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International school partnerships: Contribution to improving quality of education for rural schools in Uganda

Douglas Bourn and Madeline Bain



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Preface

This research report is one of two reports being published at the same time by the Institute of Education in partnership with Link Community Development. This report looks specifically at the Impact of School Partnerships on Rural Schools in Uganda. Its companion report, Research Report No.5, entitled Evaluating Partners in Development, is a mid-term evaluation of the Link Community Development's European Union funded Partners in Development project.

Both reports add significantly to the growing body of evidence of the impact of international school partnerships. These two reports are significant because they are two of the first published research studies that look in depth at the impact in both the Global North and the Global South.

Douglas Bourn

Director

Development Education Research Centre

Executive Summary

School linking and partnerships has been an increasingly important feature of educational practice in the UK but there has to date been little research on the impact of links on Southern schools.

Link Community Development (Link) has over ten years' experience of supporting partnerships between schools in the UK and sub-Saharan Africa. Their Link Schools Programme aims to support their wider educational development programme and its success is measured against their well established School Performance Review strategy agreed with in this case with the government in Uganda.

By focusing on schools in rural areas within the Masindi district of Uganda, this research compares the impact of links in 5 schools with 5 schools that have not had links.

Based on interviews undertaken by Link staff and consultants with headteachers, teachers, representatives from local communities, Minister of Education and Sports and District Education Officials, the main features to emerge were:

- Linked schools had, compared with non-linked schools, a strong sense of self esteem;
- the link through formal and informal professional development had improved the quality of teaching and learning in the linked schools and overall leadership;
- children, particularly girls, had more enthusiasm and motivation to attend school as a result of their school having a link;
- local communities with linked schools had a sense of pride and enthusiasm in their school.

By having a link, the school also benefited from opportunities for the teachers and the pupils to improve their English language skills. The teachers and the pupils also tended to have a broader vision, to look beyond their own community and to recognise they are part of a wider world.

However the support to the linked schools tended to create a two-tier structure in the district, with significant differences in terms of resources, quality of teaching and motivation of teachers and pupils. Those schools that were not linked schools tended to have poorer resources and there was less support available for improving the quality of the school improvement.

To address this challenge, it is proposed that Link gives consideration to seeing their linked schools as centres of excellence in a community, that act as a resource to support and model good practice to surrounding schools in the area.

The research showed the need for NGOs, policy-makers and practitioners involved with school linking to recognise the educational development needs, as well as the development education benefits, of partnerships. For Southern schools, the priority for any link will always be the extent to which it can help with improving access to education, increasing resources and support, and as a consequence improving the quality of education. However it is also important to recognise that unless development education goals of challenging perceptions and awareness of the dangers of dependency relationships are built into a partnership, links will re-enforce stereotypes and not lead to educational development. A strategy and indicators that recognise these complex relationships needs to be considered by all bodies involved in Linking and partnerships. For Link this research is aimed to help them, the schools they work with in the UK and partner schools elsewhere in Europe to understand issues of access and equity and how best they can support school improvement in the South.

1

Introduction

Link Community Development (Link) is an international non-governmental organisation whose mission is to work with communities and governments to improve the quality of education in sub-Saharan Africa. It currently works in rural districts of Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, South Africa, and Uganda. Link also works with schools in the European Union (EU) to build support for development and raise awareness of important global issues through its Link Schools Programme.

The Link Schools Programme was introduced in 1998 before other school linking initiatives that have since followed. It was developed to involve a UK school audience in supporting African school improvement in rural districts in Africa where Link was supporting school improvement having built relationships at district and school level. With these structures in place school linking was welcomed by the districts and schools involved due to its potential to support the direct needs of rural schools which would not otherwise have the opportunity to get involved in an international school partnership.

Half-way through a three-year EU grant, Link is evaluating the impact of school linking on the African school in order to inform the future of the programme and to inform the learning and development understanding to be gained through school partnerships by an EU audience. The support offered to African schools to enable them to take part in the programme and to benefit from the partnership has been subsidised by Link.

This report aims to review, evaluate and reflect upon the impact the Link Schools Programme brings to schools in a district in Uganda, and the lessons that can be learnt in terms of the added value of such links for Link's educational development work in Africa. The report is based on interviews and data gathered by Link staff and locally based consultants in Uganda, and on an analysis of this evidence by staff from the Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education. The report also makes reference to similar research that has been undertaken on this theme, and includes an analysis of the comparative value of the work of Link with other programmes and known research. This is an initial summary and analysis of the data from the evidence gathered to date, and it is anticipated that more in-depth analysis based on this research will be produced at a later date.

2

Importance of this Research

School linking has been one of the major areas of expansion within UK schools in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Disney, 2003; Hillier, 2006; Leonard, 2008; Martin, 2007). With funding and support from government and the active engagement of the British Council and a number of international NGOs, notably Link and Plan (Edge et al., 2010), school Linking has become an important part of the educational system throughout the UK. The drive for many of these links has been the belief that direct contact between teachers and pupils in the UK with those in the Global South can increase awareness and understanding about global and development issues.

This area of educational practice has often been noted as being controversial (Martin, 2007) with Leonard recognising that the debates mirror wider discussions within development education related to power, 'whose voices are being promoted, whose and what values underpin the practice and what is the relationship between learning and action.' (Leonard, 2008: 78)

Whilst some of the literature makes reference to the impact of school linking on the partner schools in the Global South, this has in the main not been the focus of most of the recent research or a priority for policy-makers. The interest from funders such as DFID and the EU on linking to date has been on the impact on Northern schools and not on the Southern partner in terms of learning about development and global issues. Exceptions to this have been the research for Plan International undertaken by Edge et al (2010) and current research being undertaken by Leonard (2010). Thus, this research undertaken by Link is of considerable importance – not only in terms of adding to the literature on the impact in the south, but also because of the methodology and approach taken. Most of the studies on Southern linked schools have not looked at the impact of the partnership in comparison with non-linked schools. This research for Link is arguably the first of its kind to take this approach.

Central to this research is to identify the potential added value to a school – in this case in Uganda – of having a link with a school in the UK, in terms of its educational development needs. This means that the frame for this research, whilst including references to development education principles and practices, is primarily located within educational development goals related to access to, and the quality of, teaching.

Link has been running a school linking programme for over 10 years that has included subsidising the African schools' involvement. There is a need, therefore, for Link to assess the impact of the programme in terms of its educational development work generally in sub-Saharan Africa. Its school linking programme is encompassed within its overall mission with the assumption that a partnership can add value to the improvement and development of an African school. A key

need for Link therefore is to assess whether this is the case and to identify where it should target its efforts to ensure the greatest impact on rural African school improvement. An insight into what school linking offers the African school and why can build global awareness and understanding for the partner school. Link also hopes to use the findings of this research to inform their engagement with schools involved in the EU project.

What this research does not do is evaluate the opportunity cost of investing in school linking i.e. could the investment in school partnership be channelled into a different project and achieve the same; or have a greater and more sustainable impact on whole district development and African school improvement? This is an important area of discussion, and one that necessitates further research.

