Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL): The Story of Catch Up in Zambia

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Introduction to TaRL
Problem: Even after 3 years or more of schooling, children unable to read simple text and perform basic math operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Children in Grades 3-5 at different reading levels</th>
<th>Zambia Catch Up Baseline Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades III-V</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>III-V</td>
<td>Cannot recognize letters as yet</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Look at the challenge that teachers in primary grades face.

The overall reading levels are low, and the tail of the distribution is long and varied. Math is often worse.

Who should the teacher teach? What should be taught?

Note: This data is from Catch Up program implementation baselines covering schools in Eastern & Southern province with the number of schools increasing over time, 80 in 2016, 470 in 2018 and 1100 in 2019.
Possible Solution: Teaching at the Right Level can help the picture to change quickly in classrooms

Data from close to ~800 schools in Zambia shows big shifts in children able to read, and consequently reductions in those at the lowest levels of reading

~60 hours of implementation

By allocating time to foundational skills, using data and activities with a focus on outcomes, and uniform action – change is possible

Today the Zambian government is developing a plan to go to national scale
TaRL transforms practice in many ways, and helps shift the system from *schooling for all* towards *learning for all*.

### ‘Business as usual’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal &amp; Assessment</th>
<th>Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal is to complete the grade level textbook or curriculum. Assessments aligned with curriculum and often complex.</td>
<td>Goal is to ensure basic foundational skills for all, with clearly articulated goals for basic reading and math.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Training &amp; Mentoring</th>
<th>Practical training of leaders &amp; instructors on the approach with practice periods – develop “leaders of practice”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal continuous professional development or targeted coaching for teachers; traditionally non-practitioner trainers.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
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<tr>
<td>Full class assembled together by grade level. Whole class teaching with little room for adjusting teaching to suit children’s needs.</td>
<td>Children grouped by learning level rather than by grade. Children move quickly from one group to the next as their learning progresses.</td>
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<th>Teaching &amp; Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers focus mainly on whole-class instruction (‘Chalk and Talk’ or textbook-driven), focus on curriculum leads to teaching to the ‘top of the class’.</td>
<td>Teachers use simple and engaging daily learning activities that can be adapted as children progress. Students engage in activities in large groups, small groups, and individually.</td>
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<th>Measurement, Monitoring &amp; Review</th>
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<td>Pen and paper assessment done at the beginning and end of a learning unit. Minimal data analysis to understand student learning or adjust teaching before moving to the next learning unit.</td>
<td>Simple assessment to plan, and similar assessment used periodically to track student progress, review data, and make decisions on child progress and program design. Quick decision making to inform program delivery and future course.</td>
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TaRL was developed through a process of experimentation and refinement

**Proof of concept**
- **2001-2003**
  - "Balsakhi" programme; Pratham community volunteer “pull out” remedial programme in urban schools

**Identifying a scalable model in India**
- **2012-2014**
  - Teacher-led model, on-site mentoring by govt academic officials; Learning camps in govt primary schools, led by Pratham teams and supported by village volunteers

**Pilots and scale-ups in Africa**
- **2005-2006**
  - Village volunteers conducted community classes for rural primary school children
- **2008 – 2010**
  - In-school one-month govt teacher-led summer camp with support from village volunteers; in-school govt teacher-led learning improvement program & support from volunteers
- **2016**
  - Catch Up piloted in Zambia in 2016 and it continues to grow (2000+ schools in 2021)
- **2018**
  - PEC piloted in Ivory Coast in 2018 and continues to grow (1,000 schools in 2021)
- **2018 – 2014**
  - Borno State government piloted TaRL and it continues to grow
The Zambia Story
Catch Up program in Zambia

Target group: Grades 3 to 5 / Age 8 to 10++

Language(s): Local languages (e.g. Icibemba...)

Type of schools: Government schools

Duration: 2 terms every academic year, Jan-July

Timing and Modality: during school day, outside class hours
1 hour of instruction daily, language or math

Instructors: school teachers

Mentors: District Coordinators, Zonal Coordinators, School mentors

Role of Government: Owner of the program; provides Strategic orientation / defines Policy; implementation (coordination- trainings- evaluation- supervision)
History of Catch Up in Zambia

Nov 2015:
Ministry created Catch Up working group

Nov 2016
Pilot launched

March 2016
India learning journey for MoGE officials

April 2017
USAID DIV committed funding for scale

July 2017
Pilot concluded

Sept 2017
Pilot review meeting and decision to scale up to 1,800 schools

Jan 2018
Scale up to 470 schools

Jan 2019
Scale up to 1,114 schools

Jan 2020
Scale up to 1,800 schools

Jan 2021
Scale up to 2,000 schools and potentially more
Catch Up Government Structure

Ministry of General Education
- Standards and Curriculum
- TESS
- Planning and Information

Provincial Education Office
- PEO
- PESO and Standards Officers
- EO-TED and PRCCs
- SPO and Statistician

District Education Board Secretary's Office
- DEBS
- DESO and ESO
- DRCC
- DPO and SO

Zone Resource Centre
- ZIC

Primary Schools
- School Administrators
- School Mentors
- SIC
- Teachers

Support
VVOB Lusaka Team (Country Programme Manager, Education Manager, Education Advisors), + TaRL Africa support

VVOB District Coordinators
In the classroom, TaRL unfolds through a simple process involving key elements

1. Simple one-on-one assessment done to group Grade 3, 4 & 5 children by level instead of by grade. Instructors facilitate easy-to-do whole class and small group activities to guide children’s work.

2. There are a set of activities and materials in reading and arithmetic that are appropriate for the level of each group.

3. Children learn in groups and also individually.

4. Similar assessments are used for tracking children’s progress. Thereafter, groups are reorganized based on children’s progressed levels, and activities are conducted accordingly.

Children progress and move into the next level group.
Catch Up Results by Year

Catch Up Zambia: Scale vs outcomes

Year of implementation

- 2016-17 (Pilot)
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020 (uptil Midline)

Number of schools

- Children who can read a simple paragraph
- Children who can solve a subtraction problem
- Number of schools

Percentage point improvement

Projected outcomes at Endline
A coalition of actors
Core principles for building a systems-led TaRL initiative

Focus on the problem at hand, and clarity of goal – foundational skills for all

Contextualized locally-grounded design and approach to leverage existing systems and structures

Build coalitions within and outside government, from national to local levels

Capacity building across the system to build ownership and leadership at all levels
What’s Next?
Programming continuing and scaling
• Catch Up to be continued in Eastern, Southern and Lusaka with Ministry leadership, and deepening integration in existing structures and budgets over time
• Catch Up included in GPE COVID-19 response project as strategy for remedial and accelerated support
• Expansion planned to additional provinces through global funding support

Alignment & integration with MoGE priorities
• Catch Up programme part of System level and Long-Term priorities as presented by Directorate - Planning in Dec 2020
  • Ideas on integration into existing job descriptions, built into ministry systems, budgets
  • Including in CPD workplans and teacher training curriculum
• Process initiated to develop scale up plan in line with MoGE intention to take Catch Up to National Scale, including support for mobilization of resources for scaling

Continued Learning
• Research activities to improve and establishing effectiveness of Catch Up being planned in 2021 and beyond
Thank You!