Learning to teach for equitable learning outcomes: Lessons from sub-Sahara Africa

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Conference on Equity in learning outcomes – exploring policies, research and practice

Brussels, 5-12-2013

Photo from Panos pictures

Millions of children go to school and do not learn – GMR 2012

- Of the 650 million children, 120 million do not reach grade 4, but also the additional 130 million who are in school are failing to learn the basics.

- Learning achievements are largely determined by socio-economic status, gender and location.

- Teacher numbers have not been able to keep pace with enrolment and pupil-teacher ratios have worsened since 1999

- In a third of the one hundred countries with data, at least a quarter of teachers at primary schools are not trained to the national standard.

Inequitable Learning Outcomes

Associated with:

•Being poor/female who are least likely to learn

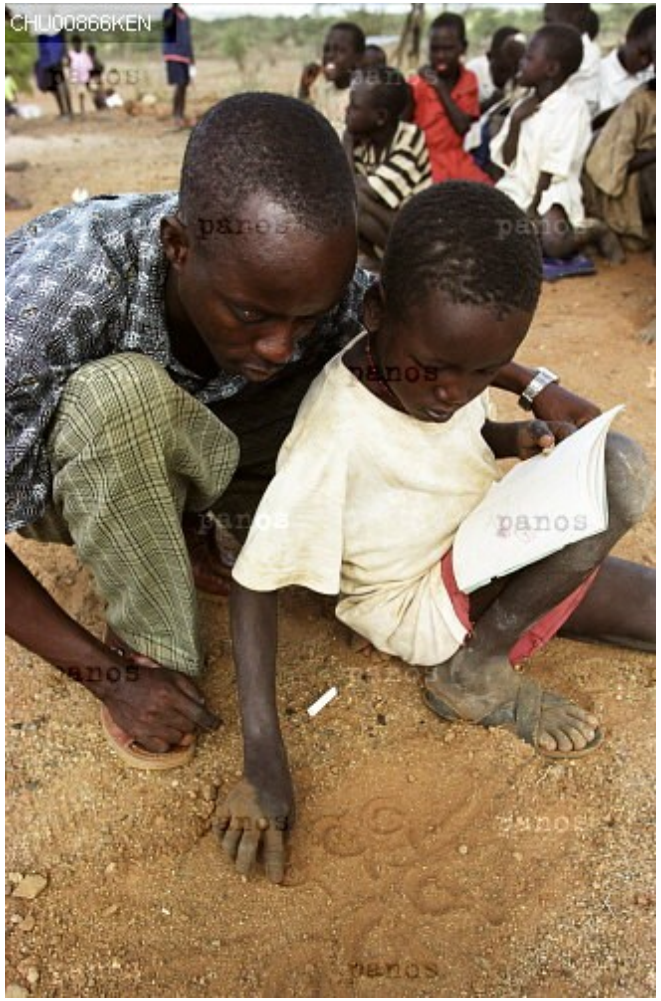
•Location, starts early and widens – e.g. in Ghana: % of grade 3 students in urban areas reaching minimum proficiency levels in English is twice that of students in rural areas, by grade 6 this has widened to three times.

•Less experienced teachers assigned to lower classes with large class sizes

E.g. data collected in Malawi in 2010 show that the number of words grade 4 students could read correctly in a minute varied from 26 in classes with 75 students to just 13 in classes with 175 students.