3

Research Aims and Methodology

The focus of this research by Link has been to identify to what extent an international school partnership can support rural schools in a district in Uganda, to improve the quality of education provided to all children in the area.

Link has been working in Masindi, Uganda since 1998 in partnership with the National Government and the District Department of Education on a programme of whole district development. Masindi was selected as the Link Schools Programme is integrated into Link's wider district programme, and where the schools involved in linking have hosted UK teachers through Link's former programme, the Global Teachers Programme. Masindi district was identified as performing well compared to other districts, and this performance is attributed – to an extent – to Link's work with the district. A comparison of the impact of school partnerships in Masindi with another district would add value to this study.

All ten schools identified for this research have been supported equally through Link's work in the district, and have had involvement in Link's process of School Performance Review.

Schools selected were similar in size and infrastructure. The following criteria were used so that, as far as possible, there was no more than a 25% variance between any two sample schools across the following:

- Number of pupils (boys, girls)
- Number of teachers (male, female)
- Number of classrooms (permanent, temporary)
- Number of latrines (male, female)
- % of pupils who pass the primary leaving examination

Five of the schools selected for interview were involved in Link's school partnership programme and five were not. In all ten schools, interviews were conducted with the head teacher and other teachers, and included an activity with pupils plus interviews with representatives from local community groups involved with the school. In addition, an interview was conducted with the Principal Inspector of Schools, Ministry of Education and Sports / DES for Uganda and local District Education Officers.

The interviews with the head teacher and some of the teachers were conducted in English. Others were conducted in the local language. All schools agreed to take part in the interview and interviews were successfully conducted in every school. The interviews were held in early March 2011 and were undertaken by Link staff with freelance Ugandan education consultants.

4

Overview of Education in Uganda

Uganda has seen major progress within education over the past decade, and Universal Primary Education (UPE) is a key strategic policy priority in Uganda. The policy was introduced in 1997 since which enrolment into primary schools has tripled, with a doubling in the same period of trained teachers. During the same time frame the number of classrooms nearly doubled, as did the number of books for the four main curriculum subjects. As a result of these investments, the pupil-teacher ratio decreased from 60:1 to 48:1 in 2006. Currently there are 17,562 primary schools in Uganda with 7,196,922 pupils, and an almost equal number of boys and girls. This equal access is however not mirrored in terms of completion of primary education seeing 56% of boys (3,599,992) compared to 51% of girls (3,596,930) completing UPE, averaging at a completion rate of 54% overall for the country (Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2010).

A major challenge is the continuing high pupil dropout rate which can be attributed to levels of poverty, poor health and the long distances many children have to walk to school.¹

The quality of education offered in primary schools also remains a challenge. As the Primary Education in Uganda report notes: 'Teaching methods are old-fashioned and books are not always used effectively' (De Kemp and Eilor, 2008 p.17). The quality of teaching is a theme raised by both the Minister and district education officials in the interviews for this research and these points have been commented on in other literature on education in Uganda. For example, the Primary Education in Uganda report notes that examination and test results,

¹ These comments are based primarily on observations of Masindi District Education Officers interviewed for this research.

whilst improving, are far from satisfactory. Too many children leave school without having mastered basic literacy and numeracy.

This report also notes that a major challenge is the high teacher and pupil absenteeism, as well as the high dropout rate. It further notes that on average '27% of the children are not in school' (Ibid).

A key issue identified by Kasirye (2009) is the importance of qualified teachers and the impact this has on the quality of teaching within the classroom in Uganda. This study also notes that having something to sit on is important for pupils' performance, an example of the poor learning environment that existed in many rural schools. The lack of progress on this was noted in comparison to increased resources for teachers' professional development.

The Masindi district within Uganda supports 60 primary schools and the evidence gathered for this research reinforces these themes. Schools are operating in environments where poverty is high, resources are very limited, and salaries for teachers are low. Schools are not performing as well as the District would like. The quality of leadership and management in the schools is varied. The pupil-teacher ratio is still very high. There is a major issue regarding teacher motivation that is related to a lack of ongoing support. The District education officer for Masindi noted that there were also not enough school inspectors, with only two inspectors to cover all of the primary schools plus secondary and private schools as well.

It was recognised by all stakeholders involved with education in Masindi district that most schools suffered from a lack of good quality buildings, with sanitation and latrines particularly being a major problem. A lack of permanent access to electricity is also an ongoing problem. Most schools also still had high pupil to teacher ratios.

From interviews with education officials, teachers and parents, schools tended to have very limited resources, and whatever books and charts they had tended to be out of date. Pupils' level of motivation was low. Many want to 'dodge coming to school' (said) One teacher from Rwempisi School, (who also) noted:

"We conducted a survey to identify why pupils do not come to school daily. It was found failure to provide scholastic materials and lack of a midday meal at school, child labour are responsible for poor daily school attendance".

However, these negative points need to be countered by the recognition by many teachers of improvements in recent years, increased government and NGO grants and a commitment from headteachers and the local community to support improvement of the quality of teaching. There is widespread support from all sectors for Universal Primary Education and the research showed commitment from many parents and community groups to school improvement.

Whilst Masindi is a district in which Link has had considerable impact, the broader educational challenges faced in the area are similar to other districts in Uganda. In the District's report on measuring progress in Kamwenge, Link noted similar points regarding quality of teaching, resources in the classroom and the nature of the buildings. For example, only 37% of schools met the latrine needs (Link Uganda, 2010).

5

Link Community Development and Work in Uganda

Link works with government and communities to improve the quality of education in rural districts in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, South Africa and Uganda. It works at all levels of the education system - with parents, communities, teachers, school managers, district education authorities and central government - to identify and remove the obstacles to quality education. Link works on a whole district basis, usually within two or more districts to build the capacity of the District Department of Education to take forward whole district school development with available resources.

Link works to improve the quality of education by understanding school needs through the collection of data about school performance and use of that data to plan for school improvement led by the district and involving head teachers, school management bodies and wider school communities. This is the process of School Performance Review. Data is collected based on a set of indicators that differ by country based on the context. In Uganda they include:

- quality of teachers' preparation and planning
- quality of use of resources and of the classroom environment
- quality of the teaching and learning process
- assessment and record keeping
- teacher knowledge
- learners' understanding and attainment
- school leadership
- financial management

- management of resources
- supervision of teaching and learning
- staff deployment and development
- management of co-curricular activities
- access and equity
- climate and relationships within the school
- school governance
- community relations
- sanitation, health and nutrition
- school safety and security

Within these indicators a four-point scale is used as a basis for assessment from 4 (fully achieved) down to 1 (not achieved).

Whilst it is outside of the scope of this report to look at the evidence gathered by Link in terms of progress against these indicators or their wider value, what can be noted is that both the Ministry of Education in Uganda and the District Education Officials value Link as they provide evidence as to what is happening in schools, which it has not been possible to gather from their own officials.

