

Classroom Observation Study

Adapting and piloting a classroom
observation tool for the Right To
Play 'My Education, My Future'
Programme, Burundi

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ACRONYMS

COT	Classroom Observation Tool
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MEMF	My Education, My Future Programme
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
PBL	Play-Based Learning
RTP	Right To Play
SEL	Socio-Emotional Learning

Executive Summary

Introduction

Classroom observation tools (COTs) are used to understand and improve the quality of teaching practices, ultimately for better student learning outcomes. While COTs are widely used globally, there is limited research on how they are adapted to fit different educational contexts. Moreover, little is known about how lesson observers and teachers are involved in the development of COTs. To help close these evidence gaps, we present a study on the adaptation of an existing COT for Right To Play's My Education, My Future (MEMF) programme in Burundi, which supports play-based learning (PBL) in resource-poor schools.

This report presents:

- the process of adaptation of an existing COT and the development of a user guide for use in low-resource schools in Burundi
- a small-scale study piloting the adapted tool
- findings and recommendations based on feedback from teachers, school leaders, and education stakeholders to refine the tool.

Our approach

The study started with a desk review of existing COTs and familiarisation with programme documents to inform the first adaptation of the MEMF COT. We then piloted the COT in two schools in Ruyigi Province, Burundi and held a workshop with district-level education stakeholders, interviewed headteachers and held focus group discussions with teachers to gather their feedback on the tool. We used a qualitative approach for the analysis of their responses on what they thought worked well in the tool and suggestions for improvement. Along with post-pilot reflections from the MEMF programme staff, the feedback informed further contextualisation and finalisation of the tool.

Key Findings

- Our desk review found that few open-source tools are available for resource-poor contexts, with organisations typically creating context-specific checklists.
- Although the large class sizes meant that it could be difficult to observe all the children in lesson observations for the tool pilot, the format of the tool did allow documentation of type and frequency of play-based activities and other important elements of teacher practice.
- Teachers and school leaders found the COT helpful in reinforcing MEMF training concepts and guiding effective teaching practices.

Key adaptations to the tool

- expanded classroom context section to capture student age ranges and types of disability, reflecting the multi-age and mixed-ability nature of the classes
- new indicators to assess gender equality and socio-emotional learning, such as inclusive seating arrangements and critical thinking prompts
- introducing a scoring system to help observers rate teacher and learner behaviours
- adding sections for notes and comments for observers to elaborate on their scoring
- reduction in the number of teaching goals and moving examples of behaviour to the user guide for a more streamlined observation process.

Recommendations

Contextualisation: COTs should be tailored to address local challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, high learner absenteeism and the need for a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Focus on specific observation aims: COTs must align with specific programme approaches, such as the PBL approach in this study, to ensure they capture relevant teaching practices.

Stakeholder involvement: Engaging teachers, headteachers and education officials, and programme staff in tool development enhances contextual relevance and usability. Investment in time to review tools with stakeholders is important.

Training for observers: Proper training and opportunities for joint observations to ensure consistent scoring and observation practice should be developed.

Teacher feedback: Observations should be linked to professional development, providing constructive feedback to teachers for continuous improvement.

Acknowledgements

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1 - Introduction

The practices that take place in the classroom hold the key to understanding how learning happens. Thus, it comes as no surprise that observations of classroom practices have been the focus of extensive research. The key objective of classroom observations is to understand and improve teaching and learning, ultimately for improved student learning outcomes. As noted in NFER's guide to selecting classroom observation tools (COT) (Price *et al.*, 2022), classroom observations can serve different purposes for different audiences across each level of the education system, from individual teachers up to national and global policy makers.

The objective of COTs can be to generate tailored feedback for individual teachers as part of a continuous professional development initiative, or to measure the effectiveness of teacher training and classroom interventions as part of a programme evaluation. They can also be used to generate data, the analyses of which can add to the evidence base on resource needs and challenges and serve as input to inform policy change at school, regional or national level.

However, little is known about how countries adapt COTs for use in their education systems (Newman *et al.*, 2022). Some organisations refer to COT adaptation for initiatives in their education programmes, for example, World Vision (2019); however, the process of alignment to programme needs and intended outcomes, and the COT itself is not always accessible. There is also little known about how lesson observers and teachers are involved in the process of adaptation and contextualisation of COTs. To help close these evidence gaps, and build on NFER's guide to selecting observation tools we present a study on the adaptation of an existing COT for the non-profit Right To Play.

The objectives of this report are to present:

- our adaptation of an existing COT and creation of an accompanying user guide for use in resource-poor schools in Burundi in a rural commune with a high concentration of returning refugees
- a small-scale study to pilot the tool
- some findings and recommendations following the collection of perceptions of teachers, users and relevant education stakeholders, to inform the finalisation of the tool.

The present report can be used as a reference aid or a resource for schools and other education stakeholders who seek to adapt COTs.

1.1 Study background: The importance of classroom observation tools

Observational methods allow for examination of factors such as time spent teaching, behaviour management, teaching techniques, and student engagement. Such information helps assess teaching quality, provide feedback for improvement, and identify areas needing support in education systems.

Classroom observation for the purpose of improving learning outcomes can help teachers to adjust their practice when they are offered constructive feedback. It can also play a role in ongoing monitoring, evaluation and operational learning by providing insights into how well an education intervention is being implemented. When it is part of a structured pedagogy approach, classroom observation is a cost-effective way of monitoring and improving teaching quality (Akyeampong *et al.*, 2023), and it can also be used as ongoing feedback in teacher professional development interventions for improving teaching practice (White *et al.*, 2022).

