

Education

A study leaflet based on experience in the linked dioceses of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Suffolk and Kagera, Tanzania

Exploring the Link

Kagera

Both Government and church place great emphasis on education.

Primary education (up to age 15), conducted in Kiswahili, is free and over 90% of children attend. There are usually 60 in a class – the allowance for equipment is £12 per pupil pa. About 30% of pupils pass the exam which enables them to go on to secondary school, but many cannot afford to do so. There is a charge of £20 a year and often the cost of boarding, as not every village has a school. Only 1% of children go on to university or college.

All these figures are national – the percentages for a remote area like Kagera will be lower

Suffolk

In the UK schooling is compulsory up to the age of 16 and around 60% of students enrol in tertiary education. Some 6% of national income is spent on education.

At primary level a typical class will have 30 pupils, with one teacher and one classroom assistant. In Suffolk each primary school pupil is funded at the level of £1,700 pa.

There are 86 Church of England primary schools in the Diocese.



School pupils in Kagera

First hand experience

Koku a primary school pupil in Kagera

Koku gets up at 6am. She has to walk to fetch water for the household before walking to school. With no breakfast she arrives at 7am and then helps the other children carry out cleaning and maintenance tasks around the school building before classes start at 8am. There is a break at 10am for play (no play facilities though). "Now I am 11," says Koku, "I stay until 2.30pm." When she gets home she will be helping her mother look after the few chickens owned by the family.

Ruta a teacher at a secondary school in Kagera

"All the teaching is in English at secondary school level," says Ruta. "This is very hard for pupils at first. For many of them they are also away from home. They will not see their families for 6 months. But they know that their schooling is going to open new possibilities for them in the future and most of them work very hard." Ruta is one of many new teachers. He earns about £100 a month.

Views from a Suffolk primary school

Abygail (10): "School is fun – mostly. We learn 12 subjects; my favourite is Science. We are learning about the planets." Alexander (9): "We spend 6 and a half hours a day at school, and we stay here 7 years. I like Design Technology; we're making moving toys from correx, card and wood." Teacher Naomi: "Work in Suffolk is quite target-focussed. Children must reach certain levels in a specific time. We have lots of resources, but many things are restricted by finances."

Catherine a secondary school pupil in Suffolk

As she approaches her Advanced Level Studies at a Suffolk High School, Catherine anticipates studying history or medicine at degree level. "If all my intentions and hopes materialize," says Catherine, "I would like to study at a French University." Her achievements so far suggest she has a good chance of getting her wish. "I know I am very privileged," she adds, "and I look forward to the day when all young people of the world will have these opportunities as of right."



Catherine, Suffolk

Educational issues

In Tanzania debt relief has had a major direct impact on education. There is free primary education available for all and every school has at least one new school building paid for in this way. But equipment is still very limited and teachers poorly trained.

The Tanzanian government has a massive programme of teacher training as it aims to raise the proportion of children going to secondary school to 50% by 2010. The church is seen as a major partner in achieving this with a specific role in addressing the needs of the poor. Alfred Sebahene, Coordinator of Education and Training in the Kagera Diocese, considers that there is a particular opportunity for the church in providing Christian education in Tanzanian schools & colleges. "With inadequate religious/Christian education in schools today, students are not given the opportunity to learn positive values and adequate life skills."

The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich enables 75 children of pastors in the Kagera diocese to go to secondary school. The pastors themselves may only earn £30 a month so this is vital to them. In 2006 an appeal was also launched to raise funds for the rebuilding of the Ngara Anglican Primary School (NAPS). The school is growing – it goes up to grade 4 so far, but will continue up to grade 7. Already it is seriously cramped. This is a fee paying school run by the Diocese where all teaching is in English. This gives pupils a head start when progressing to secondary school.

In the UK education through to university is taken for granted. Most schools have excellent facilities and there is voluntary help from parents both in the classroom and with extra curricula activities. Nevertheless illiteracy and innumeracy remain serious issues and some 13% of secondary schools have recently been identified as "inadequate". In Suffolk major concerns are: the levels of attainment, retaining small schools where they are the hub of a community, and the low participation of children in post 16 education.

In Suffolk the church plays an important part in the education of children in school, in the church and at home. Despite the teaching of religion in schools, many children grow up with an inadequate understanding of Christian teaching. The church is inevitably more and more involved in adult learning (Alpha and Emmaus courses, confirmation classes).



The school day begins in Ngara Anglican primary school

For Prayer

Learning to live is such a wonderful but difficult business, Lord:

Learning to know
and to understand,
Learning to love and to care.

We so often fall short, but you prompt us to try and try again.

So, bring us to that day when we know as we are known and love as we are loved, the day of the joy of your Kingdom.

In the name and grace of Jesus we ask this.

Amen

National Society

Jesus, we want to grow in knowledge:

Help us to grow in body, mind and spirit.

Jesus, we want to grow in faith:

We thank you for the people of faith in Bible times and in our times whose lives are an example to us.

Jesus, we want to grow in hope:

We pray for all who are helping to bring freedom, peace and justice in our world.