Link has been in Uganda since 1998 and supports the implementation of two key government policies:

1. Universal Primary Education (UPE)
2. Decentralisation

Link summarises the central focus of its work in Uganda as follows:

- Building capacities of District Education Departments to collect and use information to meet the needs of schools and communities
- Working with school level stakeholders to improve teaching and learning, leadership, management and governance in primary schools
- Strengthening the capacities of local political leaders and school communities to hold schools accountable
- Supporting teachers to improve their delivery in key areas of literacy and numeracy

- Improving schools' ability to promote children's health and wellbeing
- Supporting resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons through education
- Facilitating partnerships between Uganda and UK/Ireland schools for mutually beneficial learning and development
- Improving capacity of district officials and head teachers to effectively manage school improvement in collaboration with their communities
- Enhancing Ministry of Education and Sports and District policy supporting decentralisation and quality Universal Primary Education.

Links are being supported in 4 Ugandan districts: Masindi, Buliisa, Kiryandongo and Kamwenge, and currently 60 schools in Masindi district are involved link activity with a school in the UK or Ireland. Link, in supporting school partnerships within Uganda, recognised that they cannot support all schools to have a partnership; the decision about which schools to identify is based on dialogue with District Education Officials. The decisions were based on selecting those that have the capacity and strong support of the head teacher, so that they have the best chance of being able to work successfully with a partner school.

Link has been working with the district in Masindi since 1998. The Link Schools Programme was introduced within the context of Link's wider work in the district, where there was an understanding of the performance of the schools in the district, and therefore how international partner schools could support school needs and priorities. With Link's understanding of those needs and priorities, partner school inputs can be managed and directed for the most effective impact. Link can then use its understanding of African school needs to inform global learning and understanding. In this way, although the main objective is African school improvement, both partner schools benefit.

Regardless of the educational development benefits of a partnership or link with a Ugandan school, it needs to be noted that there is a direct correlation between the aims of the Ugandan education programme with this broader and more global outlook. For example, the national aims of education in the Ugandan Government White Paper (GWP) (1992) mention:

*"Promoting understanding & appreciation of the value of national unity, patriotism, and cultural heritage, **with due consideration to international relations and beneficial interdependence**"*

*"Inculcating moral, ethical & spiritual values in the individual & to develop self-discipline, integrity, **tolerance and human fellowship**"*

The aims and objectives of the Uganda primary curriculum further mention:

*“Instilling the values of living & **working cooperatively with other people** and caring for others in the community”*

*“Developing & cherishing the cultural, moral, & spiritual values of life & **appreciating the richness that lies in varied and diverse culture & values**”*

This broader development or global educational viewpoint is therefore one side of the rationale and benefit of partnerships. The main focus is the role of partnerships to support educational development in Uganda.

A third focus of this research is the added value of the involvement of Link and their wider school improvement work with districts. Interviews with policy-makers and teachers for this research identified support for the work of Link in Uganda. The NGO is well regarded particularly in terms of its role of working in partnership with educational bodies. However, Link’s work in Masindi has been affected by changes in funding for its core work in Uganda in February 2010. While Link has raised revenue locally to continue the process of School Performance Review in Masindi in 2011, District Education Officers did refer in this research to the changes in direct support in the district.

6

Framework for Measuring Value of School Linking in Relation to Educational Development and Development Education

In a paper for UNESCO UK, Bob Doe, an educational journalist, commented on the lack of evidence regarding the potential relationship and value of school partnerships to the UN ‘education for all’ objectives (Doe 2008). He states that the motivation behind linking for most schools is the ‘desire for or enjoyment of friendships between colleagues, pupils and communities’. However he goes on to state that some benefits could be identified including material goods, education resources and even money, impact on cognitive learning including improving knowledge, understanding and skills and impact on effective learning, including changes in attitudes and values. (Ibid: 7)

Doe notes that evidence from the British Council Global Schools Partnership programme suggested that for schools in the Global Schools programme:

- 83% said their partnership had improved teacher motivation

- 76% said it had a dramatic or significant effect on curriculum development
- 99% said it had raised students' motivation
- 100% reported that it had raised standards, with 52% seeing dramatic improvement (Ibid: 8)

Leonard (2010) refers to the contribution partnerships can make to progress on the Millennium Development Goals. She notes, through examples with schools in both Ghana and Uganda, how a link can help to eradicate global poverty by increasing the skills base of local communities; promote gender equality by giving positive role models for both girls and boys; and assist access to universal primary education through the link providing increased resources to the school.

However, within the literature on the role and value of school partnerships, a common thread is the unequal nature of the relationship. Funders, NGOs and policy-makers may aspire to promoting mutual and equal relationships and learning, but the reality is that UK schools tend to have the funding, the resources and often the better-qualified teachers. There is also a tendency for UK schools to see their role as 'providing support' to the partner school which can be in the form of sending equipment, donating money or offering teachers for professional development purposes. A former British Council employee, centrally involved in managing school partnership, has stated that the funding relationship can '*accentuate the problem of the Southern school being the grateful and uncritical recipient of a Northern benefactor*' and this he suggests takes '*the focus away from learning and education and back towards charity and aid*' (Egan, quoted in Leonard, 2008: 85).

However it could be argued that the more transparent and open the debates are about the benefits of partnerships, the more conscious both Northern and Southern partners are likely to be about the pros and cons of partnerships. The broader developmental benefits to the Southern school perhaps need to be discussed more openly and Link could consider raising these points within its broader EU funded project. This would ensure that all stakeholders would understand the dangers of a dependency-based relationship.

These observations are important to consider because when one looks at a potential framework for the value of linking to the Southern school, as will be shown later, there are direct educational development benefits. There is now evidence (Leonard 2010; Edge et. al 2008; Burr, 2007) that Southern schools not only value, but often seek out, partnerships because of the resource gains that may well accrue, particularly in terms of access to new resources, better equipment, funding and opportunities to learn from their partners about good teaching methods.

The tensions between dependency and aid versus education and learning therefore need to be not only recognised but also brought together within one

overall approach. As Burr (2007) suggests, *'a good link is a link where perceptions are challenged on all sides'*. This means that for both the Southern and the UK school, the link should aim to encourage teachers and pupils to reflect upon how they see their partner country and people and what the process of personal contact and experience means.

All of these comments suggest that a form of measurement of the impact and value of partnership for the Southern school should include reference to learning about the wider world, sharing voices and perspectives, and using approaches that, above all, improve the confidence and skills of the teachers rather than reinforcing inferiority complexes.

As a framework for assessing school performance more widely, the School Performance Review indicators have been used in this study to evaluate the impact of school partnerships on school performance. Not all indicators were tested and those School Performance Review indicators chosen for this study were also selected on the basis of existing knowledge of where partnerships tends to have impact. All of the indicators with the exception of the final one were used as a basis for defining the methodology and the question areas for the interviews in the Ugandan schools. The final indicator around challenging perceptions is one that has been added following a review of the evidence, including the drawings and comments from children, and reflection on the literature on this area.