Classroom observations need to consider context. When developing COTs or teacher development tools in resource-poor settings, for example, the COT needs to be adjusted for factors such as limited subject matter experts, resources, teacher training, reliance on rote learning, overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, poor working conditions, and low salaries. These challenges are more pronounced in overburdened and underfunded education systems, Burundi being an example, and this affects both teachers and students.

The current study focused on an adaptation of an existing tool used by the international non-profit, Right To Play (RTP), who work in 15 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, using play as a tool for the development and empowerment of children affected by war, displacement and poverty.

1.2 NFER Classroom Observation Study Context

The objective of NFER's Classroom Observation Study was to adapt and pilot an existing COT that could monitor the application of training on the play-based learning (PBL) approach used by RTP in their My Education, My Future (MEMF) programme in Burundi. The objectives of the tool adaptation were to inform the development of RTP's teacher development programmes; support programme monitoring, evaluation and learning, and provide insights on aspects of gender equality and socio-emotional skills in classroom practice.

The My Education My Future (MEMF) programme

RTP has been implementing MEMF since February 2020. The main objective of the programme is to improve learning outcomes for children affected by the Burundian refugee crisis. It targets 24,000 children, (13,950 girls) aged 6-17 years across 30 primary schools in the commune of Gisuru, Ruyigi in Burundi, where more than 41,000 returnees are located (UNHCR, 2024).

The programme is aimed at equipping children, particularly girls, to take the lead in shaping the lives of the returnee communities in which they live, through education. Ethnologue lists three languages in Burundi: Kirundi, Swahili and French (SIL International, 2024). In primary schools, Kirundi is the medium of instruction from Grades 1-4 and French is used in Grades 5 and 6. The children of returnees have experience with Swahili and Kirundi only, while their teachers use Kirundi and French as mediums of instruction.

RTP's core objective is to enhance the quality of education in the schools they support, through gender-responsive PBL that motivates girls and boys to attend and stay in school, experience positive associations with school, perform better academically and participate actively in their education and future.

In addition, given the impact that displacement tends to have on girls' access to quality education, MEMF seeks to ensure that girls do not lose out on any of the benefits that quality education, in secure environments, have to offer; including classroom practices which focus on socio-emotional learning (SEL), and gender-responsive and inclusive pedagogy. PBL has emerged as an important strategy to promote student engagement and development of holistic skills or SEL through learning activities, such as games, which are joyful, interactive and engaging (Parker, Thomsen and Berry, 2022), hence the focus in RTP's programme and in our tool adaptation.

MEMF is monitored by RTP's programme team in Burundi and since its launch, they have been exploring ways to enhance support for teachers in the 30 primary schools that use the play-based approach to learning. This approach is used across all subjects in Grades 1 to 7 (ages 7 to 14, approximately). Headteachers and teachers on the programme are trained in the play-based approach and how to support the development of gender-responsive and inclusive practices, as well as students' socio-emotional skills. Headteachers, as well as school inspectors in Gisuru, are additionally trained in coaching, which involves providing post-lesson observation developmental feedback to teachers.

2 - Our approach

2.1 Sample schools and teachers

We conducted the COT pilot in January 2024, in two schools in Gisuru Commune which the RTP programme team selected because teachers in these schools had participated in the relevant training. There were eight teachers in each school and six classrooms, each holding 50-75 pupils. The schools are situated in communities that have a high percentage of returning refugees, Gisuru being close to the border with Tanzania. The children's ages in these schools ranged from 7-14 years.

Both schools had a similar infrastructure: one continuous block with a headteacher's office at the beginning of the block, followed by six classrooms,

side by side, and a small teacher's resource room at the end of the block. Both schools had separate latrine blocks for boys and girls. Each of the classrooms had a similar set up, with a blackboard that took up the whole width of the wall at the front of the classroom, a teacher's desk, two bookshelves at the back or side of the classroom, and two or three sets of up to 10 rows of desks with benches attached that seated up to three children comfortably. Most of the benches had four or five children seated on them.

The classrooms had little lighting, no displays of children's work, or any other instructional material, apart from some worn out textbooks on the shelves. Only one of the schools had a cleared play area for

the children and neither of them had any play equipment. The teachers had between four and 40 years of experience. In consultation with RTP and the schools headteacher, we selected three grades in each school in which to observe lessons for the COT pilot.

2.2 Stages of the study

A **desk review** of existing tools preceded the adaptation of the MEMF COT, to assess which elements of other tools could inform the adaptation and whether those elements were appropriate for a resource-poor, rural school context. The desk review was followed by the **tool adaptation**, a **pilot of the tool** in Burundi, followed by a **collation of feedback which informed the final tool adaptations** and the writing of a report.

Desk Review of existing tools

We reviewed a small number of mainly publicly available COTs used in low- to middle-income countries to explore if / how they capture aspects of gender equality and socio-emotional learning (SEL), whether they had guidance for the observer on how to administer the tool and for general format, for example and whether they used a rubric or some other format to present the wording of the required teacher competencies to be observed.

A key consideration was scoring in a way that would support the monitoring of classroom practice for programme learning. As noted in our guide to selecting tools (Price *et al.*, 2022), COTs generally feature two types of scoring which can be in either a checklist or rubric format:

- Binary yes/no or options depending on whether the behaviour is seen at any point during the lesson, for recording simple, quantitative data. These tools are known as low-inference as they provide basic insights such as teachers' use of a particular learning activity.
- Three or more options in the form of a rating scale, for example, not at all (0), partially (1) or fully (2) observed behaviours. These tools collect high-inference, more insightful, data and involve observers making judgements on, for example, the extent to which teachers are using positive behaviour management strategies.

