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A REFLECTIVE STUDY OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGIONAL CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING

(APRIL–NOVEMBER, 2004)

EXECUTIVE REPORT

April, 2005

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DISCLAIMER:

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This study found that primary reading teachers in the CETT program have been very successful in improving their skills in the teaching of reading and writing and have achieved a higher level of competency on the various dimensions of literacy instruction studied than teachers from comparison schools who did not participate in the CETT in-service training. CETT teachers were found to be significantly more skilled in teaching phonological awareness; in offering opportunities for oral and written expression, vocabulary development and comprehension; and in employing effective instructional skills. This report details the findings of our Reflective Study.

Introduction

This Executive Report presents results of a qualitative study of the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT) professional development program for primary classroom teachers of reading after its first year of implementation. A team of international and local researchers with extensive experience in educational research and evaluation conducted the study between April and October 2004 in classrooms in the three subregions served by the program: the Andes, the Caribbean, and Central America and the Dominican Republic.

The CETTs provide in-service training in reading strategies and teaching methodology to teachers in schools located in poor, disadvantaged areas (urban and rural) that do not benefit from other donor programs. Since the early discussions of the program, the program has been guided by a generally agreed-upon set of program components. These components form the common backbone of the program, which has been implemented in different ways in the three subregions. Thus, the goal of the CETTs is to enhance the instructional practice of in-service teachers through training that addresses those components:

- promoting the development of skills and strategies for teaching reading, by aligning existing pedagogical practice with research-based best practices, for a student population with a wide range of abilities and backgrounds;
- using a variety of assessment tools to better diagnose and address students' learning needs;
- developing a diverse bank of materials to support the CETT program;
- using applied research to test the CETT tools and techniques for pedagogical soundness and ease of integration into classroom practice; and
- applying information and communication technology to develop distance training programs and to increase communication among partner institutions.

Program Background

CETT is an outcome of a 2001 Summit of the Americas presidential initiative and is managed by USAID. USAID provided over \$20 million to establish centers in the three subregions. These centers are tasked with improving teachers' ability to teach literacy skills to children in first to third grades in marginalized communities of the LAC region, with the objective of reducing high rates of illiteracy and school underachievement.

The CETTs are implemented by universities in the region. In Central America and the Dominican Republic, the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazan in Honduras leads a consortium of universities and other institutions in implementing the program. In the Andes, the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia collaborates with two other universities to implement the program. And in the English-speaking Caribbean, the program is housed at the Joint Board of Teacher Education of the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. By the project's end, the CETTs are expected to reach some 15,000 teachers and 450,000 students in up to 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries. So far, 6200 teachers have been trained, serving over 175,000 students.

Description of the Methodology

Including data from a pilot study conducted in two Caribbean countries, the sample consisted of 114 teachers in 67 schools in a total of eight countries (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru). In order to establish a baseline for measuring teacher development, schools similar to the CETT schools, but with teachers not participating in the program, were also studied. For consistency across the regional sample, first grade classrooms were selected for observation in which either English or Spanish was the language of instruction. Classroom observations and interviews were conducted in both CETT and comparison classrooms in each subregion. The study was carried out as close as possible to the end of the school year in all countries, in order to capture information at a point when the maximum level of implementation had occurred.

This study used checklists, classroom observation forms, professional development rating forms, and focused interviews for teachers, school principals, and CETT technicians and administrators to determine the degree to which ongoing professional development for teachers was effective in changing teacher practices. The study examined a number of dimensions of professional development such as teaching of basic reading skills, teaching students to understand text, teaching oral and written expression, effective instruction, classroom management, reflective practice, and parental involvement, as well as factors that facilitated or impeded effective implementation of the training programs.

Study Design

Needs assessments conducted prior to the implementation of CETT indicated that reading achievement was critically low across countries in the LAC subregions. This was especially true in the more remote and disadvantaged schools, which are the targets of the program. In many instances, teachers received very poor training or none at all in the teaching of reading. Classroom sizes range from 20 to 60 pupils. In these classrooms, materials are outdated or lacking. Reading books and textbooks are rare. Student absenteeism is high. Students come from families where literacy is not a priority, and children come to school without many of the pre-reading skills and experiences that are necessary to a good reading foundation. In some countries, system-level conditions such as strikes and non-payment of wages affect the education environment. It is against this background that CETT sought to make a difference in reading achievement, and it is with this information in mind that the evaluators sought a way to characterize the progress of CETT teachers.

