

Report by Maggie Zimmermann

August 2014

1. Context

This is my second visit to Tuishime Primary School. My first visit in October/November 2012 was organised through the British Council on a Reciprocal Visit Grant. The purpose of this visit was to establish a stronger link between Church Broughton Primary School, England and Tuishime Primary School, Tanzania. This visit was followed a year later by a visit from the headteacher of Church Broughton School, Mrs Margot Davison in October 2013. Reciprocal visits were made to Church Broughton School by Mr Andrew Mathias and Renalda Temu. This second visit is self-funded, being both a follow-up of the previous visits and also a family holiday. It comes as an opportunity to share my wonderful experiences of Tanzania and Tuishime Primary School with my family.

2. Welcome and arrival

My family and I were welcomed by the whole school with songs, prayers, dancing and singing. The children were enthusiastic and the welcome was warm and genuine. The teachers were open, smiling and keen to speak to us all.

3. Initial observations

On walking around each classroom, some very positive changes had taken place.

- There were many resources in the infant classes which were being used to good effect, helping the children to learn. Some infant children were able to respond to my questions, even though my accent must sound very unfamiliar to them. I was impressed by this.
- In some classes, new posters have been made and put up on the walls to make the classroom an attractive and informative working environment, supporting teaching and learning.
- The children were ready and willing to speak to the mzungu teacher. They were less daunted and more prepared to speak up than when I last was at the school.
- Some children were able to ask open questions and probe by supporting questions and following up on a theme to deepen understanding. This was impressive and should be encouraged.
- There was a greater emphasis on group work. Some classes had tables facing each other to encourage children to discuss their work and work collaboratively.
- There was a greater evidence of children reading, and many children had reading books. I took the opportunity to listen to a number of children read, and they are able to use phonetics to work out unfamiliar words. Asking questions about the understanding of the text was interesting and informative.
- There was an increased commitment from teachers. Teachers were present at school, unless ill, and were involved in lessons in all classrooms. Some teachers gave many extra hours of their own time to preparing work, marking and collating results, and were highly committed to improving the school. This is highly commendable and impressive.
- Teachers were very open and ready to talk. I had a long conversation about measuring pupil progress in Tanzania and England, sharing our different methods. Another teacher spent a long time talking to me about the curriculum in Tanzania and England and how these compare and contrast. I also talked at length with Peter Gitonga about the future of the British Council link, and how this could be planned, carried out and evaluated over time.

4. Teaching

Many exams had taken place the week prior to my visit and teachers were busy marking papers and collating results much of the time. The curriculum had been covered before the exams and therefore, there were few formal lessons to observe. Also, two days were given as holiday to celebrate Eid and on one day, many children were absent due to confusion over the date that Eid would take place.

However, I did have opportunity to observe some craft lessons and these were very well-taught, with clear instructions, relevant materials prepared in advance and real examples of work prepared by the end of each lesson. The work was at a very high standard and the lessons well-conducted.

I was impressed by some of the deeper conversations about why craft lessons are such an important part of the curriculum, because, by learning a craft, children have the potential in the future to start their own business, and all pupils, whatever their academic attainment, have an opportunity to learn skills for life. Enterprise is highly important for the future of every child.

5. Culture boxes

It was a pleasure to share the culture box that the children at Church Broughton School had prepared. The ten items inside were shared with a small group of children, and these children were asked to take them to the other classes to show the rest of the school what was in the culture box and why each item had been included.

The children at Tuishime had prepared a written postcard about different aspects of Tanzanian culture. These will be taken back and shared with the children at Church Broughton. I have also collected a number of artefacts made by the children at Tuishime during my time here. These include tie dye, batik and hand-made dolls. Some of the children made short videos of the presentation of these which will add to the excitement as I take these items back to England. Thank you for your work on this.