Our guide to selecting tools featured Stallings (a low-inference tool), CLASS (not open-source) and World Bank Teach Primary (high-inference and open-source). Since one of the study objectives was to adapt a tool to support the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) strand of the MEMF

programme, we reviewed the World Bank Teach Primary tool as it is both open-source and high-inference. Some of the other COTs, all at the primary level, which we reviewed were the Classroom Guide: Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment (Aga Khan Foundation, 2019) and the Save the Children Education in Emergencies checklist (2012). We also reviewed a COT which had been developed for the baseline evaluation of the MEMF programme. We present the findings of the desk review of COTs in Section 3, Results.

Adapting the original MEMF COT

RTP had begun to develop a COT for the MEMF programme, firstly, to inform the teacher development programme and identify gaps in teachers' abilities and learning in relation to play-based learning, and secondly, to assist general programme Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). There was no accompanying scoring manual or user guidance document. The tool was used by school inspectors; and district and provincial education authorities to inspect RTP schools; and RTP MEMF programme staff and Headteachers to monitor classroom practice.

The key features of the original tool (see Appendix 1) comprised a short context section and a series of 11 goals distributed under two main teaching and learning goals (Positive, Child-centred Learning Environment and Experiential, Play-based learning Methodology). The 11 goals were presented in a rubric with each goal describing a set of behaviours and an arrow on the left of the rubric to indicate increasing levels of competency.

The tool featured some gender-specific teaching and learning teacher competencies, for example, *Gender inclusive language and gender-neutral terms are used in the classroom* and *Girls and boys have equal opportunities to participate in classroom activities*. It also included some student behaviours which indicate the development of SEL, for example, *The children have opportunities to discuss, practice and expand on what they learned* and *The children assist classmates in solving problems or understanding questions*. The tool also monitored physical safety in the classroom, behaviour management and the quality of teacher communication with the students.

There was a brief section at the end for the observer to note strengths and weaknesses in the lesson, to be used as part of the MEMF coaching and mentoring programme.

In-country activities

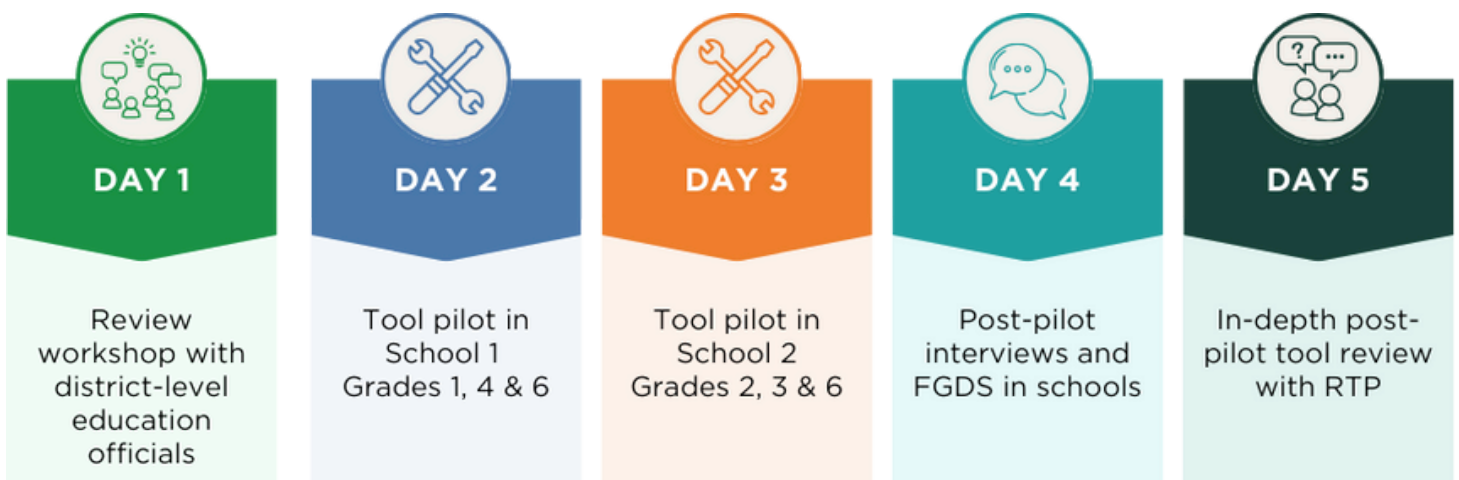
Each of the activities listed below were conducted with the assistance of translators who were fluent in Kirundi, French, and English and had a working knowledge of Swahili.

The tool was piloted in two rural schools in the Gisuru Commune of Ruyigi Province, close to the border with Tanzania. RTP programme staff coordinated a sequence of activities with district-level education officials, headteachers, teachers and RTP programme staff to pilot and review the tool,

with the availability and convenience of all stakeholders, a key consideration. These activities were undertaken by the NFER team and assisted by the RTP MEMF programme team, three stages across a 5-day period: a presentation to the Ruyigi and Gisuru education officials; a set of interviews with headteachers and focus group discussions (FGD) with teachers; and an in-depth review with RTP programme staff.

The timeline for these activities is outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Summary of in-country activities



Workshop with district-level education officials

The first step was the presentation of the tool by NFER to provincial and commune-level education stakeholders, including the Provincial and Commune Directors for Education, Headteachers of the two schools selected for the tool pilot and Commune Inspectors, followed by a FGD with the group.

Piloting the tool in selected schools

Next, the NFER research team piloted the COT, making a note of both the experiences had and observations made while using the tool. Three classes were observed in each of the two schools; in School 1, Grades 1, 4 and 6; and in School 2, Grades 2, 3 and 6, a total of six classes.

