Scores on that test are individual, but class averages and school averages are also given.

At the end of each term, before or after the test week, there are teacher training sessions per school. School visits take place during the trimester: a local coordinator carries out observations and supports / guides the teachers.

A school will receive a complete package at a fixed price (user license). A package consists of 2000 words; 160 clustermaps, 160 teacher cards, plus 160 word posters.

Materials are still printed in the Netherlands. The trainers bring the folders with posters and the like from the Netherlands at the end of the terms. Every four months, the two trainers from the Netherlands will come over for the teacher training courses.

Together with the schools, the tests are taken, the tests are marked by senior students and the scores are calculated. Since the end of 2018, the schools - together with parents and senior students - take and process the tests themselves based on fixed protocols.

In 2020 there could be 10 schools. Then four LOGO trainers are needed. A start will also be made with the training of trainers on site. The Dutch trainers will receive a limited reimbursement with effect from 2019. The teacher training courses will be merged into a course, with specific text material, observation tools and concluded with a certificate.

In Zambia there is regular consultation with the district office of the Ministry of Education. Contacts have also been made with the University of Zambia (Lusaka) and with the Lusaka Catch Up office. There is also regular consultation with the NGO's that are active in the region.

Currently the LOGO 2000 material (the word lists, the clusters and the teacher cards) are being translated and the image material is adapted by the designer, where necessary. Until now, these were unpaid jobs. We will have to find sponsors to cover these costs (translating, adjusting design, etc.).

In consultation with the publisher / copyright owner of LOGO 3000, an agreement has been drawn up that stipulates the good use in the schools and the accompanied training for the teachers. A school will receive a complete package at a fixed price (user license). A package consists of 2000 words; 160 clustersmaps, 160 teacher cards, plus 160 word posters.

5. Means of evaluation

1. Each term all students are being tested on the vocabulary items of that term. The test is a pictures test, made in the Netherlands. The tests represent about 30% of the wordlist of that term. Overviews of the test results in Appendix 1.
2. Teacher training will be evaluated. Teachers give their opinion about the training and what they have learned.
3. Progress is periodically discussed with the district office of the Ministry of Education.
4. At the end of each school year, a report text will be provided for the benefit of sponsors and interested parties.
5. In 2020, an initial comparative assessment is provided. Large groups of pupils from pilot schools and non-pilot schools make the same tests. Results will be compared.
6. In 2021, the first cohorts will participate in the national central exams. The results of this assessment can be compared per school with previous years.

Appendix 1.

Overview Assessments LOGO 2000 April 2018 – August 2018 - December 2018

Uyoba school	Nn April 018	Results April 018	Nn Aug 018	Results Aug 018	Nn Dec 018	Results Dec 018	Res. 018	Rang
Grade 2	64	83%	28	89%	50	88%	87%	3
Grade 3 A+B	55	77%	42	82%	50	83%	81%	6
Grade 4 A+B	60	78%	37	92%	50	79%	83%	5
School means	(179)	79%	(107)	88%	(150)	83%	84%	2

Chiwawatala School	Nn April 018	Results April 018	Nn Aug 018	Results Aug 018	Nn Dec 018	Results Dec 018	Res. 018	Rang
Grade 2	70	74%	58	73%	50	83%	77%	7
Grade 3 A+B	70	72%	60	70%	50	71%	71%	9
Grade 4 A+B	71	72%	62	56%	50	71%	66%	11
School means	(211)	73%	(180)	66%	(150)	75%	71%	4

Kakumbi school	Nn April 018	Results April 018	Nn Aug 018	Results Aug 018	Nn Dec 018	Results Dec 018	Res. 018	Rang
Grade 2	34	70%	30	67%	34	71%	69%	10
Grade 3 A+B	34	84%	39	83%	46	83%	83%	5
Grade 4 A+B	59	86%	54	79%	50	88%	84%	4
School means	(127)	80%	(123)	76%	(130)	81%	79%	3

Katemo school	Nn April 018	Results April 018	Nn Aug 018	Results Aug 018	Nn Dec 018	Results Dec 018	Res. 018	Rang
Grade 2	48	55%	49	50%	36	58%	54%	13
Grade 3 A+B	53	51%	40	62%	50	63%	59%	12
Grade 4 A+B	46	77%	50	72%	45	71%	73%	8
School means	(147)	61%	(139)	61%	(131)	64%	62%	5

Mwanda kwisana school	Nn April 018	Results April 018	Nn Aug 018	Results Aug 018	Nn Dec 018	Results Dec 018	Res. 018	Rang
Grade 2	39	61%	19	91%	36	79%	77%	7
Grade 3 A+B	37	83%	32	98%	39	92%	91%	2
Grade 4 A+B	29	91%	20	92%	27	92%	92%	1
School means	(105)	78%	(71)	94%	(102)	88%	87%	1