



**5th Meeting of the “QualiFLY” Project
Hamburg, 19–22 February 2007
“Monitoring and evaluating family literacy programmes”
Report**

The fifth meeting of the QualiFLY project was held from 19 to 22 February 2007 in Hamburg. The following participants attended the meeting:

Prof. Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield, England
Mr Eric Nedelec, Agence nationale de lutte contre l'illettrisme, France
Dr. Peter May, State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development, Hamburg, Germany
Dr. Gabriele Rabkin, State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development, Hamburg, Germany
Ms Carla Barozzi, Università Popolare di Roma (UPTER), Italy
Mr Luciano Daina, Università LUISS di Roma, Italy
Marthese Cini, Foundation for Educational Services, Malta
Sandro Spiteri, Foundation for Educational Services, Malta
Ms Snoeks Desmond, The Family Literacy Project, South Africa
Prof. (Ms) Ayhan Aksu-Koç, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey
Prof. (Ms) Sevda Bekman, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey
Ms Ceren Lordoglu Tuz, Mother-Child Education Foundation (AÇEV), Turkey
Ms Maren Elfert, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

The following participated temporarily in the meeting:

Ms Anne Bock, University of Bremen, Germany
Peter Daschner, Director, State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development, Hamburg, Germany
Ms Anna Fricke, Germany
Dr. Sven Nickel, University of Bremen, Germany
Ms Marissa Pablo-Dürr, Pedagogical Institute Nürnberg, Germany
Ms Yvonne Zirra, University of Bremen
Ms Derya Akalin, Mother-Child Education Foundation (AÇEV), Turkey
Ms Imke Behr, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Ms Bettina Bochynek, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Dr. Ulrike Hanemann, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Ms Lisa Krolak, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Dr. Adama Ouane, Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

Teachers and facilitators working in the FLY project: Ms Songül Ala, Ms Tami Alon, Ms Aysen Ciker, Ms Andrea Dünnwald, Ms Sonja Gringel, Ms Marianne Heidbruch, Ms Annette Huber, Ms Tatjana Köhne, Ms Mechthild Langemeier, Ms Anna Lies Liedtke, Ms Ilona Ozimek, Mr Christian Schulz, Ms Ute Stather

The meeting started with a welcome by the Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Adama Ouane, an introduction to the QualiFLY project by the coordinator, Maren Elfert, and a presentation of a TV documentary on the family literacy pilot project “FLY” in Hamburg, commented by Gabriele Rabkin, coordinator of the FLY project. In the course of the meeting evaluations of several family literacy projects from different countries were presented. Discussions addressed the aims, results and main challenges of evaluating family literacy programmes as well as the impact, challenges and limitations of family literacy programmes as they are reflected by the evaluations.

Snoeks Desmond presented the Family Literacy Project (FLP) in South Africa, a small NGO running its project in eleven sites in rural KwaZulu Natal where people live under poor conditions with high unemployment rates. The project started to work with adults to support them to help their young children to be prepared for learning to read and write. After the first year many mothers expressed the wish to learn to read and write as well. Local women were trained to become literacy facilitators and teach women to read and write. The project also includes home visiting. Members of the FLP visit neighbouring families to talk about health issues and activities for young children.

Evaluations of the FLP: The FLP had an external evaluation every year since it began in 2000. The presentation focused on the two latest evaluations conducted in 2006. One evaluation used an adaptation of the *Photo Voice* technique. The evaluation which took place between May 2006 and November 2006 involved the facilitators over several months. Facilitators were introduced to *Photo Voice* and given lessons on how to use the cameras. They went to people’s houses and took photographs having in mind that these photographs should show that people were beginning to read and enjoyed reading. The first photographs were taken and displayed at a team meeting. The comments made by the group members were written down. After the coordinator of the evaluation met with each facilitator to talk about the photos, they took the next pool of photographs. All the photos and story captions were displayed and group members were encouraged to talk about the photographs and chose the ones they thought were the best reflection of reading in their community. A written evaluation of the process was completed by each facilitator.

Another evaluation used the *Most Significant Change* (MSC) approach to evaluate whether changes could be observed in the homes, also with regard to the sharing of health messages.

The coordinator designed ways from the MSC approach to gather information from different levels of the home visiting programme. She included other tools to collect information such as:

- Monthly reports by the facilitators and other people visiting the homes (Peace Corps volunteers, child health specialist);
- Interviews with different members of the project;
- Meeting with facilitators on progress in the home visits;
- Discussions with group members;
- Review of the home visit books.

This revealed that not all health messages were passed on equally. For example the participation of men in the care of young children and messages about the transmission of the HI virus were difficult issues for the home visitors.