Interviews with Headteachers and discussions with teachers

Over the following two days, we interviewed the Headteachers and invited them to share their feedback on the COT. In addition, we conducted FGDs with the teachers whose classrooms had been observed and they were asked to comment on their experience with the classroom observations conducted the day before as well as to share their

feedback on the COT. These conversations were conducted in Kirundi or French with the help of translators and teachers' responses were recorded.

Post-pilot tool review with RTP Staff

Once feedback had been collected from the observation notes, teachers' reflections in the FGDs, and Headteacher interviews, two further reflection sessions took place with the senior members of the RTP Programme team. During these reflection sessions, the RTP team were briefed on some early findings from the Gisuru activities, based on some of the feedback given there. Then the RTP team were invited to give their feedback on the tool and make further recommendations. We made revisions to the tool, based on the pool of feedback received from all stakeholders, including from the district-level education officials, teachers, headteachers and the RTP team.

2.3 Analysis approach

We used a qualitative approach for the analysis of stakeholders' responses on what they thought worked well in the tool, suggestions for improvement and teachers' experience of the lesson observation we carried out in their classroom. Due to the small sample size – see Sampling limitation in Section 2.4 – we did not use analysis software as we were able to draw insights from the small volume of qualitative data we gathered.

2.4 Study limitations

Sampling

Since our study was a small-scale pilot, our sample comprised only two primary schools in a particular geographic area. The commune of Gisuru is a relatively small, post-conflict, area in Burundi. Therefore, the findings around stakeholders' responses on the contextual aspects of the tool may not be generalisable to all schools in Burundi.

Time

All school staff generously gave their time for feedback; however, there were some constraints to their availability. Teachers needed to leave straight after school, hence the FGDs with them were short. We did not fully pilot the classroom context section of the tool as there was no opportunity to go through this with the Headteacher. Furthermore, Headteachers and teachers had not actually administered the tool themselves and one or two may not have had time to review it in depth.

Observer effects

There is a wide body of research that has found that teaching under observation, or rather the conclusions arrived at from such observation, is made more difficult because of the 'observer effect'. This effect can happen where the presence of the observer can change the course of events in a classroom (Schweizer, 2009) and similarly the fact that the observer, being an unfamiliar presence, can induce changes in behaviour of the person or people being observed. (Bowring-Carr, 1993).

3 - Results

We present the key findings from each stage of our study along with the main tool adaptations, all of which are relevant for the adaptation of COTs in general.

Desk review of COTs

In our review of existing, mainly publicly available COTs we focused on how these captured aspects of SEL, gender and inclusion; how teacher and learner behaviours were scored and whether there was a user guide for observers.

Notably, while some observation tools include specific sections on teacher and student behaviours around the promotion of gender equality, we found that this is generally not the case for SEL. Other terms for SEL include 21st century skills, life skills and non-cognitive skills, with these terms often being interchangeable. Within these terms there are many skills and competences, including: communication, problem solving, creativity and critical thinking, to name a few. These are used in different ways by organisations and in programmes. While the World Bank (2021) Teach Primary tool, for

example, does have a separate section on socio-emotional skills, it places critical thinking under a section on classroom instruction.

We also searched for COTs created specifically for use in humanitarian contexts, and consulted, for example, BRAC's humanitarian education team and COTs and the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) resources. We found that there are few such open-source tools, with organisations, for example, Save The Children (2012) generally creating their own checklists which are aligned to the fragile and resource-poor contexts in which they work. The tools place an emphasis on the physical and emotional safety of children who will have experienced the effects of war and displacement (INEE, 2016). Psychosocial wellbeing is foregrounded in these contexts through the teacher developing and fostering a safe, encouraging and warm classroom learning environment; which is also the aim in a post-conflict context where the MEMF programme operates.

A summary of the reviewed, open-source tools can be found in Appendix 2.

¹To note: there are specific measures of SEL, for example, the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA), however, the objective of our study was not to measure SEL but to capture the extent to which teachers are developing students' SEL.

Pre-pilot adaptations

To support alignment to the context, we studied various RTP programme documents including the MEMF baseline evaluation report and the MEMF programme implementation plan. These informed the decision to keep the two main teaching and learning goals (Positive, Child Centred Learning Environment and Experiential, Play-Based Learning Methodology) in the tool, as they aligned to the two intermediate outcomes which support the learning environment and play-based learning.²

We held an internal session to review RTP's existing tool, then made the first adaptations, informed by our desk review of other tools, together with the RTP programme documents. We paid particular attention to:

- the classroom context section, expanding this to record the age range of students in a class and disability by type, where known

- addition of further gender and SEL indicators; for example, observations of whether the teacher is seating students in mixed-gender groups in the classroom and asking students open questions to stimulate their critical thinking
- introduction of scoring, to aid observers to rate the extent to which they observe each of the indicators / behaviours
- addition of a notes and comments section under each learning goal so the observer can elaborate on their scoring of the behaviours therein.

The RTP UK and Burundi teams each reviewed and offered feedback on the adapted COT. This involved, for example, checking that a suggested indicator on students working in mixed-gender groups was in line with expectations in teachers' training. We then made further adaptations to produce a new tool that would then be piloted in Burundi, as summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Adaptations to the original RTP tool

Pre-pilot tool adaptation	Rationale
Sectioning the tool into stages to be used Before, During and After the observation.	To guide the observer (further guidance was set out in the accompanying user guide).
Expanding on the classroom context section.	To support documentation of type of disability and / or special educational need, if known, disaggregated by gender.
Focusing the behaviours under each goal on either the teacher or the children.	There was previously a mix of teachers' and children's behaviours under some of the goals. For consistency, the focus was changed so that either the teacher or the children would be the focus of observation under each goal.
Equally weighting the level descriptors in the rubric.	The original tool featured a rubric / matrix format, with a range of teacher competences under each goal, and an arrow pointing up on the left of the table to suggest increasing competence. However, as all the behaviours did not necessarily build on the previous ones, we gave equal weighting to these.
Reducing the number of indicators / teacher behaviours to be checked by merging and checking for overlap.	To reduce the tool length and ensure that teachers are only scored on discrete behaviours once, rather than on similar behaviours throughout.