Executive Report: A Study of Professional Development in CETT

The conceptual framework underlying the design of the study is that teacher change is a gradual and continual process of behavioral change. This is not an easy task; teachers teach as they were taught, and changing behavior is difficult, often taking years. The change sought requires far more than providing a few new activities or materials to teachers; rather it requires changes in deep-seated beliefs and long-standing habits. Observers in many school improvement projects around the world have noted that teachers proceed through a continuum of change from traditional practices to approaches in which children are active participants in their own learning. Four stages of progress towards exemplary literacy teaching are presented below.¹

A Continuum of Teacher Change in the Improvement of Literacy Instruction		
Stage	Description	Some Characteristics of the Developmental Stage
Stage One: Initiating	No Form and No Substance	Teachers in this stage teach as they were taught, such as with rote memorization and group chanting of closed-ended responses. Whole-class instruction characterizes much of classroom time, and exercises are uniform and unimaginative – such as dictation or copying from the board. Questions asked of children are at the level of simple facts. Teachers at this stage, if asked to change, express a combination of fear and resentment. Some feel they “know” how to teach, while others, interested in the change, fear trying unfamiliar, time-consuming new methods.
Stage Two: Becoming	Form without Substance	At this stage many teachers become conversant with the new jargon, and may begin to try to implement some of the new practices. Teachers learn the basic behaviors of a new form of teaching, but have difficulty going beyond that in which they have been trained. There is still little or no diversification of instruction for different groups or individuals. Teachers in this change process need ample support in-class and from their peers, principals and supervisors.
Stage Three: Near Mastery	Improved Form and Substance	Teachers at this level have a more sophisticated understanding of children’s development towards literacy. All important components of literacy instruction are included and are usually well integrated, often into thematic units linked with content areas. Teachers begin to create their own learning materials and work with their peers to develop new approaches to concepts being taught. Teachers regularly assess students on their progress, and provide instruction that meets students’ needs. Student grouping is flexible; some may be working in small groups, in partners or individually. Teachers at this stage are “on their way,” and may begin to serve as trainers or mentors for their peers.
Stage Four: Mastery	Form and Substance	Teachers at this stage are never satisfied with learning in their classes, and they work cooperatively with their peers to improve it. Students play an active role in teaching and learning, and literacy is integrated with content to confront “real life” problems. Learning occurs not only in the classroom but also out in the community. Teachers have a deep knowledge of literacy and of how children learn. They are constantly looking for new ways to assist children who are having difficulty mastering concepts. To observe a true master teacher is to see an artist at work; the class is a seamless web of productive activity.
<p><i>Note: For the purposes of this first study of CETT classroom practices, successful subregional practices were defined as those practices in which at least 25 percent of CETT teachers and less than 25 percent of non-CETT teachers were at near mastery or mastery and there were significant differences between CETT and non-CETT teachers. Teachers who are near mastery demonstrate improved implementation of new or enhanced practices and have developed a more sophisticated understanding of the teaching of literacy. Teachers at this level can serve as mentors for their peers. Teachers at the mastery level have internalized and can implement the practice consistently.</i></p>		

¹ Adapted from, "Evolution in the Application of Active Learning", in Ammar, Maha; Gilboy, Andrew; Hunt, Barbara; Kraft, Richard; El Said, Maha. 2003. New Schools Program Mid-Term Evaluation. Report prepared for USAID/Egypt under the Global Evaluation and Monitoring Project, Task Order #807. Aguirre International: Washington, D.C., p. 18-20.

Effective literacy instruction must include all of the characteristics of overall excellent teaching – not simply teaching literacy but also effective teaching strategies and classroom management, teacher reflection, and relationships with parents. Descriptors of observable behavior were identified and placed along a continuum to exemplify expected behaviors of teachers at the four stages of development. Classroom observations of reading instruction and focused interviews with teachers, principals, and reading specialists were conducted to determine the degree to which the CETT training and professional development was applied and effective in changing teacher practice. Applying the same protocols, these findings were compared with groups of non-CETT teachers in schools with populations similar to the CETT schools.

Major Findings

CETT programs in the Andes, Caribbean, and Central America were all successful in training teachers to improve literacy instruction. In each subregion, CETT teachers had reached higher levels of professional development on a majority of the dimensions studied than had similar teachers who had not participated in CETT.