Table 1: Summary of Indicators

Indicator	Possible evidence of partnership impact
Use of resources and classroom environment	Maps, books, letters and other correspondence from partners being used in class.
Quality of teaching and learning process	Group work, outdoor learning, participatory methods or other methods being used by teachers following advice of partner school.
Teacher knowledge	Increased knowledge about the world, global citizenship, rights and responsibilities, or other subject areas following work with partner schools.
Pupil understanding and attainment	Improved attainment in literacy from letter reading and writing, and improved motivation as a result of school partnership.
Leadership and Supervision of Teaching and Learning	Headteacher understands leadership role following professional discussions or visits with partner school. Head teacher also demonstrates increased confidence in monitoring classes following professional discussions or visits with partner school.

Indicator	Possible evidence of partnership impact
Access and equity	Increased support of education for all due to projects or letters or other communication between partner schools.
Buildings and the Environment	Increased motivation of staff, pupils and other school stakeholders because of the school partnership.
Community relations	Better community relations initiated in some way by the partnership.
Perceptions: Mutuality and Dependency	Extent to which the teachers and the pupils have a different perception about the UK and how they view the relationship in terms of dependency or mutuality.

7 Overview of the Value of the Link to the Schools and Comparison with Non-Linked Schools

Doe (2008), in his review of school linking and educational goals, made reference to the work of Link in the Masindi district of Uganda. Referring to comments from Link staff and improvements in quality of education in the district, "While these striking improvements cannot be attributed solely to school partnerships, the school partnerships play a vital role in the Masindi school improvement programme.... The Masindi experience points clearly to the value of north-south school partnership arrangements, particularly in the context of a wider structured programme of school improvement" (Nkata and Dalton 2007).

Doe notes that important factors in the success were:

- Sustained support for linking programmes by Masindi district staff
- School development plans aligned with that of the district as a whole
- All money provided by UK schools spent according to that plan
- Exchange visits between link schools
- Experienced staff supporting schools at the UK end of the link

There is some published material and evidence to suggest that Link's school linking programme has been of value to broader educational goals. However this evidence does not look at comparative data with non-linked schools and nor does it relate the learning to both educational development and development education goals.

The material gathered by the Link team for this research takes our understanding much further. It provides some excellent data and at a depth and in a form that has not been hitherto published. What is most evident is that at all levels of the education system; from the Minister to the District Education Officer to the Head teacher, teachers and local community, the links are valued and seen as contributing to improving the quality of the teaching in the school and its overall activities.

A very noticeable observation is that rather than reinforcing a sense of dependency and inferiority, the links have given greater self-confidence and broader horizons to both the head and the teachers. All of the linked schools interviewed had a strong sense of pride in their school and teachers felt comparatively confident about what and how they were teaching compared to the non-linked schools.

These observations pose wider questions that lie outside the scope of this research with regard to the relative influences of the qualities of the partnership and the role Link has played in the process. This would necessitate in-depth interviews with UK partner teachers and a review as to how each partnership was established and the relative influence of Link and other factors in determining the quality of the partnership.

Teachers from the linked schools commented that the programme had mutual benefits. As one head teacher commented:

'It is two-way traffic you see, we agree jointly with our partner school. It is not dictated upon us, there is a mutual understanding. We collaborate in areas of common interest.'

This sense of confidence and positive views about their school contrasts with comments from teachers in the non-linked schools who tended to highlight the negative features of their institution, difficulties with retention of pupils, the quality of teaching and the poor resources.

Whilst many of these points are probably evident in some form in the linked schools, they are not given the same degree of attention. All of the linked schools, for example, have problems with access to electricity, latrines and general equipment. But whilst they mention some of these points, they also note the changes that have been made.

It is clearly evident that, by having a link, the school gained increased confidence about itself at all levels and whilst they were all having difficulties in terms of resources and quality of teaching, they could see evidence of progress.

Having a link for a school in Masindi also seems to have broadened the teachers' and pupils' horizons. They have become exposed to teaching styles and approaches from outside their own area. Also friendships have developed between teachers and pupils between UK and Uganda and these have helped to raise the sense of self-esteem.

The link also seems to have stimulated different styles and forms of learning. Teachers were able to see differing teaching styles from their exchanges with UK teachers, and that education did not all have to be teacher-led and delivered in a traditional 'chalk and talk' style.

The evidence from the interviews and visits to the non-linked schools gives a rather different picture. Whilst there is evidence of some excellent teaching, it is often portrayed within the context of a very difficult environment. The schools appeared to be less self confident about their institution. Heads and teachers gave an impression that school life is a daily struggle. There was less evidence of pride in their school with fewer visual materials and fewer resources.

The differences are very noticeable and a point that needs to be considered is the danger of the school links programme creating a '*them and us*' culture. Several of the heads of the non-linked schools referred to a desire to have a link and were clearly envious.

The aim now in the rest of this report is to look at particular themes as identified earlier as a potential framework for measuring the impact of linking.

8

School Linking and Educational Development

Access and Equality

One of the most important educational development goals for schools in Uganda and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa is access and equity. For the Ugandan government and Link, considerable resources and programmes have been invested in supporting universal primary education but there are still many areas where children do not stay in school because of external economic, social and cultural pressures. All schools noted the emphasis given by the government and NGOs to equity between boys and girls. There is evidence that for the linked schools, the importance of equality could be seen in practice whereas for the non-linked schools it remained as a policy and a goal.

Whilst all schools interviewed recognised and supported equal access for boys and girls, there were noticeable differences between the linked and non-linked schools in terms of retention and equal opportunities. Within the partnership schools, both heads and teachers spoke about equal opportunities and how girls were doing well. Teachers referred to the role that Link had played in promoting equal involvement. Girls in particular were noted to have greater self-esteem. The exchange of letters between pupils in Uganda with pupils in the UK was specifically mentioned in promoting a culture of everyone having equal access.

Another influence was role models. One school noted how the visitors from England 'inspired the girls' and how they encouraged them to stay on at school, ensuring that no one felt left out. From visits to school in England, they also saw the natural emphasis placed on mutual respect and equality within an educational environment. One head commented: *"We learnt that the schools in the UK do not separate boys and girls and we now try to do this where we can. We saw that people in England had respect for each other very well."*

The exposure to women doing the same jobs as men in the UK had an impact upon teachers as well. As one male teacher commented, *'during my visit to the UK, I witnessed women driving lorries and aeroplanes and this changed my perception of gender.'*

From most of the non-partnered schools, teachers referred to problems with girls' involvement and sense of equity in the classroom. Several spoke about the difficulties of getting the girls to stay at school and that all too often they stayed at home to do domestic duties. Within some of the schools there were clear gendered differences not only in performance, but also in perceived expectation, with a tendency towards separate roles and learning areas.

However there were examples in the non-linked schools of initiatives that had been developed to support girls' education, including more female teachers; having someone the girls could talk to and confide in was recognised as a major step forward.

Disability was also an area that schools found difficult to address in terms of resources and expertise, in both linked and non-linked schools.

