



Post-IGATE Follow Up Visit Briefing Note

Voices and Reflections: “We Never Stopped!”

Introduction

The purpose of the visit was to find out about the teaching and learning of foundational skills in schools, who participated in the IGATE project in Zimbabwe. Specifically, the objectives were to follow up on the IGATE project (2017–2021) and Zimbabwe National Catch-up Framework advice (2021) post covid-19 lockdown and to see if and how these are now influencing foundational teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy for learners, teachers and schools. It is important to note the transition of the approaches and resources developed in IGATE to their nationwide roll-out through the National Catch-up Framework and to their embedding within the 2021–2026 UKAid funded Teacher Professional Development (TPD) component of the Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for All Children (TEACH) programme.

This Note reports on Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in Mangwe District (27 May 2024) and Nkayi District (28 May 2024); both with school leaders, teachers (former IGATE TPD leads) and District Schools Inspectors (DSIs). Both Districts have the TPD component of the TEACH programme implemented in their rural primary and secondary schools. Conversations also took place with Education Development Trust (EDT) team members, who were formerly members of the IGATE team and now working on the TEACH programme, on 29 and 30 May 2024. The quotations have been chosen to give a sense and spirit of these discussions and keep the participants’ words with key points boldened.

What is happening now in IGATE Schools

In both Districts, schools shared how IGATE practices, activities and materials continue as strongly, if not more strongly, than during the project. The schools highlighted the following:

Use / influence of IGATE materials and activities.

Schools spoke about how they have continued with IGATE activities.

‘We never stopped. We are still using Module 1 to Module 6 – the information is vital to learners.’ Mangwe School Leads FGD



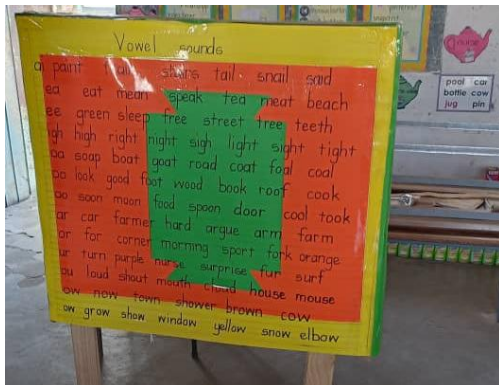
‘We are still practising most of the activities. We have reading clubs and programmes every Wednesday at our school and community centres. We have reading competitions across Grades in our school – this is a development building on IGATE.’ Nkayi School Heads FGD

Specific examples were given for numeracy.

'We use number lines, concrete objects, games, buying and selling, dominos. We use dominos for number sentences. Can you teach addition and subtraction at the same time? We use dominos to show this.' Mangwe TPD Leads FGD

'This is learners using materials, manipulating them – while they use, they will not forget. If doing shapes, if a cylinder, you have an actual cylinder, not a picture, an actual cylinder. You also can ask learners to model them – to cut out triangles, circles, etc.' Nkayi School TPD FGD

Examples were also given for literacy.



'Emphasis in new syllabus is on letter sounds; modules and audios come into use – it is now easy to align with curriculum. It is now a routine for teachers to say a sound, learners to give examples, to do sound talking.' Mangwe TPD Leads FGD

Practices have developed further; for example, through new activities, peer learning, spreading to other subjects and growing trust in learners.

'[We have] field trips, also called language excursions. Learners move around, listen to sounds in the environment. We ask learners what they can hear (birds singing, baby crying, etc.) We want learners to improve their listening and speaking skills. Pieces of paper might be blown by the wind or we might see signs, which learners can be asked to read. We can ask what is that (car, cow, etc.). Learners learn to make sentences from what they encounter in the environment. This came from IGATE.' Nkayi School TPD FGD

'Learners themselves share ideas. We have 'mother' readers, who help those who are lagging behind. Some learners are not comfortable or afraid being taught by a teacher, but, when taught by other learners, they feel free, even to ask questions.' Nkayi School TPD FGD

'We use activities in other lessons, for example, use of games, group work, rhymes. We give learners a chance to do them, to discover learning.' Mangwe TPD Leads FGD

'Radio lessons, these are from IGATE, who provided gadgets loaded with a variety of lessons. We can prepare our own lessons. Learners can play and will continue to learn in our absence. We are present, while absent! This trust builds learners' confidence.' Nkayi TPD Leads FGD

Note: In both Districts, every teacher had happily left their learners to learn together without a teacher for the day, while they attended the focus group discussion.

Space and time for TPD in schools.

TPD sessions in school have become an embedded and valued part of school life.