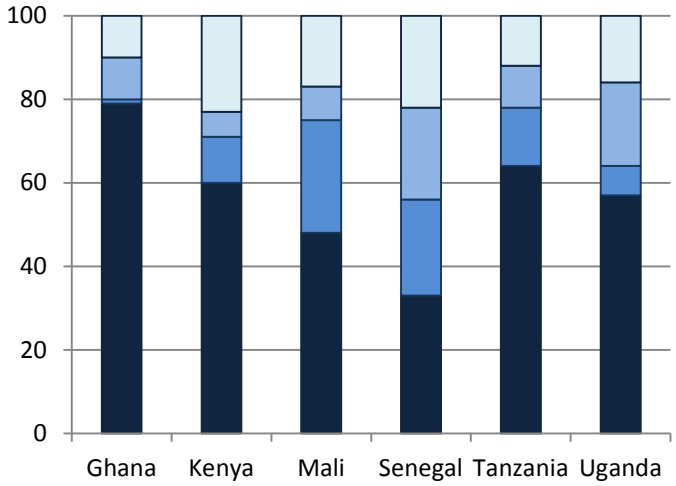
Becoming a trained teacher in SSA

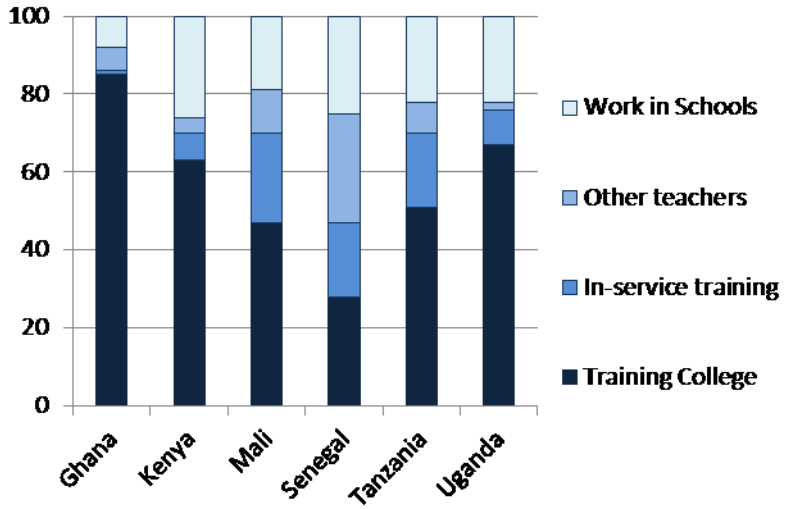
- Limited experience of learning to teach in early grades in real classrooms
- Not focused on early diagnosis of learning difficulties and how to address them
- Not sensitive to promoting equitable learning opportunities and outcomes
- Not sufficiently focused on building understanding and progression in reading and basic mathematics



- How are **trainees** prepared to teach reading and basic mathematics in the early grades?
- How do **newly qualified teachers** develop their understanding of teaching reading and basic mathematics to early grade students?

Where new teachers claim they developed best understanding of teaching Reading and Mathematics