²The two intermediate outcomes here are: 1. Improved learning environment in schools for girls, including girls with disabilities and 2. Increased skills of teachers on protective, inclusive and gender-responsive play-based learning.

Adding scoring columns for each of the indicators.	Adding a section for observers to rate each of the indicators allowed the scores to show teacher progression in each, as well as feed into MEL.
Adding a <i>Notes and comments</i> section under each of the learning goals.	To support focused post-observation coaching conversations between the observer and the teacher, by allowing the observer to explain and document their score for each of the indicators.
Adding an optional, overall lesson judgement section – this includes indicators on teacher demeanour, gender equality and behaviour management.	This can serve as a cross-check of ratings in the main tool or can be used as a standalone, shorter lesson observation tool.
Adding a lesson plan check and an overall summary of the lesson section.	At the request of the partners, to be used where teachers have prepared a lesson plan and for further reflection on the lesson.

The purpose of the adapted tool was to observe the learning environment, the incorporation of the play-based learning (PBL) approach and the extent to which classroom practice addresses SEL, gender equality and inclusiveness goals. With this in mind, the tool did not include teacher behaviours and strategies which would link directly to student learning outcomes, such as:

- whether the teacher links to or recaps on prior learning from previous lessons
- whether the lesson learning objective is written up on the board, explained and revisited throughout the lesson
- differentiation of activities (so these are accessible for children of varying abilities)
- the use of formative assessment
- teacher feedback strategies.

Feedback from workshop with district-level education officials

The Provincial and Commune Directors for Education, Headteachers of the two schools selected for the tool pilot and Commune Inspectors shared useful insights on the practicality of the questions, the viability of observer expectations in low-resource contexts, for instance in classes of up to 150 pupils, information on classroom and school context, as well as helpful feedback on the tool and program, which included:

- the suggestion that the ‘Classroom Context’ section of the tool is completed before the class begins so that the observer has relevant contextual information to inform the exercise;
- the need to be mindful of culturally informed perceptions of what constitutes ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ behaviour in the classroom.

Piloting of the tool

We found that in the larger class sizes of up to 75 students which we observed, it could be difficult to monitor all the children while using the COT. Similarly, in the lower grade classes which are 30 minutes long, scoring all the indicators and writing accompanying notes within the shorter lesson time could be challenging. However, the format of the tool allowed the observation and documentation of the intended teacher and student behaviours, for example:

- encouragement of both boys and girls to come up to the front of the class to participate in exercises on the board
- praise used by teachers, and also encouragement of whole-class praise
- teachers noticing when individual children were distracted and looking around, and encouraging them to be on-task
- general teacher demeanour
- student group work and participation of the whole group
- teacher use of inclusive language
- type and frequency of play-based activities.

Teacher and Headteacher feedback on the observation tool

Interviewees were familiar with the ‘observed behaviours’ listed in the tool, stating that this reflected the training they had received from RTP in SEL approaches, play-based learning, gender-awareness and inclusion. Both teachers and headteachers were positive about the tool and made some practical suggestions for improvement, including a reduction in length. Teachers noted that the tool served as an aide-memoire on what a good classroom should look like.

Teachers' experience of the observation

Teachers expressed that they would have appreciated some feedback on their performance, following the observation, to affirm that their teaching approach is aligned to RTP expectations, or if not, to review what they could do more of, in order to align.

Teachers reported that they had been comfortable with being observed as observation was a regular feature in their schools. One teacher candidly expressed that they had put some extra energy into the play element of the lessons they had prepared for that morning, knowing that they would be observed.

Another teacher reported that they had prepared their students, in expectation of an observation that day, although no details were given as to the preparation. This supports the aforementioned phenomenon of observer effects on teaching practice.

RTP programme staff review

After the tool had been piloted in schools and feedback gathered from staff, we met with the RTP programme staff to finalise the adaptations. Based on the results of the fieldwork and the feedback from the RTP team on the contextualisation of the tool, we further refined the tool and its user guide. The key final tool adaptations are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of key post-pilot adaptations to the tool

Post-pilot tool adaptation	Rationale
Add a check on number of girls and boys with disabilities, along with a check on the types of disabilities or special educational need of children enrolled in the class.	The provision of PBL for children, in particular, girls, living with a disability is a key aim of the programme.
Dividing the Classroom Context section into two separate parts. Classroom Context continues to be where the school name, class size and subject being taught, etc is noted. The checks on how well maintained the classroom is, physical accessibility and availability of teaching resources are now under a new section: Classroom Environment – Readiness to Learn Goals.	The Classroom Environment – Readiness to Learn Goals section mainly monitors the physical state of the classroom and establishes a minimum set of requirements for promoting effective learning. However, most of the requirements here are the responsibility of school leadership (and at the system level) and not the under the control of the teacher. We therefore added a note to this effect in the accompanying user guide.
Moving the indicator on health and safety concerns from the main body of the tool to Classroom Environment – Readiness to Learn Goals.	While the teacher has some control over monitoring hazards, the hazards observed were mainly around protruding bench parts – these are not the responsibility of the teacher.
There were many examples to guide the observer in the main body of the tool; these were reviewed for appropriateness and either moved to the accompanying user guide or removed from the tool.	This helped to further reduce the length of the tool.