- ◆ *Teachers in CETT schools were almost universally very grateful and highly enthusiastic about their participation in the trainings.* They also, though often humbly, expressed satisfaction with the changes they themselves had made in their literacy instruction. However, when observers asked teachers about the effects of the program, teachers spoke of the changes in the children, more than about the changes in themselves.

- “The children have really advanced – last year at this time, the children couldn’t read a word! I’d say they’re 80% better this year. It’s because of the type of material, the content provided – it’s dynamic, it’s really helpful.” - *First grade teacher, Honduras*
- “Now I realize, with the Center, that the children don’t have to memorize. They can write and think and participate.” - *First grade teacher, Bolivia*
- “The kids are more awake, more capable. They read, write and understand. Imagine, one group was comparing Rubén Dário to another poet!” - *First grade teacher, Nicaragua*
- “I use the CETT guide and try to get the students to write. I let them write what is on their minds because I feel that is the only way to get them to express themselves. So far I am satisfied, because before, I didn’t feel some of them had it in them. Some of them just wouldn’t write - but now they write!” - *First grade teacher, Jamaica*
- “I have seen definitive changes in them: we used to be worried they’d never get over being timid, but now we actually have to put the brakes on! The change is so interesting, and the children are more extroverted.” - *Principal, Guatemala*
- “When a student has a problem, the best way is just to face it, and design a strategy based on what the problem is. This shows the children that they can handle anything, too!” - *First grade teacher, Peru*
- “It’s a big, big change! Before, I didn’t have a word wall, the student grouping, this bulletin board... I didn’t have this [points to the board]. I now do “read aloud” first thing in the morning. It’s been a big - but good - change!” - *First grade teacher, Belize*
- “Some parents come into class and help in the reading program, or donate any little things that the teacher can use.... In one (CETT) classroom, 60% of parents are helping. The teacher gets everything from parents because they see what’s happening in the program.” - *Principal, Belize*

- ◆ *One of the most promising findings of the study is that CETT teachers are increasingly reflective about their practice, and most are able to examine analytically their long-held*

assumptions about what kind of teaching works best. Teachers who reflect on their teaching practices, self-evaluate their teaching, and discuss what and how they are changing, can be proactive in identifying areas for further growth. Almost 95 percent of CETT teachers commented that they had reflected to some extent on their teaching practices, while 60 percent of the non-CETT teachers indicated that they had engaged in reflective practices.

This reflective capacity, coupled with the CETT training content, has given the teachers an essentially changed view of how learning takes place and of their role in it. One Caribbean CETT teacher said, “I used to look at the children who were not learning and get discouraged with them. Now, I ask myself ‘what am I missing and what more can I do to reach them?’” The student is thus placed at the center of the learning process, and the teacher learns to adapt processes and techniques to teach children the next functional learning step.

- ◆ *For CETT teachers, this new way of thinking about their practice and new ways of teaching affect several key aspects of instructional practice.* First, traditional practices such as lecturing to students, assigning simple dictation, or giving “*planas*” as homework – in which students copy a word or set of words multiple times – are no longer the main or only types of instructional activities. CETT teachers were observed to have integrated more participatory activities throughout the subregions.

A teacher might read a story to the students, asking inferential questions to promote comprehension, and then have students re-read the story from a poster, or re-tell it in their own words. Then, using letters from the story title, groups of students might work together, forming other words as a team, and then writing them. Often these activities were structured around a particular letter, or letter pair.

- ◆ This more active learning may have been possible, in part, because it appeared that *these students were able to read earlier in the first grade than students taught by non-CETT teachers.* Though the study was not conceived as a measure of student outcomes, on an impressionistic level the evaluators agreed that student reading was further developed in CETT schools than in non-CETT. Teachers, too, told evaluators that most of their first-grade students could read, and that this was a clear difference from the prior year.

In fact, in most CETT classrooms, students had by and large advanced beyond the stage of needing specific instruction in phonological awareness. Teachers employed it on occasion, when necessary during class exercises. This was markedly different than in non-CETT classrooms, where phonological awareness had not been taught, and the method employed had not had the desired effect: students were generally not reading or writing in the comparison first grades. Again, as this was a study of teacher behavior, students were not tested to determine outcomes; rather, these are evaluators’ impressionistic data based on observations of students’ performance during the classroom visits.