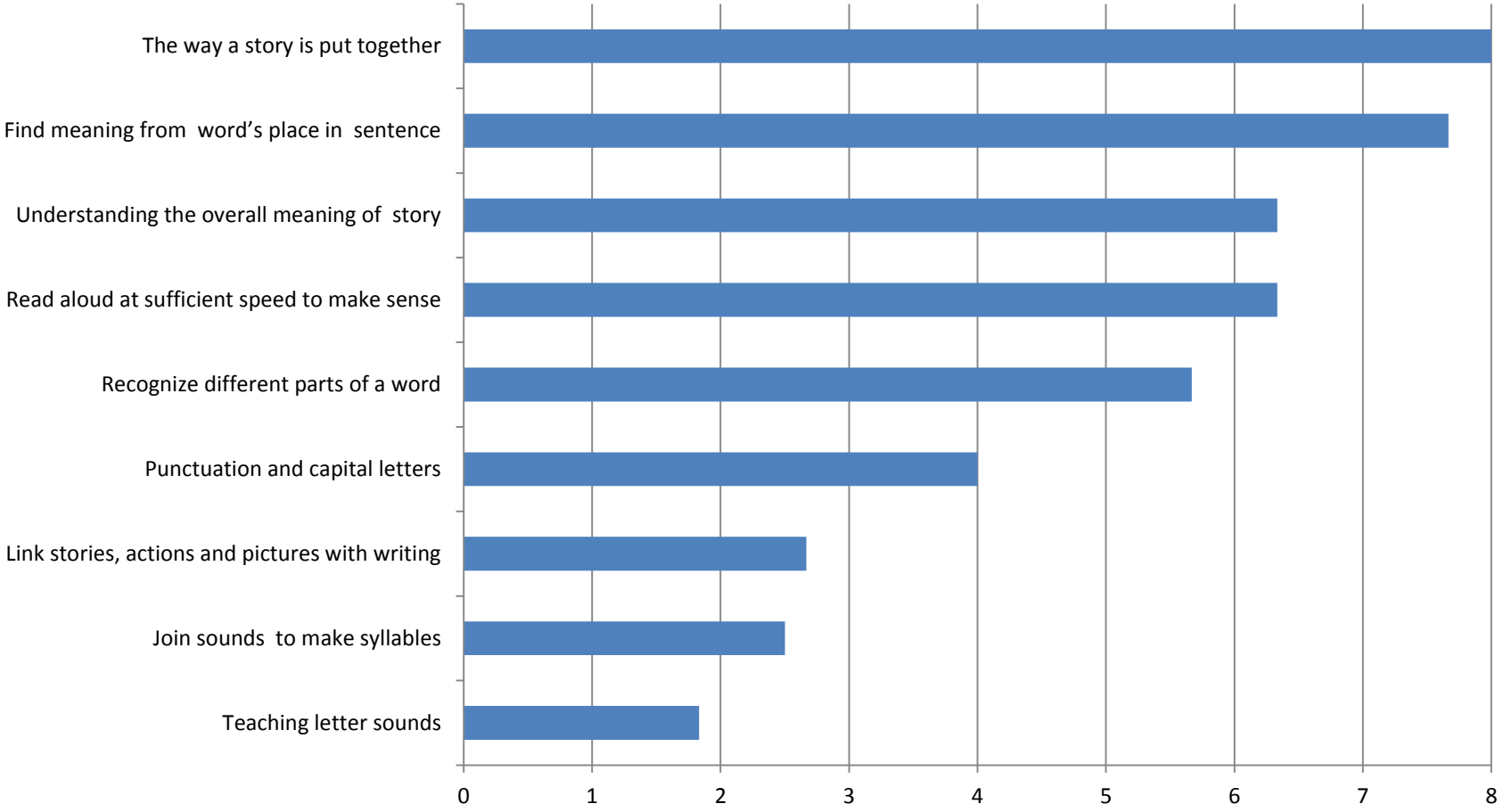




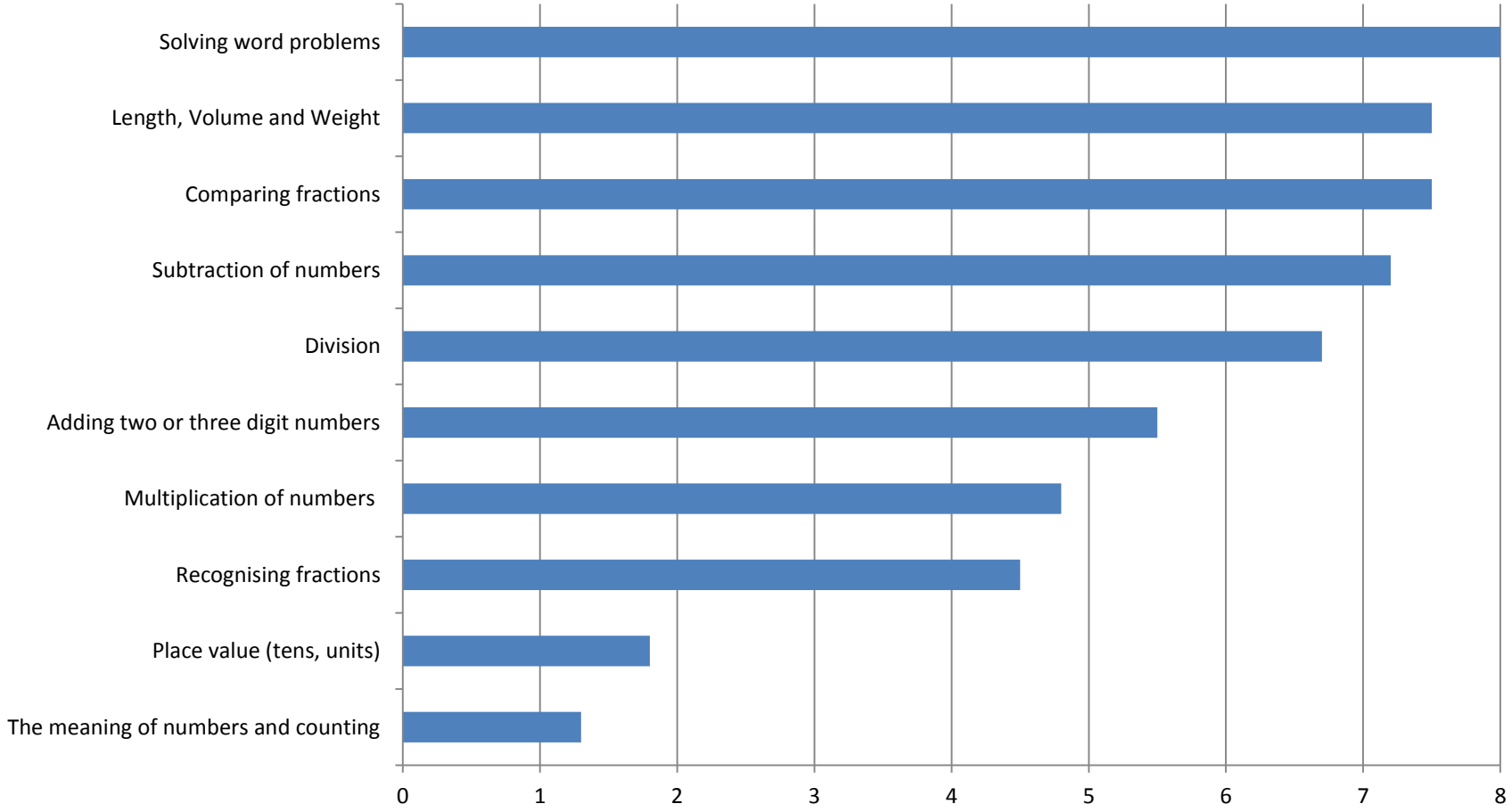
The structure of training

	Grades covered	Length of College Course	Length of Practicum
Ghana	1-9	2 years	1 year following college course – **no compulsory requirement for all trainees to experience teaching grades 1-3.**
Kenya	1-8	2 years	3 weeks with grade 1-3, 3 weeks with grade 4-5, 3 weeks with grade 6-8
Mali (college)	1-6	1 or 3 years	3 months at the end of college course then 1 whole year – **no requirement to teach grades 1-3**
Mali (short)	1-6	45 days	45 days – **no requirement to teach grades 1-3**
Senegal	1-6	6 months	3 weeks with grade 1-2, 3 weeks with grade 3-4, 3 weeks with grade 5-6
Tanzania	1-7 or 11	2 years	2 blocks 1-2 months and some single lesson practices – **no requirement to teach grades 1-3**
Uganda	1-7	2 years	3 blocks of 3-4 weeks – **no requirement to teach grades 1-3**

New Teachers average ranking of difficulty in teaching reading (1= easiest)



New Teachers average ranking of difficulty in teaching mathematics topics (1= easiest)



Uganda

- Knowledge received in Colleges divorced from understanding and practice in real classroom contexts
- ITE curriculum focuses on reading only in upper primary
- Teacher trainees positioned as ‘pupils’,
- ‘Standard’ ways of teaching rarely focuses on student learning

Mali

- Almost all of the ‘training’ in the three year college course is devoted to gaining subject knowledge.
- Tutors have no experience of teaching in primary school, even those who specialize in the methods of teaching.
- Methods teaching consists solely of simulation - ‘mock’ primary school teaching. It may not address reading at all.