In the final version of the tool, most of the Classroom Context section information is to be obtained from the Headteacher, the main body is two pages with the number of teaching goals under *Positive, Child-centred Learning Environment* reduced from 7 to 5 and under *Experiential, Play-based learning Methodology* reduced from 4 to 3. See Appendix 3 for the final tool, which will undergo further trialling.

Features of the final adapted tool

The adapted tool is divided into four sections (see also Appendix 3):

- Classroom Context
- Classroom Environment – Readiness to Learn Goals
- Positive, Child-Centred and Inclusive Learning Environment Goals
- Experiential, Play-based learning Methodology Goals

In the Classroom Context section, information about the class, teacher and students is recorded. Each of the other sections represent sets of teaching and learning goals, with a set of indicators under each goal; these are written as statements (e.g. Children are actively participating in the classroom) and they describe the behaviour that will ideally be seen in a typical RTP classroom. Under each of the indicators are a set of observed behaviours that expand on the indicators.

Each of the teaching and learning goals have a scoring grid with four scoring options next to each of the observed behaviours. In the ‘Classroom Context’ section, for instance, the scoring options are: 1 = No; 2 = Yes, partly; 3 = Yes, completely; N/A = not applicable or not observed. The scoring grids in other sections have a similar set of options, with 1 being the lowest score and 3 being the highest (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2 Example section of the adapted tool

Teaching and learning goals set		Indicators	Scoring options			
Experiential, Play-based learning Methodology Goals						
6. Children are actively participating in the classroom			3	2	1	N/A
6.1	The children assist classmates in solving problems or understanding questions.					
6.2	The children are provided with choices e.g. different ways of approaching a task.					
6.3	The children spontaneously ask the teacher questions related to the learning activities and are unafraid to interact with the teacher.					
Notes and comments:						
7. The teacher engages the children through participatory learning			3	2	1	N/A
7.1	The children have opportunities to discuss, practice and expand on what they learned e.g. in small groups, through open-ended questions.					
7.2	The children have opportunities to take on roles in the classroom.					
7.3	The children are asked questions by the teacher to stimulate critical thinking.					
Notes and comments:						
8. Children are engaged in play-based, experiential learning during lessons			3	2	1	N/A
8.1	The children are given opportunities to describe how they would apply their learning from the lesson to everyday life.					
8.2	The children are engaged in subject-specific games or play-based learning (PBL) activities in the classroom.					
8.3	The children are involved in generalised (not subject-specific) games and play during the lesson e.g. energisers and relays.					
Notes or comments on each type of activity e.g. which games or PBL activities did the teacher deliver?						

Examples of observed behaviour

Once a classroom observation begins, the observer uses the observation sheet to document specific behaviours of the teacher during the lesson, including questions, instructions, and actions. The observer places a ‘tick’ under the score that accurately describes what they have observed.

Underneath each set of indicators is a space to write additional notes, comments and explanations for why a particular score has been given.

4 - Discussion and Recommendations

The process of adapting the tool was highly iterative and needed numerous revisions and edits on alignment to the context, to enable it to meet the NFER study objectives and those of future MEMF project classroom observations, which were:

- a) Informing programme monitoring, evaluation and learning;
- b) Supporting and informing development and implementation of teacher professional development programmes by monitoring the extent to which teachers are able to apply their PBL training to their practice, and;
- c) Providing insights on aspects of gender equality and socio-emotional skills in classroom practice.

The accompanying user guide is integral to the observation process. To keep the tool as concise as possible, we moved many of the examples therein to this guide. This is generally a good way to ensure that COTs are being used consistently, which is particularly relevant for programmes like MEMF which are looking to scale the PBL approach and which would involve the training of more observers, including government inspectors.

We offer some recommendations on the general adaptation of COTs based on our learnings from this study:

Context is key and needs careful thought.

Although there are common features of many COTs, for example, a classroom context section and a focus on gender and / or SEL and a way of recording what is observed, a careful consideration of the context is needed, particularly in the case of COTs in low-resource settings. These settings often feature challenges such as large class sizes and high learner absenteeism and may have a particular emphasis on the fostering of a safe and inclusive, child-centred learning environment, as in this study.

Tailor tools to specific observation aims.

Where observations are focused on understanding specific approaches, goals or learning outcomes, such as the PBL approach in this study, they will benefit from tools designed to capture these specific areas. It is important to decide on which areas to prioritise to avoid a COT which is too heavy and therefore unwieldy to use.

Invest resources for reviewing tools with programme staff and education stakeholders.

Stakeholders' provided valuable insights and feedback which informed further tool adaptations; this highlights the need for investment in time, and resources, for example, printed copies of tools to leave with stakeholders to review at their ease. Also to be considered is any necessary translation of the tools and translators in workshops and interviews.

Invest in training and practice; and in guidance on how to use the tools.

Since our study only involved piloting a tool in development and due to the small numbers of lessons observed, we did not carry out inter-rater reliability tests. The tool may need further, minor adaptations while observers are familiarising themselves with it; once it is well established and to support reliable scoring, observers will need to be trained to use the tool in conjunction with the user guide.

Joint observations, where observers comparing scores should also take place, along with practice on using any space in the tool for note-taking to support scoring should be carried out periodically. Reliable judgements are also important for building trust with teachers when post-observation feedback is provided to them to support their development.

Link classroom observations to teacher feedback.

Teachers need post-lesson observation feedback on what went well and guidance on how to improve specific aspects of the lesson. The development of a teacher feedback protocol was beyond the scope of our study but classroom observations should include, as standard, an opportunity for the teacher and observer to reflect on the lesson. This should use an approach which supports teacher professional development rather than being a high-stakes accountability mechanism.