- ◆ *CETT teachers also provided more opportunities for their students to practice oral and written expression.* More than 80 percent of CETT teachers implemented practices to promote oral language development, writing skills, and the understanding of the functions of written text. Teachers discussed their efforts to provide children the tools and opportunity to become “producers of texts.” In an interview, one CETT teacher in Peru commented that she “used to do all the work and students would only copy. Now they participate and create.”

Many classrooms featured “silhouettes,” or templates, of varied types of texts, from recipes to stories to letters, which were hung on the walls to show children some of the purposes and structures of written language. Using one of these structures, for example, a lesson plan emphasizing story creation might take students through the creation of an introduction, a plot, and a resolution. Students then revised their stories and created final drafts with their own artwork.

- ◆ *Evaluators cited a need for increased professional development training in the area of writing.* Though CETT teachers were more highly rated in effective writing instruction than were comparison teachers, CETT teachers had not often reached the level of near mastery on this dimension. This means that teachers needed to include more open-ended assignments in which students write about topics that interest them, better instruction in the mechanics and editing of writing, and more integration of writing practice in other areas of school work.
- ◆ *The majority of CETT teachers used practices that promoted the development of comprehension and vocabulary building skills, by encouraging students to make inferences when responding to questions.* While the CETT teachers are still at a low level of mastery of instructional strategies in this area, their mastery was much higher than that of non-CETT teachers, the majority of whom were not observed focusing on any of these dimensions. Additional training for the teachers in comprehension and vocabulary building strategies would be likely to produce excellent student results.
- ◆ *In classrooms with CETT teachers, the observers noted significantly more frequent and adept use of effective instructional skills, in ways that have been shown to improve student outcomes.* Nearly all of the CETT teachers were observed to use regularly some aspects of effective instruction. In particular, CETT teachers were observed using explicit instructional language and then modeling class assignments for students, both practices that help children to grasp and perform what is being asked of them. CETT teachers were more able to employ these techniques than were non-CETT teachers, but still need considerable instruction to master their use. CETT teachers were not yet as adept at helping a student master a skill by helpful “scaffolding,” or monitoring and bolstering his or her learning, and by corrective feedback. However, over a third of the CETT teachers had advanced to a stage where they regularly used several of the strategies and were providing immediate, appropriate feedback to students’ incorrect responses.

Another technique employed by the CETT teachers was using flexible grouping formats to target and differentiate instruction, providing students multiple opportunities to practice new skills in the smaller groups. In slightly more than 60 percent of the observations, CETT teachers were found to be using some grouping strategies. Likewise, the effective use of time and physical space can increase student engagement and decrease off-task behavior. CETT teachers were found to be much more creative at utilizing the physical space; they were more likely to display a variety of students’ work and to provide “reading corners” and other interest centers, despite great scarcity of resources.

- ◆ *The trends in development of literacy instruction skills for female teachers differed little from the overall trends.* Women made up 88 percent of the study sample. Female CETT teachers had significantly greater development in teaching the areas of phonological awareness, oral language, writing, understanding written language, vocabulary, questioning and

comprehension than female teachers in the non-CETT comparison group. Because of the small number of male CETT teachers in the study sample, no significant differences could be inferred compared with the male non-CETT teachers.