*'Whole school development is a functional process in the school timetable, where staff members share best practices to improve learners' performance. **We do fortnightly.** Each teacher brings a problematic area or new method (to replace those not viable). We go from known to unknown. We draw on IGATE activities. If there is a good idea or practice, we appreciate and all adopt and see how to benefit the school.'* Nkayi School Heads FGD

Nature and content of TPD focussed on foundational skills / classroom activities

These sessions continue to focus on the modules with their emphasis of foundational skills and classroom activities.

*'We discovered these are appropriate; it really does work. For example, **use of peer teaching** – you want to teach fractions of numbers, you discuss as a whole staff. Individual teachers go back to classes and share experiences of how they worked in different classes.'* Mangwe TPD Leads FGD

*'**We share ideas amongst ourselves** and sometimes invite outside resource persons. It is a continuous process. It happens once a month. It is our core business. We use previous [IGATE] modules. They are our bible, and they will continue to be used.'* Nkayi School Heads FGD

Diagnostic assessment tool and practices

Again, these have become an embedded and very valued part of what the schools do.

*'**Learners are not same level.** You have to assess level where they are reading, and numbers. It is used continuously; we are trained again on diagnostic tool.'* Mangwe DSI

*'**From IGATE, we tried to adopt element of diagnostic tool at start of every term for literacy and numeracy.** We put emphasis on literacy. What we like about diagnostic tool is that we are able to identify a child's level of literacy development and make reference to correct modules.'* Nkayi School Heads FGD

School learning agenda on foundational skills and safe spaces to learn.

The shift from not talking about children struggling with foundational skills to this being at the heart of the school agenda appears to be transformative, along with changed understandings of the spaces and environments that help children learn.

*'Reading is a tool – **without reading, no learning.**'* Mangwe School Leads FGD

*'**IGATE came up with zero tolerance to bullying.** We are reinforcing and meeting the challenges.'* Nkayi School Heads FGD

Classroom walks

Teachers, school leaders and DSIs spoke about how these continue and have evolved.

*'**Learning walks carry on** – not done by School Head only, but by the whole staff. They help teachers to strengthen their teaching methods. If you see this is good, you adopt from other staff members.'* Mangwe School Leads FGD

*'I am still doing. I spend 10 minutes and do feedback. You can see on my laptop. **It is appreciated if you are constructive, not fault finding**, as you elaborate on what you see. In physical education, we, the School Head with teachers, borrowed IGATE 'mantra' for Grades 5A and 5B to plan lessons. We used athletics book. We planned materials. You said we need materials. We used 10 slaloms and 50 cones for a 8-minute race. All learners and teachers watched. It was a demonstration lesson. After the lesson, the learners were asked what they liked and what needed to improve. We are still implementing the walks.'* Nkayi School Heads FGD

Sufficient literacy and numeracy class and other time

School leaders articulated how school timetables have developed. Throughout the conversations, when participants talk about reading, this very often embraces numeracy and literacy.

*'**We have reading hours** – 30 minutes literacy, 30 minutes numeracy. We are not strict about exact times, but do both.'* Mangwe School Leads FGD

*'**During school timetable**, we have Mondays and Wednesdays for sports and Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2.00 – 4.00 pm, to do reading cards.'* Nkayi School Heads FGD

*'Each and every day, there is reading hour – **we make sure interest and variety**, not monotonous.'* Mangwe School Leads FGD

Community engagement

All schools talked about how they engage with their local communities.

*'There is the element of community engagement, whereby **Head Teachers take School Development Committee (SDC) members on classroom walks** and they see the quality of learning materials being used. This enables parents to chip in or buy learning materials. SDC members engage other parents and community members.'* WV Field Officer

*'**We have print-rich environment**. There is teacher development every Tuesday. There are chart making and toy making days. We include learners and parents, so they are for everyone, and everyone owns it.'* Mangwe School Leads FGD

Secondary schools

As all schools at the focus group discussions were primary, DSIs and World Vision Field Officer spoke about secondary schools.

*'**IGATE continues to be used in secondary schools** to support learners not at Grade level in all forms, particularly peer learning and diagnostic tool.'* World Vision Field Officer

*'Secondary schools do national Catch Up and EDT [TEACH] programmes. School Head identifies 1 English teacher and 1 Mathematics teacher, who they consider will do Catch Up strategies well and will do Catch Up sessions with learners. These TPD Leads staff develop other teachers. **If in class learners have challenges, learners are referred to TPD Lead**, and they get a group of 6 learners together to assist in a specific skill. In all subjects, maths is there. Geography teacher must impart foundational skills and*

implement in their lessons, having been staff developed by Maths TPD Lead. It is same principle as primary. Teachers are assigned a group of learners, who are supported to get to level of others.’ Nkayi DSI

Impacts

Participants spontaneously spoke about the impacts and benefits.