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Appendix 1: Existing RTP tool to be adapted

TEACHERS DEVELOPMENT TOOL

Teacher Name..... School

District :

School name : Grade : date :

Topic.....

Play & Game applied

Total no of Pupils Male Female Absentees Male..... Female : Quality assurer's name or observer's name

Positive, Child Centered Learning Environment Goals

1.Children feel physically safe in the learning environment	2.The children's behaviour in the classroom is managed	3.Children are encouraged in the classroom	4.Children are communicated to in a positive manner	5.The classroom environment is gender inclusive and girls and boys have equal opportunities	6.Children living with disabilities are included in classroom activities and discussions	7.Children are actively participating in the classroom
Children take appropriate actions to address safety concerns with their teacher (children involved where appropriate - e.g. not picking up glass)	The child is involved in identifying a solution or alternative behaviour arial	Children are encouraged and actively acknowledged, even if they give incorrect answers	Children are actively listened to when they talk	Girls and boys have equal opportunities to participate in classroom activities E.g. to give answers, ask questions, express their ideas, etc.	Children living with disabilities actively participate in the classroom activities or discussions	The children assist classmates in solving problems or understanding questions
Children identify safety concerns with their teacher	The child is encouraged to learn about the impact of the behaviour E.g. why it is wrong, which behaviours would be better,	Children are recognised with positive, friendly and caring body language and tone E.g. Good eye contact, facial expressions like smiling, demonstrative gestures, varied tone	Children can understand the questions and directions given (instructions are rephrased and/or explained if necessary)	Girls and boys take on roles and participate in activities that are non-traditionally fulfilled by their gender	Lesson is modified or adapted to include children living with disabilities, if necessary	The children share ideas, opinions, thoughts, and/or feelings with their teacher
The teacher takes action to deal with safety concerns <u>and</u> explains the safety concerns to children	The child has the opportunity to discuss his/her behaviour, is listened to, and is given an opportunity to explain his/her behaviours		Children can understand the language used (language is age-appropriate)	Gender inclusive language and gender-neutral terms are used in the classroom E.g. police officer vs. policeman, everyone vs. you guys, etc	Children living with disabilities (visible and non-visible) are identified by the teacher	The children ask the teacher questions
The teacher takes action to deal with safety concerns	The child's behaviour is managed in a calm, patient, and non-stressed manner.		Children can hear the instructions clearly (volume and speed are appropriate)			The children look comfortable and relaxed E.g. smiling, laughing, relaxed posture, no signs of worry, etc.
	Children are not physically punished, disrespected, or made to feel scared, fearful or shamed					

Experiential, Play-based Learning Methodology Goals

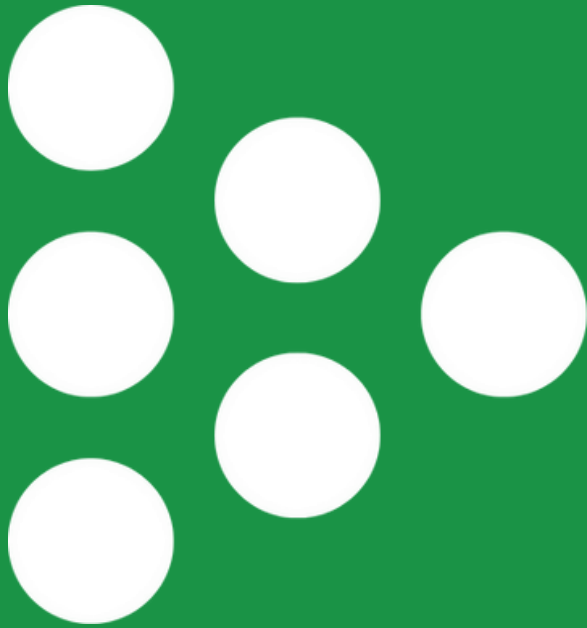
8.The children are engaged through participatory learning	9.Children are engaged in games and play activities in the classroom	10.Children are engaged in play-based, experiential learning during lessons	11.Children have equal opportunities to participate
The children have opportunities to discuss, practice and expand on what they learned E.g. in small groups, through interactive activities, etc.	Children are often involved in generalized (not subject-specific) games and play during the lesson E.g. energizers, relays, etc.	Children are engaged in a Reflect, Connect, Apply (RCA) discussion about the learning from the game/activity	All children have equal opportunities to participate in the lesson (based on how the lesson is designed and conducted)
The children have opportunities to talk to each other about the lesson E.g. through open ended questions, asking each other questions, etc.	Children are sometimes involved in generalized (not subject-specific) games and play during the lesson E.g. energizers, relays, etc.	Children have the opportunity to link the game/activity to the lesson being taught E.g. through explanations or general questions	Children who are participating less are included and encouraged E.g. they are asked questions, invited to participate, etc.
The children are asked questions and answer the questions		Children are engaged in subject-specific games or play-based learning activities in the classroom	Children are noticed by the teacher if they are not participating