At a broader level, there were also comments from linked and non-linked schools about how important the promotion of *education for all* was and what this meant. For one of the linked schools there was reference to how they have learnt from their link about the importance of all children having the right to go to school and having basic needs met. One head noted that for the children, *'It is their right to go to school; it is their right to have clothes and food. It is their right to have security and they shared this and learnt this from their partner school. Before they write they discuss their rights and debate and this helps them to write and they value each other.'*

One of the teachers from the non-linked school referred to how important laws and policies have been to ensure no discrimination takes place. Teachers have had to change their attitude, one said, *'due to what everyone is putting to us that all should have equal access to education.'*

Buildings and Environment

For most primary schools in Uganda, a major challenge remains the quality of the buildings for teaching purposes, access to electricity and water, and the latrines. Whilst there is evidence of progress in a number of schools, for all interviewed for this research, many of the wider aspirations by the government and Link for raising the quality of teaching were hindered by poor buildings, intermittent or non-existent electricity, poor quality water and above all latrines.

There was evidence from at least three of the linked schools of the benefits of a partnership to help to improve the quality of the school environment. This included resources and funds from the UK school to develop the latrines, develop boreholes for water and generators for electricity, and build teacher accommodation. Separate latrines for boys and girls and improvements to their structures (e.g. addition of doors) were recognised as major developments.

The non-partnered schools often talked about problems with latrines and lack of equipment. The poor quality latrines were noted as having a consequential impact on pupil attendance, particularly for girls.

For both linked and non-linked schools, many teachers and pupils had to travel some distance to get to school. But it was noticeable that only the non-linked schools cited this as a problem in terms of pupil and teacher attendance.

Classroom Resources and Equipment

A common theme within schools in Uganda is the lack of basic resources and equipment and the ensuing impact this has on the quality of teaching and pupil motivation. As will be shown below there is considerable evidence of the impact that having better resources and equipment can have on a school.

The evidence from the five linked schools is that they have, in the main, better equipment and resources than the non-linked schools. All of the linked schools had some resources and equipment that appeared in some form to have come as a result of contact with their UK partner. One school for example stated, *'we have a variety of learning resources; we use textbooks, reader books, mathematical sets, thematic charts, maps, games. Some of these were given by our partner school.'*

A popular and effective resource was games equipment or having books about games. Learning new games was noted as creating better interaction between the children. Improved teamwork and increased social skills were examples also mentioned. One head noted how resources had *"improved performance and it has made the children love the school, in fact school enrolment has increased due to these resources like those for games. They have led to increased enrolment as the children see the environment as child friendly and they hope to get a lot so they are motivated to learn"*. Another head commented:

“Our enrolment has remained constant over the past few years and this is because of the improved learning resources, especially games. Other neighbouring schools have had their enrolment drop.”

The extent to which the resources were negotiated and discussed or just given by their UK partner school varied. Even within one school, a comment was made that in some areas consultation was undertaken but in others, such as reader books, they were just donated without consultation. Nevertheless, community members from one school noted how the donation of some resources *“reduces the financial burden”*.

Overall, equity and empowerment were noted however. *“These materials were bought through mutual understanding. In most cases they bring us their thoughts and we express our needs so all things received are relevant to us.”*

The mere engagement in the process of fundraising also had an impact in terms of empowering local schools to raise money. At one school it was commented that in the past they would not have done this, *‘just let the white man do it’*.

The resources and materials were stated in several schools to improve the quality of teaching and pupils’ performance, particularly with reading and writing.

An issue raised from the interviews was the importance of training and support on how to use resources. Link did in some cases help with basic introductory classes on how to use materials. Reciprocal visits and regular communications also helped with effective use of resources. A comment made by more than one school was that the teacher had learnt a great deal from their UK partner school on the value of visual materials for teaching.

A clear impact on the pupils was that resources, especially in areas such as games, improved enrolment. Teachers stated how much having better resources, even a globe, can help to make concepts easier to explain. One Headteacher commented *“teaching has been made easier with the availability of resources such as wall charts. Concepts are easy to explain”*... the games introduced have enhanced the talent and are also enriching the curriculum.

The non-partnership schools, if they had resources, tended to have textbooks or materials secured nationally. Some had a library but this tended to be very small and with few books. Teachers stated that the resources they did have were ‘basic’.

A noticeable contrast between the two groups of schools was the use of visual materials. Whilst all schools had problems with theft, and damage to their classrooms because of the weather, many linked schools would store what they could overnight in a small secure cupboard and then display the materials each day and use them actively in the classrooms. The linked schools tended not only to have wall charts, some of which came from their UK partner, but also to know their value as a resource and in terms of improving the look of a classroom.

Very few wall charts were seen in the non-linked schools. One Headteacher commented, *'We don't have any permanent wall displays in the classrooms'*. The reasons for this are not clear but may be due to wanting to protect what materials they do have, but there may also be a lack of experience of the value such visual materials can provide.

An issue for both groups of schools interviewed was that whilst IT access and resource were considered important, unless the school had ongoing electricity such equipment was of little value. None of the schools had permanent access to electricity. This was clearly a major issue that to an extent the link reinforced. Schools may have had electrical equipment, often donated, in one case from the British Council, but it was left unopened.

Community Relations

With the introduction of Universal Primary Education, links with local communities have become an issue. As the District Education Officer commented, there was now a perception in some communities that they had nothing to do with schools anymore. But as the Officer commented further, without community support the schools could not function well. For example, although there are legalities against schools soliciting money from the local community for a child's education, there is a need for voluntary fundraising to support facilities and resources. The extent to which the local area can assist with raising funds becomes very important when resources are scarce. This therefore means that how the school is perceived becomes key to community support.

A common theme from the research gathered from visits to the partner schools was the heightened esteem by which the school was held by the local community. The link had increased interest and support for the schools from the local community. Parents and community meetings often referred to the value of the link. It gave a sense of pride in the school and parents and the community are always asking about how the link is going. Hosting visitors also helped to raise the sense of self-esteem and create a positive atmosphere in and around the school. One school that has a link went to the District Education Officer showing how they have involved the local community, stating they had done this, *'without your help or support'*. In recognition of this the District Chairman gave them two new classrooms and five latrines, as he saw the passion of the parents and what could be and had been achieved.

For the non-linked school, there was still a strong bond and support from the local community to the school. There was evidence of more negative rather than positive stories about the school, linked to the probable lower esteem in which the school was held. However, in all of the non-linked schools there was evidence of a commitment from parents and the local community to help improve the quality of the school. The support of communities is central to Link's broader educational programme and the NGO is well-known for its commitment to this area.

Quality of Teaching and Learning Process

A priority for the Ugandan government is to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process. This is also a major objective of Link and its programme within Uganda. There is some evidence that the partnership has had an impact on the quality of teaching and the nature of the learning within a school. However, the link also needs to be seen alongside other factors that contributed to the quality of the teaching, such as the leadership within the school and access to professional development workshops run by Link.

