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Full Length Research Paper

Assessing the suitability of the teachers' delivery methods to the curriculum's purpose of enabling children in the lower classes acquire reading and writing abilities

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ABSTRACT: This study was about assessing the suitability of the teachers' delivery methods to the curriculum's purpose of enabling children in the lower classes acquire reading and writing abilities. Structured questionnaires, focus discussion guide and interview guide were used to obtain data from a sample of 486 respondents consisting of 181 teachers, 214 pupils and 86 head teachers was selected using cluster, stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and in verbatim respectively. Majorly, lower grade teachers view that the thematic curriculum involves creativity, is integrated in nature, themes are drawn from different areas, learners are actively involved, involves critical thinking, and it's balanced between teachers and learners. Lower grade teachers' content delivery was not too different from content specifications of the thematic curriculum except where children still could not find good words, and ideas clearly while writing. On the suitability of methods, lower grade teachers used creative methods to teach, and combine value, skills and knowledge between subjects while teaching. The day-to-day processes were supportive of early literacy acquisition. Conclusively, classroom application of the thematic curriculum by lower grade teachers in Nakaseke District is fairly done though with some significant areas of weakness which require attention by district education leaders with support from the Ministry of education to ensure that there is masterly of content specifications and it is followed up to make pupils understand.

Keywords: Delivery methods, teacher, curriculum, reading, writing, skills, lower-class

INTRODUCTION

Though the thematic curriculum was introduced to enhance children's proficiency in various aspects and life skills, many children in lower primary classes in Nakaseke District are still struggling to read and write (UWEZO, 2011); they lack the desired competencies in literacy and numeracy. By the end of primary level, many children are not in position to write letters, or even express themselves well in public using an appropriate diction. Some parents and teachers attribute this to the introduction of the thematic curriculum whose content and objectives are not yet clear among stakeholders. By primary three, children still struggle to read, communicate or even write effectively. As an approach to continuous investigative journeys, this paper specifically explores issues pertinent to the manner in which the Thematic Curriculum is implemented to ensure that learners develop literacy skills.

The United States of America applies an inclusive approach called "Spice Functional Literacy Programme (SPICE-FLP)", a home-based and intergenerational programme established to provide professional and technical-based literacy training to disadvantaged families (Hughes, Students and Parents in Cooperative Education (SPICE) Family Literacy Programme, 2017).

This approach is based on oral language development for listening comprehension, verbal expression, and vocabulary development; Knowledge of alphabet letters and phonological awareness; and print knowledge and use (Strickland and Shannon, 2015). The approach owes to the fact that many families in the US either willingly or due to some factors, could not participate in universal school access to education. The SPICE-FLP is therefore said to be promising in enhancing attainment of literacy skills to all Americans.

On the other hand, though with some criticisms by authors (Schlechty and Phillip, 2012), European countries have successfully benefited from a literacy development approach called "Emergent Literacy" (EGLs), which provides a print-rich classroom environment characterized by books, magazines, posters, charts, labels arranged in library corner, and writing centre, appropriate literacy activities, and story book reading (Kathleen, 2017).

However, the application of various approaches to ensure universal development of literacy skills for EGLs especially in Africa leaves a lot to desire. Uganda is one of the African countries which have tried to use several approaches to ensure that EGLs develop literacy skills but with setbacks. In 1999, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) ordered for the formation of District Language Boards (DLBs), and later in 2000, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) sent a circular to schools instructing them to forward languages which were ready for use as media of instruction to the NCDC. In 2002, teachers were oriented in the use of the primary school syllabus Vol. II, which has the local language syllabus content. This was followed by dispatch of guidance on Local Language (LL) time-tabling, use as a medium of instruction except for English, and the teaching of LL as a subject (Begley and Kotersk, 2015).
Thereafter, the NCDC, in a bid to enhance learning achievements in literacy and numeracy, revised the Lower Primary Curriculum (LPC) to make it thematic. This LPC was rolled out nationally in 2007 for P1, 2008 for P2 and in 2009 for P3. Teachers and pre-service student teachers were trained on thematic curriculum materials.

On the review of LPC, Tormere (2016) pointed out that children generally learn faster if early education is conducted in a LL. Therefore, the use of LL as a medium of instruction in lower primary was institutionalized with major objectives being to ease transition from home to school environment and enable pupils to freely communicate with their teachers and peers in LL, which in turn would increase the degree of understanding and enhance performance of pupils in lower primary (Wink, 2017).

However, though the contents of the thematic curriculum seem to be obvious, there is a problem regarding the manner of classroom application of the thematic curriculum so as to meet desired outcomes. Evidence from Kyeyune quoted in Kato (2015) shows that, teachers are not taught reading skills thus they are unable to transfer them to their pupils, and some do not realize that reading is a taught skill. Kyeyune further notes that most teachers use the whole word approach instead of suggested phonetic sound process, where learners are taught to interpret sounds and use those to read. The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) report of 2010 indicates very low levels of reading in both English and mother tongue among P.2 and P.3 pupils in the Lango and Central regions. Out of 1,926 children tested in mother-tongue reading, 50.8% and 81.8% in P.2 and 25.8% and 51% in P.3 could not read a single word in Luganda (Central region) and Lango (Lango region) respectively.