Appendix 2: Summary of desk review

Tool and brief description of user guide, if any	Gender/Equity and inclusion	Socio-emotional learning	Scoring
<p>World Bank Teach Primary (Second Edition) Tool. In-depth administration guide as there are many sections.</p>	<p>Gender and Disability are under Supportive Learning Environment in the Classroom Culture dimension. The tool features teacher behaviours which to capture gender and disability bias and reinforcement or challenge of stereotypes.</p>	<p>Autonomy, Perseverance and Social and Collaborative skills.</p>	<p>A quality range consisting of Low, Medium or High is assigned for each behaviour, then a score between 1 to 5 decided on by following the guidance in the tool.</p>
<p>Schools2030 guide on inclusive learning environment. Not an observation tool per se, but more of a guide to the elements of teaching practice for inclusive learning environment.</p>	<p>No specific sections on Gender and Inclusion, but the guide includes an observation checklist for each of eight dimensions of an inclusive learning environment. Within these are teacher behaviours which observe gender-sensitive and inclusive practice.</p>	<p>Not a specific section but the development of SEL is underpins the guide. Individual and collaborative learning is one of the dimensions of an inclusive learning environment.</p>	<p>The teacher behaviours in the checklist are rated Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Mostly, Always,</p>
<p>Save the Children EIE Classroom/Teacher observation checklist. 30 criteria on teacher assessment and 3 on the assessment of children's participation. No user guide.</p>	<p>One criterion on involving girls and boys equally and one on identifying children with special needs and catering for them.</p>	<p>1 criterion on using a child-centred approach and others on teacher activities which support the development of SEL.</p>	<p>Scored 0/1/2.</p>

Appendix 3: Post-pilot adapted tool - not to scale

Before the lesson		Classroom Context				
Date (DD/MM/YY):		Observer name:				
School name/code:						
Teacher gender:		Teacher years of experience:				
Subject(s):		Lesson Topic:				
Grade being taught:		Age range of children being taught (youngest to oldest):				
Number of girls in lesson:		Number of boys in lesson:		Number of girls absent:		
Number of girls with disabilities in lesson:				Number of boys absent:		
Number of boys with disabilities in lesson:						
Type of disabilities or special educational need of children enrolled in the class:						
Visual <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive: name, if known _____ Other: name, if known: _____						
Observation duration: Start time _____		End time _____				
Before / at the start of the lesson		Classroom Environment – Readiness to Learn Goals				
For each of the following indicators, put a X in the box that corresponds to the rating you would give to the classroom (3 = Observed completely; 2 = Observed partly; 1 = Not observed; N/A = Not applicable)						
#	Indicator	3	2	1	N/A	Comments
0.1	The classroom is clean and well-maintained.					
0.2	The classroom is accessible to children with disabilities.					
0.3	There are sufficient resources (e.g. books, pencils, desks) for all children; there is blackboard and chalk.					
0.4	There is sufficient space for games and active learning.					
0.5	The lesson takes place in a safe environment which is free from hazards					
0.6	The teacher has a lesson plan - if Yes, complete the lesson plan section in 'After lesson'. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
During the lesson: When observing the following indicators, mark an X for your rating (3 = Observed in the whole lesson; 2 = Observed in some of the lesson; 1 = Not observed at all in the lesson; N/A = Not applicable).						
Positive, Child-Centred and Inclusive Learning Environment Goals						
1. Teacher manages the children's behaviour in the classroom						
1.1	The teacher adequately addresses the children's off-task and general behaviour.	3	2	1	N/A	
Notes and comments: (note the type of behaviour that is punished and any differences in punishment given to boys and girls):						
2. Teacher encourages the children in the classroom						
2.1	The teacher uses positive, friendly and caring body language and tone e.g. good eye contact and facial expressions, like smiling.	3	2	1	N/A	
2.2	Where children are having challenges, the teacher has a positive attitude towards their challenges.					
2.3	The teacher praises children when they show effort.					
Notes and comments: (e.g. on any different treatment of boys and girls):						
3. Teacher communicates to the children in a way that aids their understanding						
3.1	The teacher ensures that children can understand the language that is being used (the language is age-appropriate).	3	2	1	N/A	
3.2	The teacher ensures that children can understand the questions and directions given (instructions are rephrased and/or explained, if necessary).					
Notes and comments: (e.g. on any different treatment of boys and girls):						
4. The classroom environment is gender inclusive, and girls and boys have equal opportunities						
4.1	The teacher provides opportunities for girls and boys to participate in activities that are not traditionally seen as appropriate for their gender.	3	2	1	N/A	
4.2	The teacher uses gender inclusive language and gender-neutral terms.					
4.3	The teacher challenges children when they use gendered language or express gender stereotypes.					
4.4	The teacher places the children in mixed gender groups and provides opportunities for them to equally participate in classroom activities.					
Notes and comments:						
5. Children living with disabilities are included in classroom activities and discussions						
5.1	The teacher ensures that children living with disabilities actively participate in the classroom activities or discussions.	3	2	1	N/A	
5.2	The teacher modifies or adapts the lesson to include children living with disabilities, if necessary.					
Notes and comments: (e.g. on any different treatment of children with disabilities)						
Experiential, Play-based learning Methodology Goals						
6. Children are actively participating in the classroom						
6.1	The children assist classmates in solving problems or understanding questions.	3	2	1	N/A	
6.2	The children are provided with choices e.g. different ways of approaching a task.					
6.3	The children spontaneously ask the teacher questions related to the learning activities and are unafraid to interact with the teacher.					
Notes and comments:						
7. The teacher engages the children through participatory learning						
7.1	The children have opportunities to discuss, practice and expand on what they learned e.g. in small groups, through open-ended questions.	3	2	1	N/A	
7.2	The children have opportunities to take on roles in the classroom.					
7.3	The children are asked questions by the teacher to stimulate critical thinking.					
Notes and comments:						
8. Children are engaged in play-based, experiential learning during lessons						
8.1	The children are given opportunities to describe how they would apply their learning from the lesson to everyday life.	3	2	1	N/A	
8.2	The children are engaged in subject-specific games or play-based learning (PBL) activities in the classroom.					
8.3	The children are involved in generalised (not subject-specific) games and play during the lesson e.g. energisers and relays.					
Notes or comments on each type of activity e.g. which games or PBL activities did the teacher deliver?						



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