Where the link has been seen as directly beneficial in terms of quality of teaching and learning is where the teachers have visited schools in the UK and seen differing styles and approaches to delivering a topic within the classroom. Examples also referred to when UK teachers came to their partner school and ran sessions with the pupils. As a result there was a noticeably greater mention of the use of participatory methods within the linked schools, compared to the non-linked schools. Several of the linked schools had more variety in terms of layout of the classroom, not always having children sitting in rows. Examples were given such as group work, role-plays and brainstorming. One head from a linked school stated, *"Yes, learners respond differently when using participatory methods, learners have opened up and as do the methods of grouping learners, it has created team work among pupils."*

One head teacher, for example, noted that, *"during my reciprocal visit to the UK, I learnt the technique of group learning"*. But he noted further that some of his teachers found it difficult to adapt to new teaching styles. Once progress was made with teachers there was evidence of more lively and interactive classroom discussions. Professional development opportunities, whether formal or informal, as a result of the link, were recognised as being key to improving the quality of teaching. Not only did they result in new ideas, they gave the teachers increased confidence:

'Previously we had no appetite for teaching – since we have been trained we have improved on what we know and we value this...now other teachers come here to learn from us as role models.'

Other examples include helping children with special needs through identifying particular needs for, say, a child with a hearing impairment. Several teachers noted this area of recognising the value of individual attention, although there was the added comment that with such large class sizes, such one-to-one support was difficult to maintain.

Another area of improvement was in writing skills, as a result of regular exchanges of letters between pupils and classes. These examples raised a wider issue regarding communicating with their UK partner: whilst the Ugandan schools were keen to use e-mail and even occasionally phone, this was often very difficult and teachers could, and in some case did, use the local Link office for assistance.

This is an area Link has begun to address, and Link has installed a hub of solar computers in the training centre for teachers in the district.

There was also evidence in several schools of greater use of participatory methods. The partner school in the UK was often mentioned as a stimulus for this, as a result of teacher visits and exchanges.

Finally, from visiting schools in the UK and dialogue with teachers, there was evidence of a different attitude towards corporal punishment, with recognition of the benefits of starting from a positive approach, and rewarding good behaviour.

In contrast, evidence gathered from non-partnership schools showed rather different stories. There was clearly less confidence about teaching styles and there was greater emphasis on formal and traditional styles of teaching. Several references were made to the dominant influence being their training at college and the emphasis on *'explanation-demonstration and use of charts'*.

In answer to the question of, 'if and where they gained new ideas regarding teaching methods', there were references to personal contacts and attending professional development workshops. What however was noticeable was that several teachers said they needed more support and help to put into practice the skills they had gained from some workshops – they were passionate to learn more.

Another area that emerged in the discussion with non-linked schools was that of the English language. Learning in English was clearly a problem for many children in the schools whereas for the linked schools, a direct benefit of the partnership was communication in English and the consequent benefits this had on both teachers and pupils. English is the language used to teach in, after P3, and all examinations are written in English.

All the linked schools identified English as a subject where students were doing best, while all the non-linked schools noted this as the poorest achieving subject, alongside mathematics. In interviews with teachers they spoke of how many children in non-linked schools *"feared English"* and had a *"negative attitude"* to it. English language is also heavily linked to attainment. Teachers from one non-linked school commented, *"We do not see increased performances in our assessments when we expect to – their performance is not reflected by exams due to their interpretation of the questions. So we are seeing lower exam results than we expect – the problem is the language. If we ask them these questions in class and we explain what we want to know then they get it right. The exams are not written by us, they are standardised and they are in English so the pupils don't do well."*

Leadership

The quality of school leadership is an important component of securing educational change. The extent to which the head is prepared to embrace change, listen to new ideas and provide professional support to his or her staff can go a long way to improving the quality of teaching in schools.

One of the biggest influences of a partnership for the Ugandan schools was on its leadership, particularly in terms of style and approach. There was clear evidence from all of the linked schools of increased confidence and skills. For most head teachers, the link provided their first opportunity for some form of professional development in terms of leadership skills. The partnership also enabled the head to take on a stronger leadership role within the school. It enhanced their status and role not only with other teachers but also in the wider community. Several heads said that the link had made their role easier and better, the school was now easier to manage. Reference was also made to the increased support they were now giving to their fellow members of staff.

A theme that emerged from several of the interviews with heads was the extent to which the partnership had given the head the confidence to talk to people outside their own community. One head stated, *'in the past we did not relate to white people'*. Another said, *'I am now confident to talk about people's cultures...if you had visited the school before it would have been different but now we all know that we are the same.'*

The confidence gained by the heads also had spin-offs in terms of support to other schools. One head had brought clusters of schools together to have a dialogue with the UK school. This resulted in the school being recognised as a centre of excellence *"in the partnership we have also formed a team of 5-6 schools in a cluster and the head teachers meet regularly to see how we are moving forward and share ideas. We interact with the heads in the UK regularly to share our experiences and challenges and better our leadership skills. We learn good points from them to take forwards."*

Another school notes, *"During my visit to the UK, I interacted with the school principal and appreciate the concept of team work. It is based on that experience that I introduce the concept of team work, which has yielded good fruits."*

This increased sense of self-confidence had consequential impact on the schools as a whole, and heads themselves noted it had helped to improve pupil behaviour.

The mere existence of the link has helped with this increased confidence but more than one head noted that by visiting schools in the UK or having discussions with fellow heads from the UK they learnt how important relationships were with fellow staff. *'We would just sit and talk with her about how she manages the school.'*

Another positive impact of linking on school leaders was the change in attitudes towards corporal punishment. One head stated how they learnt about positive discipline from a workshop. He stated that corporal punishment was now in the past. *“There is no need anymore for this and the teachers have really adopted these methods and the children I don’t think they even remember about corporal punishment but their behaviour and motivation is much improved. The children used to come late to school but now I’d say all children are in school by 8am which is what we want – they do this willingly.”*

For the non-partnered schools whilst there was evidence of good quality leadership, there were fewer examples mentioned of professional development opportunities, both formally and informally. One head mentioned one course they had been on and one referred to support from Link. A more common comment was the lack of opportunity for any form of leadership training.

Heads from both linked and non-linked schools also mentioned the importance of their own teacher training and the influence of their predecessors in their schools in terms of developing good leadership skills. What is noticeable however is that the link gave the Heads enhanced status and confidence, and above all a source of ongoing support, someone they could talk to about new ideas and approaches.

Pupils’ Knowledge and Skills

For all schools in Uganda, pupils’ knowledge and skills will be very dependent upon a number of external factors, including school attendance and family and community support, as well as the nature of the building and the quality of the teaching. One area tends to have an impact upon another.

For the schools that are part of a link, there is evidence of increased pupil performance because there is increased confidence within the school generally and there may well be more resources. For example, as already mentioned, the quality of English language in a linked school is good because of the opportunities for direct contact with teachers and pupils in the UK. This resulted also in teachers reporting improved writing skills.

The opportunity to exchange letters was noted by several teachers as having a positive impact upon the children. One noted how from the exchange of letters and photographs, friendships had developed. One parent also noted how the letter exchange had *‘motivated her daughter to improve on her grades’*.

Another area that the link helped to develop was in the area of painting and drawing – an area that for most schools in Uganda appeared not to form a formal part of the curriculum. Teachers noticed how painting and drawing provided an opportunity for developing visual forms of expression and saw the potential benefits as a technique in other subjects. From the drawings the children did of their representation of the UK, the linked schools tended to use more complicated

art work and colouring (3D representation of buildings in some cases) with far simpler images represented by non-linked schools, often drawing stick men and drawing a collection of items rather than a picture that tells a story.

