CENTRE FOR

Democratising
Information

South African Community Capability Study
Insights into the role of the Community Work Programme in Public Primary Schools
02 July 2013

EMPLOYMENT
PROMOTION
PROGRAMME

TIPS

Content of study

- Methodology

- **Contribution** of Community Work Programme to Public Primary Schools

- **Perceptions** about Community Work Programme in Public Primary Schools

- Public Primary Schools as **Workplaces** for Community Work Programme

- **Working for** Community Work Programme

- **Contribution** of Community Work Programme to **Participants' Personal Lives**

- **Other Needs** Community Work Programme May be Able to Address in Public Primary Schools

- **Recommendations** & **Conclusion**

Aims & Objectives: CDI Education Research Project

- The CDI Education Research Project aims to understand the state of learning and teaching in public primary schools

- Findings from the study are used to formulate a set of recommendations for interventions supporting public primary schools in improving the quality of learning and teaching

- Specific objectives:

  - challenges facing learning and teaching in South African public primary schools

  - dominant classroom practices in schools located in poor communities

  - factors contributing to current classroom practices

  - learning opportunities in the home

  - role of digital technology in public primary schooling

Aims & Objectives: CDI
Community Work Programme in Schools Research Project

- The Context of Public Primary Education Research Project = **vehicle to investigate** perceptions related to the contributions made and value added by the CWP

- **Stages of interviews:**

  - Initial stage of the interviews respondents were not directly probed on issues relating to the CWP

  - later the interviews included a set of questions relating to the CWP, specifically on awareness, value, challenges and needs of the school that such a programme can address

- **Objectives** of the study are to investigate the:

  - **perceived value** of CWP amongst public primary schools

  - **perceived challenges** facing CWP in working in public primary schools

  - kinds of **work interventions** that CWP may be able to make to improve the quality of learning and teaching in public primary schools

Methodology

- **In-depth interviews** and **focus group discussions**

- **Sample:** 10 schools that are beneficiaries of the Community Work Programme in four provinces

  - Randfontein in Gauteng, uMthwalume in KwaZulu Natal, Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga, and Joe Morolong in Northern Cape

- The reader should keep the **qualitative nature** and **perception-based nature** of the project in account when going through the results

- Fieldwork conducted in October 2012 collecting information via:

  - 9 focus group discussions with teachers

  - 6 focus group discussions with parents

  - 10 focus group discussions with learners

  - 8 focus group discussions with school management teams

  - 4 focus group discussions with Community Work Programme participants

  - 4 focus group discussions with Community Work Programme coordinators

  - 4 in-depth interviews with circuit managers

  - 4 in-depth interviews with Community Work Programme site managers.

RESULT SUMMARY:
Community Work Programme in Public Primary Schools

Contribution of Community Work Programme to Public Primary Schools

- Assist to implement the **National School Nutrition Programme** (feeding scheme)

  - by providing fresh vegetables from the food gardens established by CWP as well as cooking, serving and cleaning the dishes

- Assist with **establishing and maintaining community vegetable gardens** in schools

  - that provides fresh vegetables to the school, vulnerable learners, and needy households in the community

- Assist with **general gardening** by planting flowers, keeping the lawn manicured, and clearing the weeds

- Assist with **routine school maintenance** and **school upgrades**

- Assist with **keeping the schools clean**

  - especially cleaning toilets and the common spaces

  - However, it appears that cleaning of classrooms by CWP participants are not universal across schools that are beneficiaries of CWP and this remains the tasks of learners in most schools in the study

Contribution of Community Work Programme to Public Primary Schools

- Assist with **orphaned learners**

  - by playing with them and providing them with fresh vegetables to take home

- Assist with **school administration**

  - by photocopying, typing, and entering data e.g. marks

- Assist with **recordkeeping**

  - by monitoring attendance and maintaining attendance registers

- Assist **teachers in the classroom**

  - by supervising when teachers are not in their classrooms i.e. when teachers are in meetings or workshops or absent; providing individual support to learners; marking learners' books, and implementing lesson plans

Contribution of Community Work Programme to Public Primary Schools

- Assist with **sporting activities**

  - by preparing sports fields, coaching and encouraging playing sports at school

- Participate in **school events** especially sports

- Assist with **maintaining order** in the playgrounds and **disciplining learners** in their presence

- Assist with creating a **safe playground**

  - by removing stones and keeping the ground level

- Assist with **forging a link with the community**

  - by relaying messages from parents to teachers and vice versa

- Assist with **road maintenance**

  - hence improving access to school during the rainy season

Perceptions about Community Work Programme in Public Primary Schools

- **Grateful**

  - Generally parents, teachers, school managers, and circuit managers

  - Makes their schools cleaner, safer, and more attractive

- **Insufficiently informed**

  - Key stakeholders

  - Role of the CWP in contributing to community wellbeing

  - Providing a basic income through employment opportunities

  - The actual role and potential of the programme in their schools (some)