- All training assumes French as medium of instruction with no recognition that many schools work with local languages.

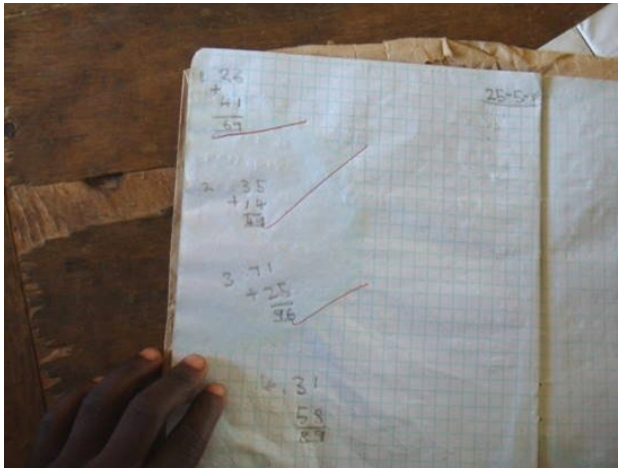
Senegal

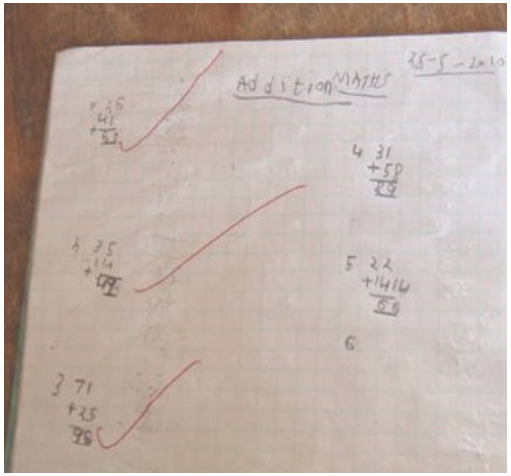
- Many tutors are familiar with primary schools and local conditions. However there is little time to do more to address classroom teaching and learning issues.

- Trainees feel very underprepared to teach maths and reading.

Kenya

- Colleges focus a lot more on theoretical aspects of learning to teach and less on challenges and learning requirements at the school level
- Maths and Language tutors have had little/no training in learning to teach at primary level
- Uncritical transfer of teachers knowledge and practices resulting in poor learning experiences for pupils
- Newly trained teachers failing to secure pupil understanding of basic maths concepts and skills in reading





Ghana

- College curriculum draws much more on the requirements of primary curriculum
- However, problems/challenges of learning to teach reading and maths in real classrooms not a strong feature of learning to teach at college level
- Uncritical transfer – not much on the challenges disadvantaged children face in learning to read and do basic maths

The way forward?

- For good or for bad – training is significant!
- Learning to teach – make identifying learning needs of disadvantaged and weak learners a critical focus
- Shift focus of learning to teach to the study of practice
- Put experienced teachers in lower grades
- Incentivise trained teachers to teach in rural areas/disadvantaged groups