Both evaluations promoted a sense of ownership of the evaluation process and observation and reflection in the facilitators and motivated the facilitators to bring about visible changes in reading patterns in their groups.

Ayhan Aksu-Koç presented an evaluation of the Mother Child Education Program which is an early childhood and parent involvement programme for parents with limited formal education, involving weekly meetings to train mothers on educational activities with their preschool children; weekly group discussions on effective parenting; and monthly home visits to encourage literacy activities at home. The aim of the evaluation study was to investigate the effects of home enrichment as an intergenerational intervention programme. The programme was evaluated

- immediately after its completion (after six months)
- at the end of the first grade
- at the end of the fourth grade

The evaluation had a quasi-experimental design involving one experimental and two control groups. Children were assessed in four stages (pretest/baseline; end of the program (post-test 1); follow-up I (end of first grade); follow-up II (end of 4th grade).

In addition, mothers were interviewed and observations made.

With regard to the immediate effects of the intervention, it was not apparent for all variables when compared to control groups. The follow-up I evaluation showed significant effects on mechanical print skills, but not on reading comprehension. Challenges: The quality of the school should have been taken more into consideration, as well as the cooperation with teachers to find out differences in performance. More age-appropriate intervention measures should have been used. It is difficult to draw conclusions as random selection is rarely possible.

The follow-up II showed impact on the development of skills necessary for assimilation of verbal material. It also showed that exposing the child to narrative discourse by book-reading and story telling develops long-term competence for text-level language use. An educated mother who engages in literacy interactions has the most positive effects.

Ceren Lordoglu of ACEV reported on current evaluation practice of the Mother Child Education Program and the Preschool Parent-Child Education Program. Effects on the literacy and numeracy skills of the children as well as the involvement of the mothers in their child's education can be seen.

Greg Brooks gave an overview on family literacy research in England which began in 1994. The major part of the programmes evaluated were devised by the Basic Skills Agency: the Family literacy demonstration programmes, 1994/95; Small grants for local programmes, 1994/95; Family Literacy for new groups, 1997/98; Family literacy and numeracy in prisons, 1998/99; Keeping Up with the Children, 2001/02; Early Start, 2001-03; Skills for Families, 2003/04; Involving Grandparents, 2006/07). Other key initiatives were: Bookstart, 1992-97; PEEP, 1998-2005; REAL, 1995-99; Sure Start, 1998 - ; the Big Book Share (family literacy in prisons), 2001-02. The evaluations used a variety of research designs (REAL: Randomised controlled trial with follow-up; PEEP: Matched groups, pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental study; Bookstart: Matched groups, post-test only; Family literacy demonstration programmes: One group, pre-test/post-test study with follow-ups; all the other BSA evaluations: One group, pre-test/post-test studies. The research methods involved parents (reading and writing tests, interviews, home literacy-related activities questionnaire), children (vocabulary, reading and writing tests) and teachers (interviews and observations).

The major findings are

- limited quantitative evidence of benefit to parents' literacy;
- better evidence of boosting parents' ability to help their children;
- good evidence of benefit to children's language and literacy.

Greg Brooks concluded that there is a lot of rhetoric around family literacy, but not enough controlled comparative research. However, it seems a very promising approach and needs to be explored further.

Peter May presented the status quo of the evaluation of the family literacy pilot project FLY in Hamburg. The evaluation followed the several phases the project has gone through so far: Prior to the start of the project in 2003/04, a pre-investigation was done to find out about the interests of the parents and the teachers and prepare the ground for the implementation. In 2004/05, in the implementation phase of the project in preschool classes (age 5), the concept was developed and evaluated and the target group described. In 2005/06 the project was extended to first grade classes (age 6). During this phase, only the impact of the project on parents and teachers has been assessed through qualitative methods (questionnaires and interviews). In 2006/07 the project is being sustained: networks are being built with other projects and learning effects of the children will be measured through quantitative methods. The summary of the evaluation results so far show the high motivation and satisfaction of facilitators and parents, little effects on the literacy behaviour of parents but stronger effects on their supporting role at home. The parents believe in the benefits of the programme for their children but the effects remain to be proved.

Marthese Cini and Sandro Spiteri presented the evaluations of the Maltese HILTI and NWAR family literacy programmes. The evaluation included questionnaires and interviews with children, parents, teachers and heads of schools, but no literacy tests. The results showed a strong correlation between parental participation in the programme and involvement in their children's education and children's educational progress. Parents, children and teachers strongly feel that participation in the programme is beneficial for personal and social development. Heads of school feel that family literacy has a positive effect on their school.

The guest from France, Éric Nedelec, officer in charge of prevention, educational partnerships and adult continuing education at ANLCI, pointed out that a family oriented perspective to literacy teaching is not common and rather new in France.