Other examples of increased pupil knowledge as a direct result of a link came from joint curriculum projects in areas such as science or the local environment. Teachers commented on the benefits of visits to the UK, particularly where they gained ideas and resources on how to teach a subject.

For the non-linked schools, the most common theme teachers commented upon was external factors that hindered the development of pupils' knowledge and attainment, particularly absenteeism. For example, one teacher commented that the community lacks *'role models...they see their neighbours in the field and they have no incentive to go to school.'*

English language was also noted as a problem because of the lack of exposure to people speaking the language.

In both linked and non-linked schools however, performance in Mathematics remained poor. The reasons for this are not clear and may be related to a number of factors, resources available, quality of teaching and, above all, pupil motivation.

9

School Linking and Broadening Horizons

Understanding of the Wider World

So far in comparing the evidence between linked and non-linked schools, discussion has been related to access, school improvement and quality of teaching. If one looks at the more 'development education' type of indicators around understanding of the wider world, similar themes emerge to those cited earlier in the report.

Most of the schools are operating in environments where contact with the rest of their district and beyond is limited, let alone with the rest of the world. The lack of good quality roads meant that even travelling to other places in the district, let alone beyond, was always a challenge. The lack of funds for both teacher and educational officials' mobility also reinforced this sense of limited horizons and experience. Therefore the place and role for international links in this process of broadening horizons are important components of a pupils' education. For the linked schools, having a partner and contact with teachers and pupils in the UK was seen, not only to have broadened pupils' horizons, but also to have given

them an opportunity to develop friendships, and share ideas and viewpoints with pupils from outside their own community. As one teacher commented, partnerships are *'an eye opener to the world outside of Masindi... they promote the ideology of a global village.'* Another teacher stated that the link had encouraged the children to learn more. It also *'made them know that they are also human beings. We are black and they are white but we are all humans – we are all the same'*.

One head teacher noted that pupils are now more open-minded to visitors, *'they freely interact and share with people from other places'*. Another head stated, *"learners are also exposed to the world outside Masindi and are able to share with their friends their similarities and differences in culture and way of life."*

Furthermore, the mere process of making contact with pupils from the UK led to pupils reflecting more on their own culture and values and comparing it with others.

From the non-partnership schools, there appeared to be more limited goals and horizons. One teacher said *"global topics are not part of our curriculum"*. In a couple of instances there were even stronger comments, such as a fear of the wider world where children had had minimal contact with white people. There was also a concern raised that if pupils looked at schools in other countries, a sense of inferiority could well be developed.

All of the schools interviewed were in rural areas and for a number of them merely having visitors from outside of their area, let alone another country was a major event. It was noted for example in one of the non-linked schools that the mere presence of a *'young white woman'* (researcher) had a major impact.

Perceptions: Mutuality and Dependency

A challenge for any school linking programme is to recognise the dangers of dependency. Whilst this theme was not explicitly part of the research, what does emerge from the evidence is that whilst most of the linked schools were recipients of funds or resources from the partner school, schools used the skills gained from the partnership to improve the quality of learning.

Schools that had links noted how they valued resources and materials. In most cases this appeared to have emerged from dialogue and discussion with the school. Only in one instance was a concern raised about the lack of dialogue and consultation with the partner school about what was the most appropriate material resource they needed.

A major theme to emerge from the research about perceptions was the views the pupils had about the UK. An example of perceptions can be seen from the drawings the children were asked to do in all schools, about their perceptions of

the UK. Overall, the drawings produced by linked schools gave more accurate representations of the UK, compared with those of the non-linked schools. Many drawings from linked schools included well-labelled representations of the weather/climate, transport system, buildings, churches, technology, football, landscapes, maps, flags and, in some cases, their partner school name. In contrast, many of the non-linked school pupils drew typical images of rural schools; when asked, they said this was because they either had no knowledge of the UK so had not attempted the drawing, or they thought it was exactly the same.

In all schools there were misconceptions of the UK, although this tended to be more accentuated and more evident in the non-linked schools.

The District Education Officer in her visit to the UK noted how partnerships could be mutually beneficial. They were able to challenge stereotypes about how children looked in Uganda. She noted that many UK children when they think of Africa think of wild animals: when she showed them a picture of a house with no shutters, one child said, *“Won’t the animals come in, won’t the lions come and carry away the children”*. She saw the value of how partnerships could challenge such misconceptions.

10

The Role of International NGOs

Most school links and partnerships between the UK and schools in sub-Saharan Africa emerge and grow without external support, apart perhaps from grants from bodies like the British Council. The links supported by Link Community Development are important because apart from similar programmes run by Plan International, the role and support of NGO staff and their local community organisation contacts are not part of most school partnerships.

Another major weakness in many school links is the failure to debate their impact upon educational development goals for the Southern partner. A key advantage therefore of involving an NGO in the programme is in involving the Southern partner’s development or community-based expertise, and as a consequence the wider goal of improved education. Link has a well-supported educational programme in Uganda and its school linking programme clearly benefits from this. Link is able to use and maximise its reputation and contacts with the education Ministry.

A common message from all of the schools was that the infrastructure support for the heads and the teachers was weak from the local and national authorities. Link was therefore valued because it filled some of the gaps in terms of support, both formally and informally. However, there was evidence that teachers and schools

tended to go to Link when they needed specific things like e-mail and internet access and did not perhaps consider sufficiently its broader strategic value in terms of helping them to improve the overall quality of education or their role in supporting the school improvement process.

Both linked and non-linked schools made some reference to other NGOs but this tended to take the form of help with specific projects e.g. for latrines or direct grants.

11

What Schools Need

Evidence from all of the schools interviewed suggests that whilst there is progress on educational goals in Uganda, there are still major hurdles to be overcome before the government can show major improvements in the quality of learning and teaching.

Uganda has set very ambitious educational goals. Universal Primary Education and developing the infrastructure to support the goals require not only resources but also quality educators at all levels. Improvements will not happen overnight and commitments need to be given to professional development and opportunities for teachers to gain new ideas and approaches. For example, the commitment to equal access for boys and girls, whilst recognised by all schools, was still a major challenge because of cultural influences, self-esteem and need for leadership within both the school and the local community.

All schools valued the help and support to improve the quality of their teaching. Some form of ongoing and supportive CPD programme appears crucial here. The example of a linked school bringing together a group of schools and sharing knowledge gained with other schools seems an excellent example that could be built on. The evidence from dialogue with the non-linked schools shows the value of demonstrating what changes in teaching and learning style can bring to improving the quality of the learning and impact on children.

The role of leaders within a school is therefore critical. Supporting heads and senior teachers to gain experience of the value of differing teaching and learning styles can, as this research shows, have positive impacts.

Schools clearly need more resources, whether this is equipment, better buildings or a better pupil / teacher ratio. But as the interviews with the linked schools demonstrate without professional development and possibly peer support, simply donating materials is not enough. Without electricity there is no point in schools having computers or DVD recorders.