6. Prayer book

I was able to share a book of prayers written by the children aged 7-8 at Church Broughton. This book of prayers was then given to Teacher Renalda to use during Religious Education lessons. Maybe the children at Tuishime could prepare their own similar prayers.

7. The debate

This was a memorable, enjoyable and informative occasion. We enjoyed it very much. It was extremely useful for teachers to increase their fluency and pronunciation of English and to express themselves with confidence. Thank you everyone for being strong in verbalising your opinions. I know that for some teachers, the debate continues at home!

I was astounded by the confidence at the correction of the English by teacher Pancras. This was both accurate and extremely helpful to improve spoken English and I would commend everyone to try to observe the advice that he gave.

I was also impressed by the way the debate was conducted formally and that politeness prevailed over the expression of opposing views.

8. International school link

A new Church Broughton/ Tuishime school International School agreement was written and signed. Three new joint-curricular projects were agreed between the two schools were planned. These include:

- Sharing of culture boxes (July/ Sept 2014)
- Tie dye/ batik work in the UK to be made and the results shared with Tuishime School (Sept/Oct 2014)
- A piece of work about farming in Tanzania/ UK to be prepared and shared (Feb/March 2015)
- Skipping activities (June/ July 2015)

In addition, it was agreed that letters, cards, emails or photographs should be sent to the link school three times every year to keep up the continuity of the ongoing relationship.

Recommendations/ suggestion/ideas:

Please understand that my recommendations are for your discussion and are not meant to be critical in any way. I am a teacher myself and no teacher is perfect. I am offering ideas with humility and ask you to discuss whether these are feasible in your own context.

1. Consider enterprise as part of education. The teaching of craft skills is a strength of the school. Could the school design and make articles to sell, maybe prepare food or other project which could raise money. This has the benefit of raising money, but also teaches children how to start a micro-business. Skills for life are essential for children to survive in the future. (Debate motion: Passing exams is more important than skills for life in primary school)
2. Give more emphasis to reading. I have given Naomi Masenge some money which we raised from Church Broughton Primary School for her to use appropriately to promote the teaching of reading. The teachers at Church Broughton have also given books for the teachers to keep, to read to the children in their class. Reading to the children models how to read and demonstrates to them what good reading sounds like. Children can also discuss words and questions raised by books. Reading books in groups, with questions for discussion is another good way of promoting good reading. Children read words, but, if they don't understand the meaning, the reading becomes purposeless! Children need to be able to read with understanding to learn for life. If children can't read, they can't learn for themselves. Once again, this is a life-skill.
3. Some teachers are more confident in English than others. Give opportunities for the quieter teachers to take part in the debate by giving plenty of time to prepare and giving these teachers first opportunities to express their views.
4. Some teachers seem to be more committed than others. Take time to discuss together how to encourage full commitment whilst giving time for teachers to enjoy a private life too.
5. To support the partnership between Church Broughton School and Tuishime School, it would be helpful if a Tuishime email could be set up, so that the children at both schools could communicate without having to use teachers' personal email addresses.
6. The baraza was excellent. Even though the children were tired and ready to go home after their parties, still some children were ready to make a good evaluation of the school and make recommendations for the future. The teachers were able to respond to the points raised immediately, or take note to improve other areas in the future. A few of the points raised were:
 - Every class should make fast progress as they do in Grade 7
 - Small gifts for children who perform well or make accelerated progress
 - Ensure that there are plenty of story books available
 - Follow the timetable fully and don't miss out areas of the curriculum
 - Teachers to keep clean and not spread diseases in the holidays

I thought the baraza was a very brave thing for the teachers to do, as they become open to criticism. In England, the children have an opportunity to express their opinions and ideas through an open questionnaire. I will try the baraza in my own class at Church Broughton to see how it works. Thank you for sharing this occasion with me.

7. Tuishime School is making progress and everyone deserves to feel encouraged. However my own observations are limited and not necessarily comprehensive. Would a more analytical review of school improvement be welcomed? I will discuss opportunities for this with Naomi.