‘So, then we are saying it also boils down to **improved attendance** in learners’ attendance, because if learners are able to enjoy learning at school, because failure on its own discourages learners to come to school. So now if they are succeeding, they are doing well, there is improved attendance at school level.’ Nkayi School Heads FGD

‘**Dropouts are now reducing.** Pregnant girls allowed to go back. Retention rate is now high. A few boys drop out at secondary – near border.’ Mangwe DSI

‘Then we are saying again, **improved pass rate.** If we look at our pass rate from before we started the IGATE programme and up to now, our pass rate is rising because of improved literacy and numeracy.’ Nkayi School Heads FGD

‘**Non-readers are down.** Pass rates are up. These relate.’ Mangwe DSI

‘Transition to secondary school – 6 learners in 2020, and now 17 learners in nearest secondary school. This shows **the community now takes education seriously.**’ Nkayi School Heads FGD

‘**Transition into secondary school is higher.** Before IGATE no transition and now some have reached Form 4 and got 5 O-level subjects.’ Mangwe School Leads FGD

Perspectives from District Schools Inspectors

Promoted by Government DSIs and IGATE schools, the IGATE ethos and practices have spread to all schools in both Districts.



‘District and school motto is ‘**Zero tolerance to non-readers**’. We discuss as a District. During meetings, we talk about these things – reading, etc.’ Mangwe School Leads FGD

‘**It is a big responsibility to ensure that children acquire the skills they came for** – measured by results, Grade 7, O level, A level. We have serious interest in that. Are we contributing to these learners? They have to be taught to read first at infants. Then, at junior, ‘read to learn’. We take pride in this. Are we doing justice to these children? We have high hopes. 9 + 4 years in school at parents’ expense. We have to do justice. 5 km each way is 50 km a week. How many km in a year, a school life? You could walk to the UK and back.’ Mangwe DSI

‘IGATE initiative is now brought to all schools in District. IGATE methodologies are now being transferred to all. Phonics, foundational literacy and foundational numeracy – all schools are expected to do. Some other projects also link to what IGATE is doing and teachers find it easy.’ Nkayi DSI

‘IGATE is a powerful programme. IGATE TPD Leads are getting noticed by District Schools Inspectors through leading staff development sessions and being put in the spotlight. They are being promoted, for example, to Deputy School Heads. All the TPD Leads in the Mangwe and Nkayi focus discussion groups have been promoted.’ WV Field Officer

Suggestions

Participants made the following suggestions, requesting for:

- A new school-based teacher development programme, working directly with schools like IGATE, to raise motivation and develop skills of continuing and new teachers.
- More teacher development modules to refresh and develop further skills in foundational teaching and learning.
- New reading and number cards and books, as current ones are getting old and new teacher-made cards are not of the same quality as those provided, which were colourful and laminated.
- More frequent cluster meetings, as these are not as regular as they used to be.
- More bicycles, as those provided by the Bicycle Education Empowerment Programme (BEEP), are now in poor repair, and learners have taken them to secondary schools and very few working bicycles are now in primary schools.

Enabling factors

Four years on, the level of continuing traction seems exceptional in environments where projects previously ‘come and go’. Notably, major shifts appear from non-readers being a hidden issue to a national education priority; from teacher isolation and top-down trainings to a belief and commitment to the power of teacher collaboration; from schools and communities isolated from each other to respect and support for each other.

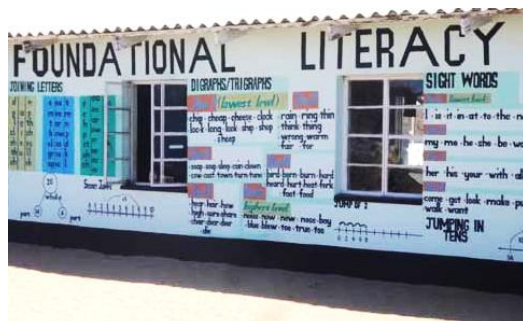
Reflections on what has and is enabling these foreground:

- DSIs’, school leaders’ and teachers’ strong conviction of the benefits of these approaches from their lived experiences of implementing in practice.
- World Vision’s continuing and active presence in both Districts, where they have been a strong collaborator with communities for 20+ years.
- Covid-19 disruptions to schools, which were closed for 1+ years, creating a pressing need uniting schools and communities to catch up on lost learning.
- World Vision’s roll-out of their Unlock Literacy programme in Mangwe District bringing new materials and stimuli.
- The National Catch-Up Framework based on IGATE approaches and resources, being the key Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) priority post the covid-19 lockdown, and the national roll-out of the materials, diagnostic tool and introduction training.
- The transition to and embedding and reinforcement of IGATE approaches and resources in the TEACH programme.