Schools also clearly need to be valued. For many teachers merely the daily routine is a challenge. The link has helped to raise self esteem and a sense of confidence in the school. Perhaps other incentives that could fulfil this role may be worth considering since not all schools will have the opportunity to be part of a Link.

Whilst the vast majority of schools in Uganda are based in rural areas and the majority of both childrens' and teachers' personal experience may have been limited to their own areas, there is a need for schools to recognise the benefits of a broader vision. The need to demonstrate the importance of learning in English has to be linked to the personal social goals of both the pupil and the teacher.

12

Contribution of Partnerships to these Needs

Schools in Uganda continue to face a range of educational challenges some of which are referred to in this report. There is evidence of progress on access as a result of the policy of Universal Primary Education. But many schools still have poor equipment and minimal resources. There is also a range of cultural influences that militate against learning, including local social, economic and cultural needs. Whatever policies may be in place, there is no substitute for providing communities with the confidence, skills and resources to develop their schools and education.

The evidence gathered from the interviews with the linked schools shows a range of benefits that the partnership brings. But, it is the impact a link can have in terms of raising confidence and a sense of self-esteem within the school that is the most significant and important. A partnership however will not automatically do this. Indeed there is some evidence (Leonard, 2010) that a partnership can reproduce a sense of dependency and inferiority. What is evident from the research for this study is that if the link or partnership is related to educational development goals, and there is local NGO support and appropriate training and support for the partner school, then a sense of self-esteem can emerge.

It is from this increased self-esteem that a number of consequences can be seen. The primary leaving examination pass rates in the linked schools are generally higher than in the non-linked schools. Three linked schools have over 70% pass rates, with two others between 40% and 60%. In the non-Linked schools only one has over 60% with three between 40% and 50% and two below 40%.

Secondly, the partnership with a school in the UK can be a stimulus for encouraging teachers to value professional development, both at an informal and formal level. As a result of discussing methods of teaching, how to use resources and what topics to cover, teachers in Masindi from a linked school gained skills

and ideas as to how improve the quality of their teaching. Some of this came from attending sessions in the UK or by working alongside visiting teachers in their school, but very often just from dialogue and discussion with partner teachers.

Thirdly, a partnership can have a direct impact upon pupils in terms of developing their skills in the use of the English language and in offering positive role models, particularly for girls.

Fourthly, there is the area of broadening pupils' horizons, developing language skills that can help Ugandan children have a wider worldview and gain increased knowledge and confidence.

The themes emerging from this research, of the benefits of linking and partnerships to educational development in schools, can be seen from other evidence gathered elsewhere. Leonard (2010) shows that in a partnership between schools in UK and Uganda, the quality of teaching in areas such as mathematics improved as a result of joint professional development. Her research also shows the benefits of teachers working on collaborative projects, and the mutual learning that can and does take place. Edge et al (2010) note how students in Kenya and Malawi had improved skills in a range of basic subjects. That study also shows the value and importance of professional development and training for teachers, particularly those that have responsibility for the link.

There is also some evidence that the partnership can help to encourage different ways of seeing the world and their partners, and can help schools to question their own assumptions.

The framework outlined, in terms of areas and indicators for progress, needs to be developed, refined and tested with other schools and in other countries. It could perhaps be adapted to three distinct areas:

- basic development needs for the school related to access, equity and resources
- educational and learning needs related to quality of teaching, leadership and pupils' knowledge and understanding
- development education perspectives that open up pupils' and teachers' minds to different ways of seeing the world, and to question their own assumptions

Finally for an NGO like Link, its role in this process seems to be crucial, particularly if the national government is not in a position to give the resources and time to support the schools and the teachers. Link can support schools in educational development and development education through equipment, professional development and training and peer support. The research showed that because Link had invested heavily in Masindi district through its broader educational programme there was a consequential positive impact on its linking programme.

What a partnership can bring may be a combination of all the above, but consideration may need to be given to where the emphasis within educational development and development education needs to be given.

As mentioned earlier, there are dangers of a partnership programme creating a 'them and us' perception. Link needs to address this by seeing the schools with a link as 'centres of excellence', providing professional development and peer support to other local schools. One school was already doing this due to an enlightened and forward-thinking head teacher.

The role of the link thus becomes much more about resourcing and helping the school to fulfil this role. It also means that the priority becomes quality rather than quantity. The issue is not having more linked schools but supporting those linked schools that do exist as models of good practice in the local area. Consideration perhaps also needs to be given to Link looking at teacher training in both the UK and Uganda in terms of ensuring that the approach they wish to take has long-term impact.

Above all, what is clear is that school partnerships can be of considerable benefit to a Southern school if they are framed within developmental as well as educational approaches. There will always be challenges with any link or partnership where there is imbalance in terms of resources and skills. This is where an NGO like Link can play such an important role. It can use its developmental expertise by working with schools and educational bodies in the South to ensure that partnerships make a contribution to broader educational development goals. What this also means is that at the UK end, there needs to be a greater understanding of these development needs, not in terms of charity and aid, but in terms of capacity-building, improved skills and access to better quality educational support.

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Appendices

I. Schools Involved in the Research

List of schools	Link Status	Year Linked	Permanent Classrooms	Temporary Classrooms	Primary Leaving Exam Pass Rate (2009)
1 Isagara	Linked	2003 – Whitefriars PS	4	3	76.8%
2 Kigulya	Linked	2003 – Kingsholm PS	3	4	74.3%
3 Jeeja	Linked	2006 – Castlewood PS	9	1	79.5%
4 Kitwetwe	Linked	2005 – Castlehill (Scotland)	4	3	56.6%
5 Isimba	Linked	2007 – Hurst Knoll PS	4	3	42.5%
6 Kothongola	Not	–	5	2	63.8%
7 Rwempisi	Not	–	7	0	20.8%
8 Siiba	Not	–	0	7	30.8%
9 Kilanyi	Not	–	7	0	48.3%
10 Kinywamurara	Not	–	7	0	49.0%

II. List of People Interviewed

Francis Atima, Principal Inspector of Schools, Ministry of Education and Sports / Directorate of Education Standards

Francis Kyomuhendo, Masindi District Education Officer

Margaret Ekwang, District Inspector of Schools, Masindi

Head teachers, teachers and community representatives from 10 schools listed above.

Douglas Bourn

Douglas Bourn is Director of Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London. He is Editor of the International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning and author of numerous publications on development education and related themes.

The Development Education Research Centre is recognised as the UK's leading centre for research and consultancy on development education. It acts as the knowledge hub internationally for development education, runs a masters programme and has a team of researchers engaged in a range of projects covering all sectors of education. See: www.ioe.ac./derc

Madeline Bain

Madeline Bain is the Project Manager for the Link Schools Programme in England and Wales at Link Community Development. Her background spans Development Education, School Improvement & Environmental Education research and evaluation.

Link Community Development is an International Development NGO working at all levels of the education system – with communities, schools and governments – to identify and remove the obstacles to quality education. Link currently works in rural districts of Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, South Africa, and Uganda. Link also works with schools in England & Wales, Ireland and Scotland to build support for development and raise awareness of important global issues through their Link Schools Programme, as well as raising funds and supporting school improvement work in sub-Saharan Africa.

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