TEACHER PREPARATION THROUGH CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ZAMBIA

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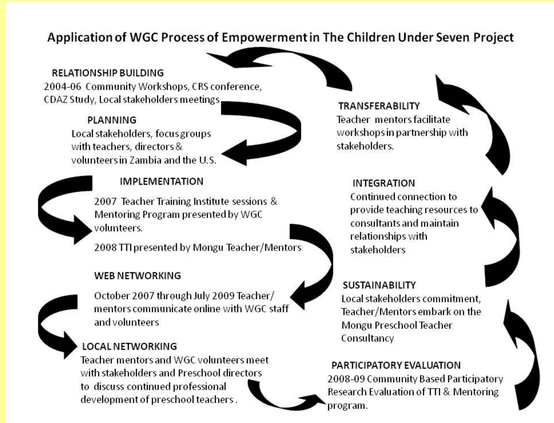
ABSTRACT

This study presents research about the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) in Zambia that aims to address the effects of HIV/AIDS on children and their families through promotion of Early Childhood Learning centers. In Zambia, pre-school education is in a precarious state with overcrowded classrooms, few educational materials with insufficiently prepared teachers who, often, are unable to provide more than mere care-giving for the children. This study questions if there is evidence that the TTI through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) can build the capacity of teachers to implement more comprehensive Learning Centers in preschool programs. Women's Global Connection (WGC) conducted a formative evaluation of the outcomes of the TTI in order to assess its perceived value and its potential as a sustainable model for CPD for preschool teachers in other rural areas.

BACKGROUND

Purpose of Study. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the journey of professional development undertaken by the teachers in the Teacher Training Institute in Zambia.

Rationale and Significance. The location of the TTI is in the Mongu District of the Western Province of Zambia. The Western area of Zambia has the highest incidence of poverty in the country as well as the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS creating a larger number of AIDS orphans and vulnerable children. Currently, there is minimal government implementation of pre-school education for children who are under seven years of age. To respond to this need, the Zambia Ministry of Education has recognized the value of collaboration with committed educators from other countries. The TTI uses a model of leadership development for teachers created by the Center for Creative Leadership. Using this model, this study explores the teachers' capacity to create child-friendly classrooms and learning activities in regions where teacher training and learning materials are insufficient. This study can offer a major step in creating a model of sustainable professional development for teachers in Zambia.



METHODS

This qualitative exploratory study began the evaluation process in the summer of 2008 when the first TTI group of teachers began to gather data on their experience of mentoring. The TTI teachers answered questionnaires within focus groups to document their perceptions of their mentees' progress and also began structured observations in their mentees' classrooms. Simultaneously, the U.S. based research team began to analyze the teachers' weekly reports on the WGC interactive website. The data collected from the questionnaires, surveys, observations and blog entries were coded and categorized into themes depicting the development evidenced in the teachers' reporting.

TTI mentor teaching mentees

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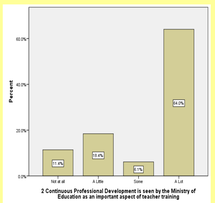
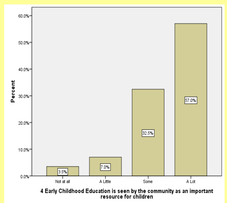
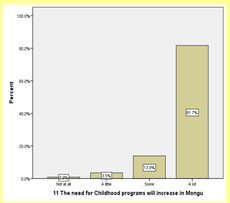
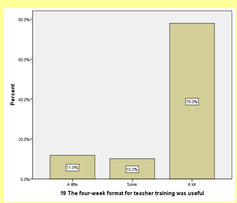
Survey Results

The bar graphs were created from the 62 item survey that was administered to 114 persons, consisting of mentors, mentees, teachers, directors, parents and stakeholders who participated in the Teacher Training Institute in Zambia.









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RESULTS

The findings include evidence that the teachers have attained knowledge related to early childhood education and content as well as evidence of an increase in technology application, mentor relationships, leadership skills and professional development. Participants in this study expressed personal and professional empowerment as classroom teachers and peer mentors.

Knowledge Transfer	Outcome/Result	Capacity/Behavior	Source of Evidence
Specific Learning Model	Knowledge for Application	Incorporation into Learning activities	Survey, Interviews Observations
Instructional Design	Knowledge for Application	Structuring of Classroom and curriculum	Survey, Photos, Observation, Interviews
Workshop Content	Knowledge for Application	Use of information and materials	Survey, Photos, Blogs, Interviews
Mentor Consultation	Mentor Relationship Technology Application	Transmission to other teachers	Survey, Questionnaires, Blogs, Photos
Professional Development	Professional Identification	Evidence of leadership skills	Survey, Blogs, Observation
Engagement of Stakeholders	Value for Sustainability Community Partnership	Interest and Support	Survey, Interviews, Obsrvation

CONCLUSION

The Teacher Training Institute Model was shown to:

- Be useful in rural areas
- Give assistance to working families
- Develop and motivate educators
- Be beneficial to children
- Be cost-effective

Quotes from the teachers who participated in the TTI:

"We now understand what we need to do as teachers. We know how to plan and prepare lesson plans. We are able to implement what we learned in the workshops, child-centered learning." (Mentor, 2009)

"The program has provided experience to teachers. We can now write a lesson plan, teach physical and mental activities, balance learning and play activities. This includes general information, current events, as well as health and sanitation." (Mentor, 2009)

""We have demonstrated that mentors can be trained, we then used the manuals to train other teachers. We didn't have to wait for people from America to come back to help. We can do it now ourselves!" (Mentor, 2009).