- ◆ Excessive absenteeism among disadvantaged populations like those served by the CETT takes an enormous toll on the amount of time students have to learn. Some education researchers have called “time on task” the most important variable for student outcomes. The number of children present during CETT and non-CETT classroom observations was counted and compared to the overall number of children enrolled in class. *Attendance in CETT classrooms was consistently higher than in comparison classrooms, with the greatest difference between CETT and non-CETT female students.* However, due to small sample size, we are unable to link this finding statistically and conclusively to CETT.
- ◆ *Strategies for involving parents and the local education community in student learning activities were similar between CETT and non-CETT teachers.* More than 96.6 percent of the CETT teachers and 96 percent of the non-CETT teachers reported achieving parental contact to some degree. The strategies, however, consisted principally of sending notes to parents about official meetings or the progress of their children. Few teachers reported encouraging parents to visit or assist in class. Teachers asserted that most parents did not help with homework and generally attributed this to the low educational level of the parents.
- ◆ While in all subregions, few CETT teachers could be said to be at the mastery level as defined in the stages of development, the evaluation team found their progress very impressive. It was not to be expected that teachers could reach mastery or even near mastery level in just one year of training, especially considering the drastic changes they were striving to make in their practice and the considerable load of content they learned throughout the intensive first year of training. However, *in less than a year’s time, the CETT teachers had made remarkable progress in terms of their observed instructional practices, and in their own knowledge and reflection on their practice.*
- ◆ *One dimension in which non-CETT teachers were as successful as CETT teachers was in the implementation of phonics skills.* Evaluators suggested that this finding probably reflected the fact that phonics instruction is the area most closely aligned with the way teachers already taught. Therefore, both sample groups were doing a fairly good job.
- ◆ *Fluency should be an area for additional in-service teacher training through the CETTs.* There was no significant difference between CETT and non-CETT teachers in fluency building skills, as neither group was using fluency building techniques well. Fluency is an important link between phonological skills and comprehension, and building these skills includes providing word banks, repeated readings, or “reader’s theater” in which children read parts of a play aloud.
- ◆ *Additional professional development is needed in differentiated instruction – targeting instruction to students’ individual needs.* It is one of the more complex instructional skills to master, and involves considerable planning effort on the part of the teacher. It is also more difficult to carry out in class as a teacher learns this skill and puts it into practice. Additionally, to employ differentiated instruction, teachers will need to develop their abilities to use assessment techniques and progress monitoring in the classroom. The teachers in the

sample tended to teach the same material to all children in the same ways. However, evaluators noted that CETT teachers were more likely than non-CETT teachers to mention use of a diagnostic focus in their interviews.

- ◆ *The evaluators noted a need for increased teacher training in managing classroom behavior, including the use of students' time.* Although CETT teachers received higher rankings on classroom climate than did non-CETT teachers, substantial disruption was noted in some classrooms, probably caused by a combination of factors. One is that many teachers have made a considerable effort to treat pupils less harshly than they did formerly, but have not yet found the successful balance needed to establish a climate that encourages cooperation and learning. CETT teachers are inexperienced with the new techniques, so that student engagement levels might ebb and flow as the teacher works with the new skills. Furthermore, the more active and participatory teaching typified by CETT methodologies involve more response from students, more movement and sometimes more noise.

Many teachers made concerted efforts to create a positive but disciplined environment in the classroom. Together, teachers and students compiled a list of classroom rules of conduct, which were posted on classroom walls. Those teachers had learned to use that agreed-upon list when reminding students to pay attention and to respect the other students.

However, considerable time off-task was noted in both non-CETT and CETT classrooms, and though CETT teachers were evaluated slightly higher than comparison teachers on effective use of student time, the scores overall were low. Interestingly, continued professional development in differentiated instruction, recommended above, would help teachers deal with behavior management and time on task as well. When teachers learn better to juggle the differing needs of students in their classrooms by being able to provide them interesting assignments, students will be more involved in their learning.

CETT Teachers and Principals React to the Program

1. Teachers

Of the 114 teachers observed and interviewed, 89 were trained by CETT and 25 were not. Teachers were asked about their own priorities in their classrooms, and the degree to which they were satisfied with student outcomes. Not surprisingly, all the teachers in the sample hoped for better results for their students; however, in observations and interviews the study team saw several key distinctions in how CETT teachers articulated their goals, what they need to advance those goals, and the likelihood of achieving them.

- *CETT teachers reported seeing a remarkable difference in their first graders' reading progress, compared to that of the prior year.* With that knowledge, were more confident that they were on the right track. Children were reading more, or reading faster (34%), and learning more actively, with less timidity (21.6%).
- *CETT teachers were more able to identify a philosophy and method* than were their counterparts, and to articulate areas in which they need further training.
- *Some 95 percent of CETT teachers cited literacy as their highest priority, while 76 percent of comparison teachers did so.*

- *More CETT teachers (64%) than non-CETT (40%) had learned and attempted to treat student errors more constructively by methods other than simply critiquing or correcting the students.*

There was no area in which CETT teachers were not satisfied with the program, with the exception that most wanted more training. One component that teachers praised especially was the follow-on routine of visits in classrooms by trainers or reading specialists. Many cited a trainer or reading specialist as the person they consulted with questions on practice. Also cited as helpful were the teacher literacy circles, or groups for sharing experiences and addressing topics of interest. A few teachers had even taken leadership roles in these groups, putting together agendas and exercises to practice new skills as a team. Several teachers did mention that they would appreciate more demonstrations from trainers or reading specialists on exactly how to handle different student situations, such as assessment and regrouping, treating errors productively, or employing effective instructional skills. Study team members agreed that such demonstrations would prove enormously useful for teachers as they practice new techniques.