11% of the seventeen year-old struggle to understand a simple text and 4,5% have severe difficulties (source: Ministry of Defence, 2004). 9% of the French population between 18 and 65 who went to school in France can be considered functional illiterates.

The "local family programmes" is a new initiative which was created to reflect a more global approach to educational processes not only looking at schools but also at family life, informal and non-formal education and social life. The programmes aim at supporting parents whose children start school. This programme consists of various elements: improving parents' basic skills, supporting parents' parenting skills, social and cultural activities, and involving parents in school life and out of school activities. Local actors will be asked to initiate local family programmes. It is expected that these programmes will bring about new methods and will enhance local partnerships.

It is in this context that in the last two years the "Educative Achieving Programmes" (Réussite éducative) have been implemented. These programmes aim at improving the educational success of children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme starts in early childhood provisions and continues on a long-term basis. This programme marks a significant change in educational policies as it sees children not only as pupils but as individuals and takes into account their family background, peer groups and everyday life. The programme is conceived as a joint effort of actors in education, health and social work.

The main aspects addressed during the discussions among the group in the course of the meeting were the following:

What works in family literacy programmes:
Talking about things that matter to the parents.

Do learning contracts with parents: The parents say what they expect from the programme, these expectations are negotiated and aims are set (NWAR).

In Malta the children are always asked what they thought about the programme. They get more involved by signing the contract (together with their parents).

What is family literacy about?

Is family literacy a response to multicultural integration?

Or is family literacy a response to social class education?

It cannot be divided. If you address ethnicity, you address the social class at the same time. Social class is not necessarily a predictor of educational achievement.

Is it a middle class approach?

It shouldn't be either or. We need family literacy programmes and adult literacy programmes to target different people with different needs.

In many cases, family literacy is a women's empowerment programme. It's a refuge for women from a man's world. So it can be seen as positive that these programmes are mainly attended by women.

What can family literacy do?

Family literacy needs to set manageable goals, it cannot do everything.

Family literacy can diminish the gaps between the educational backgrounds.

Family literacy is about breaking the cycle of educational failure.

To involve the "difficult", "hard-to-reach" people is a long-term process and needs a very close contact. Family literacy programmes do not always reach the target group they want. To change this, programmes have to be sustained over a long period.

Avoid top-down "power relationship"

Should FL be an entitlement for parents?

FL cannot be an obligation. Preschool education should be an obligation.

In Malta, the focus goes back to the work done in the schools. After-school programmes should not compensate what can be done in the schools. In France there is awareness that the school has failed, therefore investments are currently being made in out-of-school activities.

For center-based programmes: How can it be achieved that the activities continue at home? Give homework, parents can borrow books and games and take them home (parents' suitcase).

Challenges of evaluations:

Fluctuations, lack of control groups, too many conditions, too few effects to analyze.

Not reaching the target group that you really want.

Use the evaluation to bring the change you want.

Photovoice and *The Most Significant Change* are ways of assessing that avoid the power relationship. It is a way of assessing what is meaningful to the the parents, not to evaluate them.

The impact of family literacy programmes seems promising, but there are not enough data actually proving significant effects on reading and writing skills of parents and children.

There are very little long-term evaluations except some data in the U.S. and a long-term survey carried out by Turkey which showed that a higher proportion of children who had participated in family literacy programmes studied at university.

Assessment depends on the context.

Family literacy is multidimensional. If only the literacy skills are tested, the other effects and dimensions of the programme are lost out of sight.

Evaluations are needed to prove that the programme achieves what it is aiming for.

What evaluations are needed?

Stories with numbers. For the funders, the numbers are needed. For the learners and the more holistic effects, the stories are essential as well.

What would an ideal evaluation of a family literacy programme look like:

1. There should be an intervention group and a control group, put together by random selection. Randomized control trials are rare in literacy assessments.
2. People get lost along the way, so the cohort should be big enough, e.g. 150 participants in the intervention group, 150 in the control group. The methods used should involve a pre-test and a post-test.
3. Preferably standardized tests should be used. Standard tests (e.g. phonological awareness tests, vocabulary tests, vocabulary language use, discourse competence) have the advantage that they can be generalized. The Clay test tests the reading culture at home through indicators, e.g. does the child have a favourite book?
4. The assessment should be dynamic, meaning that the child is being helped so that it can give the correct answer at a second stage. Not only pointing at something and if the child fails it gets a score of 0. The score should be more differentiated. Such an evaluation would be time-consuming and require well-trained people.
5. There should be a follow-up test after 1 year and maybe another one after 4 years. If the effect washes out over the years the effect in the first place needs to be questioned.
6. The core characteristics of family literacy evaluations is that they look both at the children and the parents.