Jesus, we want to grow in love:

Help us to love one another as you have loved us and given yourself for us. We pray for those who today are giving their lives for others.

Amen

Prayer from Africa prepared by women on behalf of their children. WCC.

Some seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge:

that is curiosity;

Others seek knowledge so that they themselves may be known:

that is vanity;

But there are others

who seek knowledge in order to serve and edify others: and that is charity.

*Bernard of Clairveaux,
12th century*

Bible resources

In OT times, children were brought up as members of the community of faith. As they grew up, they took on their religious tasks and family responsibilities. Parents' duty to teach their children Israel's stories, laws and prayers of Israel was stressed (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalm 78:1-7).

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7

However, in the Bible education is not only for children. Faithful people are always learning. Studying God's Law was a joy for the Psalmist (see Psalm 119!). Searching for wisdom was a life's work (Proverbs 1-2). Prophets like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah appealed to their people to reflect on experience and change their attitudes and behaviour. God's people was to be a learning community.

This is what the Lord says: Stand at the crossroads, and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it and you will find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16

Jesus was seen as a Rabbi or teacher with adult disciples or learners (Mark 3:14-19). He taught people in synagogues



Suffolk school classroom

and the open air, using parables as Jewish teachers often did (Mark 4:33-34; Matthew 4:23-5:1).

Teaching and learning were part of Early Church life (Acts 2:42; 18:24-26), probably all ages together. However, Paul reminds the clever and sophisticated Christians of Corinth that God's foolishness is a challenge to human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:25).

OT and NT have examples of the spiritual awareness and qualities of children (1 Samuel 3; Mark 10:13-16). Children are models of discipleship, and of how to live in God's kingdom.

From the Bible, people of faith draw a strong concern for education and a particular sense of the value and equality of people, young and old, in God's sight.

Pray for

- children in local schools, especially those who struggle to keep up
- teachers, especially those who are stressed or short of resources
- young people leaving school, especially those who lack hope
- politicians, especially those whose decisions shape our education system

Thank you Lord for the
...learning times
...helping times
...listening times
...doing times
...working together times.
Through these we are your people in your world.
Thank you.
Amen.
National Society

Bible study

1. What do 1 Samuel 3 and Matthew 19:13-14 suggest about children's relationship with God? How is this reflected in your experience?
2. Imagine you are 1 of the 12 disciples (it may help to skim-read Mark 1-10). What are you learning from being with Jesus, eg skills? attitudes? How has being a disciple changed you?
3. What do Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Psalm 78:1-8 say parents should teach their children? How far is faith passed on in families today? Share any good ways of doing this.
4. Reflect on the value the Bible gives to education. How does this compare with how education is valued today, (a) in Kagera, and (b) in Suffolk?

Discussion

1. What did you learn at school? How has the education of children in the UK changed in your lifetime? What do you think has changed for the better, and for the worse?

2. Read what Koku has to say about her experience of school. How does it compare with a child of similar age in the school near you?

3. What values underpin our own education system today? How do you feel about them, as a Christian? In Kagera where there is need and poverty do you think education has a different role in society?

4. What challenges face young people growing up in Kagera? How do they compare with those in Suffolk?

5. Ruta talks about his hopes for his pupils. What do you think is the relationship between economic development and education? Will education help to lift Tanzania out of poverty? What can we do to help this process? Why do you think the Kagera Diocese sees support for NAPS as important even though government schools are less well resourced?

6. What do you think are the advantages of having links between church and school? For the school? And for the church? Does your church have contact with nearby schools?

7. How important is it to continue learning as an adult? Does the church have a role in this? How do we teach Christianity to adults?



NAPS children

It should be stressed that it is important to have an educated society. A child belongs to the community. For me the fruits of ignorance are poverty and diseases. We need to come up with innovative ideas to utilize resources: fertile lands, minerals, water and manpower. I think education should be a priority.

Seba, headmaster of Ngara Anglican Primary School (NAPS)

Action

1. Consider how you could become better informed about your local school(s), e.g. invite the Head to talk to the PCC, to participate in a dialogue in All Age Worship, to write a magazine article. Think about becoming a school governor. Pray for the school regularly.

2. Plan to find out more about the needs of school children in Kagera and consider if there are ways you can help. Share what you learn with children locally.

3. Review how your church helps people of all ages to learn. Give thanks for the opportunities for learning which you enjoy.

4. Consider how you might campaign for debt relief in other poor countries to enable them to make the progress on education which has been possible in Tanzania. Join the Jubilee Debt Campaign (www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk) and participate in co-ordinated action.



New classrooms at Murgwanza primary school, built as a direct result of debt relief

This leaflet was produced on behalf of the World Mission Group of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich with input from the Diocese of Kagera. For further copies of this leaflet and others in the series or for more information please contact Sue Young, World Development Adviser on sueyoung@fish.co.uk 01473 233525 or Elizabeth Moore, Lay Education & Training Adviser on elizabeth@stedmundsbury.anglican.org 01359 233050. We can arrange for someone to visit your church or community to talk about Kagera and education or to lead a discussion. Bible quotations taken from New International Version. January 2007