National Catch-Up Framework

Ministry priority

MoPSE, supported by FCDO Zimbabwe, had a clear priority on Catch Up Learning and Diagnostic Tool, which informed the new substantive FCDO-funded education programme, TEACH, led by Education Development Trust (EDT).



'Key MoPSE priority in 2021 was operationalising Catch Up ... This has led to the National Catch-Up approaches and materials being embedded as part of TEACH ... TEACH is in 42 [out of 64] Districts, including Mangwe.' EDT (former IGATE) team member

*'After IGATE, MoPSE introduced ... EDT [Education Development Trust – FCDO TEACH programme] – same methods, different name. EDT has teacher development sessions, diagnostic tool. They took from IGATE modules and repeated. We thought IGATE had changed its name. ... **We in IGATE are the pioneers!**'* Nkayi TPD Leads FGD

Rollout of Framework

The National Catch-Up Framework was rolled out by the Government to all schools in Zimbabwe. Every school has received the reading / number cards, School Head / Teacher / Community Guides, and introduction training. There have been initially mixed reactions, as many schools left these in their cupboards not sure what to do.

*'UNICEF made effort to get **the materials out to all schools**, but did not explain. Challenge was that having received with no explanation, they remained neatly packed in cupboards.'* EDT (former IGATE) team member

*'**Non-IGATE schools had to be prompted to get materials out** of cupboard. [A colleague] recalls, before joining TEACH, they visited schools as part of [another project's work] and would say to schools to get them out of the cupboard and go through together. EDT (former IGATE) team member*

In contrast, IGATE schools immediately ran with these.

*'Exception is IGATE schools, who immediately ran with these. **Easiest schools are the ones in IGATE. They know what to do and are building on that.**'* EDT (former IGATE) team member

*'We received some reading cards grouped from Level 1 to Level 5. We tried to give learners cards according to their levels. **After the diagnostic tool, we place learners at appropriate level.** We assign a teacher to take these children and progress from Level 2 to Level 3. If you start this and learner proceeds to Level 5, the learners do not have challenges in answering comprehension questions.'* Nkayi School Heads FGD

*'All schools must do. **They have the resources, training and are using.** The training was at cluster level and then cascaded to school level. Time and again we meet as clusters to share achievements and challenges. The focus is on infant level but can fill learners' gaps through Catch Up at junior and secondary levels.'* Nkayi DSI

Now 80% of schools in Zimbabwe – the IGATE and TEACH schools – are reported to be using these approaches, materials and activities.

'Catch Up forms part of the TEACH general pedagogy.' EDT (former IGATE) team member

'Now 80% of schools are using – those in IGATE and TEACH. For the 20% outside these programmes, it is not clear where the materials are and who is using.' EDT (former IGATE) team member

It is to be noted that quality of implementation will inevitably be variable and was not explored in this follow-up.

Focus on diagnostic tool

The diagnostic tool developed by IGATE, which was directly put in the National Catch-up materials, is seen as critical to the National Framework. MoPSE have directed all schools to use it at the start of each school year for all learners from Grade 3 to lower secondary, and then termly, for those learners identified as needing catch-up support.

'MoPSE accepted Diagnostic Tool [from IGATE] as standard assessment tool for Grade 3 to secondary.' EDT (former IGATE) team member

'The starting point is 'has a school got the catch-up materials?' Then move to Diagnostic Tool. This gives standard assessment. Then how many non-readers?' EDT (former IGATE) team member

'All schools have identified non-readers. They must have a list of those learners not performing well. School Heads must be aware and use Catch Up strategies.' Nkayi DSI

'MoPSE issued minute to Provincial Education Directors to remind all schools to administer Diagnostic Tool to all pupils from Grade 3 upwards.' [MoPSE minute to Provincial Education Directors on use of the diagnostic tool 11March2024.]

Closing and thanks

The principles, developed in IGATE, embedded in the National Catch-Up Framework and enacted within and by the FCDO TEACH programme, of 'learn to read, read to learn' and 'zero tolerance to non-readers' are strongly and systemically held. These embrace numeracy and literacy, with materials, tools, teacher collaboration and safe, supportive learning environments at the heart of implementation at each level of the system.

We are grateful and thank all those who participated in these discussions: Local Ministry Officials, school heads, teachers, former IGATE team members; to Joel Mberengwa, Nomathemba Tshuma and the Mangwe and Nkayi District Teams from World Vision Zimbabwe for their logistical support; and to Janelle Zwier from World Vision International for her vision and support throughout.

Claire Hedges, Centre for the Study of Global Development

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