2. Principals

Sixty-five interviews were held with school principals—49 in CETT schools and 16 in non-CETT schools. Principals were asked questions about their overall priorities for their schools, their literacy goals, satisfaction with their literacy program, their philosophy of literacy instruction, and their role and supervisory practices in relation to the literacy program. Their responses revealed many similarities between CETT and non-CETT principals; however, differences were noted in several key areas.

- *More CETT principals saw literacy as their highest goal, more mentioned comprehension as a specific literacy goal, and more expressed satisfaction with their literacy programs.*
- *Thirty percent of CETT principals specifically mentioned CETT methodologies as their preferred approach to reading and were able to describe these methodologies, while many other CETT principals described methodologies compatible with CETT goals.*
- *In terms of supervision, CETT and non-CETT principals reported making similar numbers of classroom visits, but CETT principals had more flexible approaches to supervision, stating that they focused on teachers who needed more help.*
- *Some dissemination of CETT ideas was noted in favorable comments made by non-CETT principals about the CETT program. Furthermore, some CETT principals made direct efforts to replicate CETT training for all of the teachers in their schools.*

Successful Practices Across the LAC Region

As noted earlier in the report, for the purposes of this first study of CETT classroom practices, successful subregional practices were defined as those practices in which at least 25 percent of CETT teachers and less than 25 percent of non-CETT teachers were at near mastery or mastery. Teachers who are near mastery demonstrate improved form and substance in the implementation of new or enhanced practices and have developed a more sophisticated understanding of the teaching of literacy. Teachers at the mastery level have internalized the practice and implement the practice consistently. In the following sections, we mention the dimensions on which each

subregion produced the most successful results, relative to their comparison schools. Such data may be used to inform future exchange between the CETTs, and mutual learning.

1. Andean CETT Successful Practices

- ◆ *Andean CETT teachers had consistently greater percentages at the higher levels of literacy instruction than comparison groups on all study dimensions.* Over 40 percent of teachers were implementing phonological awareness and oral language instruction at mastery or near mastery level, teaching phonological awareness explicitly and in the other contexts. They prompted students to use their knowledge of the sounds of letters to spell and sound out words and students were observed using this strategy independently and to help peers.
- ◆ *Teachers in CETT classrooms provided students with multiple opportunities to use oral language in both structured and unstructured formats.* Students participated in discussions, listened to and discussed texts, and learned songs and poems. Students were active participants, answering and posing questions, providing opinions, and initiating discussions.
- ◆ *Teachers at the near mastery and mastery level employed behavior management practices* such as the use of posted rules, review of rules, a shared set of behavioral expectations, and explicit and appropriate consequences for misbehavior. Students in these classrooms tended to be more engaged in instruction and less frequent off-task behavior was observed.

2. Caribbean CETT Successful Practices

- ◆ *The Caribbean CETT teachers had consistently greater percentages at the higher levels of professional development than the comparison group on most of the effective instruction dimensions of the study.* They implemented practices that helped students understand the forms and functions of books. Teachers read to students using big books and encouraged discussions about the books. They also provided reading centers in their classrooms where students read independently. Teachers in the Caribbean were able to identify an educational philosophy and discuss why they used various instructional strategies, including some classroom assessment techniques. They were also able to articulate goals for their own continued growth, and they tended to work together with other teachers, both in CETT-sponsored activities and on their own initiative.
- ◆ For many CETT teachers the idea of reading aloud regularly to children was a new concept. *Their ability to incorporate this reading aloud actively in curriculum helped children to enjoy books and become highly motivated readers.* CETT teachers also worked to discuss words in the stories to build vocabulary and use predictions and discussion about the story to develop oral expression and comprehension.