Public Primary Schools as Workplaces for Community Work Programme

- CWP is introduced to **school via engagement with the principal**

- Principals and CWP coordinators decide on the **work priorities** in schools and coordinators oversee that the work is done

  - This modus operandi seems to be working and **prevents conflict** & **exploitation** of CWP participants

- Programme **does not seem to be formally introduced** to learners, parents, school managers, support staff and teachers

  - Creates a **distance** between CWP participants and the professional and support staff at schools

  - Leading to **conflicting reports about collegiality** in schools

    - Some CWP participants have been **well received** in schools

    - Some CWP participants are **shunned** and are perceived as **'spies'** or treated as **outsiders**

Public Primary Schools as Workplaces for Community Work Programme

- **Challenges:**

    – In some schools the support staff feel **threatened** that CWP participants will replace them and this fear contributes to a **hostile working environment**

    – Similarly, several CWP participants working as teacher assistants have the impression that **teachers are not fulfilling their professional duties** and responsibilities in class and that their **presence creates anxiety** amongst these teachers that the teacher assistants **may expose their negligence**

Working for Community Work Programme

- Participants **enjoy** the nature of work

- They are **proud** of working in their communities and for their communities

- In some cases their respective communities consider their work as **low in status**

- **Challenges:**

  - Late payments and lack of equipment, consumables, and safety gear

  - Limited amount of public land and water to establish more food gardens frustrates participants

  - Management tensions – some participants feel that their direct line managers are unfair and their direct managers feel that the workers are lazy and require constant supervision

Contribution of Community Work Programme to Participants' Personal Lives

- **Securing a basic income** to meet some of their essential needs and household priorities

- Becoming more **self-confident** and able to be **more assertive**

- **Engaging** with their communities and **learning** about their communities

- Gaining **work experience**

- Attaining **technical skills** from doing different work

- Feeling **confident** in securing livelihoods from the workplace experiences

- Getting **fresh vegetables** from the community food gardens they establish and maintain

Other Needs Community Work Programme May be Able to Address in Public Primary Schools

- **Cleaning classrooms** in foundation phase

- Assisting in **libraries** and **computer laboratories**

- Improving the **playground** and making it safe for playing (such as levelling)

- Supporting **orphan** and **child-headed households**

- Training **teacher assistants**

Recommendations: Short-term

- **Raising awareness of the broader goals of CWP in beneficiary schools**
  - Understanding CWP contribution to community wellbeing and opportunities it offers to under-resourced schools; especially in school improvement programmes

- **Formally inducting and introducing CWP participants to schools**
  - Improve effective deployment to meet school needs & reduce fear of support staff that CWP will take their work functions, or spy on teachers and expose under-performance

- **Community vegetable gardens in schools - schools as part of community life**
  - Vegetable gardens on school property serve vulnerable households & supplement the provisions of the National School Nutrition Programme
  - Can create stronger links between schools and the communities that they serve

- **Leveraging CWP participants in promoting greater parental involvement in their children's schools**
  - CWP participants who are parents learn about formal demands of learning and ways in which they need to help their children's school careers
  - CWP participants can assist with advocacy about the role of parents in school improvement and in their children's learning

- **Addressing implementation challenges that undermine the programme**
  - Especially providing consumables, safety gear, and equipment

Recommendations: Longer-term

- **Offering structured workplace training**

  - CWP participants are 'learning by doing', however this can be improved through structured workplace training opportunities

- **Intensive training for teacher assistants**

  - In some instances, CWP participants perform the functions of teacher's assistants in various ways

  - While this role was generally accepted by teachers in the study; CWP participants noted that 'negligent' teachers were less supportive and considered them as 'spies'

  - For teacher assistants to contribute to learning and teaching, there will need to be a greater level of screening of appropriate candidates for this role, as well as intensive training in aspects such as classroom management, learning theories, and using learning, teaching support material, and the requirements of the National Curriculum statement will be necessary – depending on the tasks deemed appropriate after further investigation

  - This would require some shifts in the design of the programme, with more specialised support (and appropriate budgets) for this group of CWP participants

Conclusion

- CWP = significant contribution to make public primary schools **safer**, **cleaner**, **more attractive** and **productive** - enhancing the learning environment at schools

- CWP participants create an **organic link between the schools and the community**

    – Strengthened by the vegetable gardens

- CWP participants as **teachers' assistants** = they are making a positive contribution to overcrowded and under-resourced schools

    – Need to further develop this part of the programme

    – Clear guidelines on what tasks can and cannot by delegated to the teacher's assistants would be required

- Lastly, the **greater awareness** amongst CWP participants (especially those who are parents of learners enrolled in the school they work in) of the way schools function (or dysfunction) and the role of parents in strengthening schools and supporting their children's learning may offer avenues to build stronger ties between communities, parents and the schools

    – Potential to spark greater parental involvement in schools in learning, school improvement, and governance

Democratising information: A prerequisite for the future
melani@cdi.org.za