2. Central America and Dominican Republic CETT Successful Practices

- ◆ *The Central American and Dominican Republic CETT teachers had consistently greater percentages at higher levels of professional development than the comparison group on all but one of the effective instruction areas of the study.* Teachers who were at the near mastery and mastery level taught both letter names and sounds and consistently used letter sounds throughout their lessons. Student use of phonemic awareness was observed as they participated in activities to make words, dictation and writing activities, and reading activities.
- ◆ *Teachers demonstrated strong and consistent implementation of practices that helped students develop oral language skills.* CETT teachers integrated discussions and activities to develop concepts and vocabulary in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes throughout the reading language arts lesson. For example, teachers would conduct whole class discussions of books or texts read, teach students songs and poems, and form heterogeneous small groups for discussions on a variety of topics. The most common style of discourse was description, but some teachers also taught students to use other discourse styles such as persuasion and compare and contrast.

Parent and Community Involvement

CETT schools by definition are in poor, disadvantaged areas, and comments from interviewees about parental participation reflected this fact. Parental participation was viewed as problematic by 49 percent of the principals, and by about two-thirds of teachers, with support compromised by poverty, parents' work schedules, and illiteracy. Thirty-two percent of all principals mentioned that significant numbers of their students' parents were illiterate. On the other hand, 41 percent of principals described parent participation in positive terms, saying that those who could help did so.

Parents are generally aware of the CETTs, and a majority of principals and teachers described parents' reactions to the CETTs as very positive. Several of those commented that there had been difficulty with the parents initially because the methodology was different from what they were accustomed to, but that attitudes had changed during the year. Teachers credited this change in part to their own efforts to inform parents about the new program and its benefits. Teachers also credited the uncommon successes their students were having: these successes had allayed many parents' initial concerns. Parents who had had older children pass through the same school setting were said to have commented on the difference as well.

Many principals mentioned support given by parents in physical ways, such as building furniture, repairing a roof, assisting with food preparation or cleaning in classrooms. Although many reported parents coming to classrooms to assist with special events, none stated that parents came to class specifically to assist children in the instructional program.

Schools in several countries held literacy events as a form of outreach to both parents and communities. Subregional differences were noted with regard to these events. Overall, 24 percent of the schools in the sample held special CETT literacy events—most frequently in the Andean subregion. The events often took the form of pedagogical fairs, in which student work was displayed and students and teachers demonstrated reading strategies or displayed their writing and discussed the writing process.

Another type of event reported was a “reading walk” or parade, in which children marched through town carrying posters about books and literacy and sometimes wearing costumes of book characters. In some of these walks, children interviewed passersby about their attitudes toward literacy and whether they thought reading was important. This kind of event is important for increasing parents’ pride in the school and interest in supporting the literacy program, and can be helpful to the creation of a broader network of support for schools in their communities. Several of the events involved support from the local community and some received attention from the wider community, including coverage in the local press.

Recommendations

Though CETT teachers were clearly more advanced than non-CETT teachers on almost all of the teaching dimensions examined in the study, the fact that few had consistently reached mastery or near-mastery indicated a distinct need for further intervention. *After examining the main findings of the research, the study team’s key cross-regional recommendation is that all participating CETT teachers need additional training in most areas of professional development.* Improving the training for future iterations, with an eye toward strengthening certain components, will also have a significant positive impact. But the danger of leaving teachers with this partial development is that they will not be able to sustain the gains or proceed to improve them.

Moreover, drawing on qualitative observations, the study team concluded that *teachers who complete their training at a level of near mastery and mastery show more ability to share that knowledge with another generation of teachers.* Teachers with deeper knowledge, practice and confidence levels are more able to mentor other teachers or take on leadership roles in their schools and teacher development circles. The ability of the CETTs to make long-term, lasting impact would be enhanced by continuing the training of these teachers, to bring them to a higher stage of development. The study findings support deepening the training of teachers already in the program, rather than simply adding more teachers.

Greater training in the use of a diagnostic focus in their teaching will help teachers be more adept at using assessment data to inform their instruction, group students, and select appropriate materials for students at different levels. Such changes will lead to students working at the appropriate level and to greater student engagement, thereby contributing to more effective use of instructional time. *What is clear from these findings is that training needs to move from focusing simply on instruction by elements to more comprehensive training that cuts across elements.* Such training will need to involve highly participatory adult learning that combines theory and practice. Teachers are eager, willing and able to learn more, and as their knowledge increases, the connections between elements will become easier to bridge.

Although implications of the findings are discussed by area, many of the dimensions are interrelated. For example, increasing the variety and availability of text in the classroom will address several of the areas. Students need more opportunities to read texts at their independent level to build fluency and practice newly acquired decoding skills, and at their instructional level to increase vocabulary and conceptual knowledge and to develop and practice applying comprehension and questioning strategies. Likewise, teachers who use a diagnostic focus in

their teaching will be more adept at using assessment data to inform their instruction, grouping students, and selecting appropriate materials for students at different levels. Students working at the appropriate level will be more engaged and instructional time can be used more effectively.

Specific recommendations for improving the training in key areas are outlined below.

- ◆ **Basic Reading Skills.** Implementation of phonological awareness activities has been consistent but teachers are not able to accurately assess student progress.
 - Focus additional training on the use of progress monitoring to determine which students need additional instruction in phonological awareness.
 - Train teachers to provide students more opportunities to read independently to apply the decoding (phonics) skills they are learning in a variety of texts, and to provide students multiple opportunities to build fluency.
 - The training program needs also to develop or provide different levels of texts for different purposes: text at students' independent level for fluency building, text at instructional level to practice decoding, and text to build vocabulary and comprehension. There are frequently no books of any kind in schools in the region.

- ◆ **Understanding Text.** Teachers have begun to teach comprehension and vocabulary and to use questioning to enhance instruction but the majority has not moved to teaching students strategies they themselves can use while reading to understand new vocabulary.
 - Continue training in these dimensions with a focus on strategy instruction in comprehension, vocabulary development, and questioning.
 - Train teachers how to provide students more opportunities for wide reading to develop and apply vocabulary and reading comprehension independently.

- ◆ **Oral and Written Expression.** Teachers are beginning to provide many different activities to teach students to use oral and written expression for a variety of purposes.
 - Focus training on strategies for conducting “read alouds,” the writing process, effective writing practices such as the use of planning sheets and graphic organizers, and oral language activities in a variety of formats and for a variety of functions.

- ◆ **Instructional Practices.** Teachers have enhanced their instructional practice—in particular, the use of explicit language and modeling were implemented consistently. The use of guided practice before moving to independent practice was used less often as were the effective use of corrective feedback and scaffolding.
 - Focus on training teachers how to use scaffolding and corrective feedback to implement diagnostic focus more effectively, and to focus on the use and interpretation of progress monitoring and diagnostic measures to inform instruction.
 - Provide further training in differentiating instruction, especially in appropriate remediation activities.

- ◆ **Classroom Management.** Teachers have made changes in their behavior management techniques but off-task behavior was observed consistently across sites.
 - Provide additional training in the use of various grouping formats and in the use of assessment data to group students for various instructional purposes.
 - The training should also provide effective positive behavior management practices, and a stronger focus on the effective use of time. These dimensions, addressed in conjunction, give teachers ways to establish a format that is conducive to individual student engagement, in ways that tend to reduce disruptive behavior.

- ◆ **Reflective Practices.** Although many teachers are able to articulate an educational philosophy and can identify a variety of teaching approaches, this knowledge is not always translated into practice. This reflects the difficulty of deep change in teacher practice: once understanding the theory, they must have time to test out and adopt the new methodologies for themselves.
 - Focus training on deepening teachers' knowledge of various teaching methodologies and the appropriate use of each.
 - Trainers' visits to classrooms should include candid feedback on how the teacher's performance meets the theoretical goals of the methods practiced.

- ◆ **School-level Factors.** Training should be provided to principals that will enable them to strengthen their instructional support strategies.
 - Many principals indicated a need to receive more training that would acquaint them with the specifics of the new strategies their teachers are learning so that they can provide more effective instructional support. This will be important for the long-run sustainability of the project.
 - Principals also noted many concerns about relationships with parents and parents' ability to assist with the reading program.
 - Training for principals should include strategies to involve parents in the literacy program.

Final Comments

This study found that teachers in the CETT program have been very successful in improving their skills in the teaching of reading and writing and have achieved a higher level of competency on the dimensions studied than teachers from comparison schools who did not participate in the CETT in-service training. Though these results are heartening and promising, the study team also offers in this report a list of recommendations that would strengthen and improve teacher and student outcomes. Using such recommendations would help to ensure that teachers in whom so much has already been invested are trained not only to use these new techniques, but to analyze and weigh the changes in their classrooms, intervene in their own processes more effectively, and spark ongoing professional development through their own ability to mentor others. Enhancing and extending the effects of CETT through these recommendations promises to sustain the capabilities newly produced and invoke a multiplier effect throughout these school systems and countries.