Further, a national assessment of learning conducted on 80,000 children by UWEZO in April, 2011 at household level in 88 districts shows that 15% of the sampled children had no numeracy skills, while 9 out of every 10 children in P3 could not read and understand an English story text of P2 level difficulty (Kato, 2015).

Based on the above statistics, implementation of the thematic curriculum has not resulted in the desired levels of reading thus raising concern about the education processes in primary school, namely, its implementation in general, and in particular the classroom practices involved in teaching reading. Two major questions arise: What do teachers understand to be the value or place of literacy development of literacy skills? What do teachers do to enable children read? Thus, as much as teachers endeavor to develop literacy among learners, it is important to find out whether they interpret the Thematic Curriculum meaningfully. Have the learners been helped to develop their own mother tongue or area languages? Are the learners taught by people who are literate in the respective languages of instruction?

As development of literacy skills continues to be an issue of great concern in institutions, there is need to understand the concept "Literacy" as spelt out in various theories. The Functional Context Theory by Tome Sticht advanced in 1975 postulates that literacy directly translates into learners' ability to transfer learning from classroom to the real world. The theory is based on three components: (1) knowledge base or a long-term memory of what an individual knows, (2) processing skills including language, problem solving and learning strategies, (3) information displays that present information (Sticht, 2016).

The theory emphasizes that in order to teach literacy skills, there are four components to consider. First, instructions should be made as meaningful as possible to a learner in terms of the learners' prior knowledge; materials and equipment used in teaching must be those that a learner will use after training; improvement in content knowledge, information processing skills, design of learning materials; and a valid assessment of learning based on context or content specific measurement

(Sticht, 2017).

On the other hand, the Behaviorist/learning Theory of John Watson advanced from 1878 to 1959c states that as a child advances to learn in his/her mother tongue, learning becomes interesting. The theory further states that human beings are empirical in nature thus tend to experiment whatever happens or want to look for facts thus when children are taught in the language they understand; they are able to make better decisions. Besides, learning is controlled by conditions under which it takes place and that as long as individuals are subjected to the same conditions, they learn in the same way (Knud and Ileris, 2017).

Therefore, since development of literacy skills is necessary for successful implementation of social activities and individual targets, countries have applied various approaches to ensure universal development of these skills for Early Grade Learners (EGL).

The study was conducted within the confines of Nakaseke district having cited massive indicators of decline in levels of literacy attainment. Anecdotal evidence shows that by 2012, out of every 10 early grade learners in schools in Nakaseke, only one, by chance would be able to read and interpret texts well, and about only three would write a passage and comprehend it without teachers' intervention. This percentage is the highest when compared to sister town councils in Nakaseke district and thus requires immediate attention.

Statement of the problem

Though Uganda government introduced the thematic curriculum as an approach to development of literacy skills for early grade learners, the intended results are not reflected among early grade learners in Nakaseke district. Observation has shown that learners in three quarters of early childhood centres in Nakaseke district cannot effectively demonstrate basic literacy skills such as reading letter sounds, identifying letter names, phonemes and syllables effectively. Further, learners can hardly tell stories, interpret pictures, respond to questions, or even talk about one and others (Altinyelken, 2016). The ineffectiveness of reading abilities for early grade learners implies that teachers fail to interpret the curriculum for effective instruction and so children cannot develop such literacy skills. On this note, if the implementation process continuously fails to focus on effective literacy instruction, learners continually fail to read and write thus the value of the thematic curriculum will be lost. Quite a number of studies have come up to explain about the importance of the thematic Curriculum in relation to academic performance (Adama and Glanz, 2010); others address the effect of the thematic Curriculum on academic performance (Terry, 2000; Muyanda, 1996; Neuman, Hagedom, Cellano, and Dalley, 2005). However, there are no studies conducted so far to assess the classroom application of the thematic curriculum on development of literacy skills in Uganda, in particular Nakaseke district.

Purpose of the study

This study was intended to assess the suitability of the teachers' delivery methods to the curriculum's purpose of enabling children in the lower classes acquire reading and writing abilities. The point in this is that for quite some time reading and writing skills of learners have not been given adequate attention yet this is pivotal to comprehension and acquisition of good grade in examinations.

Literature review

Hamid and Khan (2015) note that much as pedaggogy is a good approach to education, suitability of teachers is important. This, he argues, is due to the fact that localizing pedagogy is easy for local teachers as knowledge and understanding of local language comes by instinct, but this may not be so for foreign teachers in these communities. Hamid, and Khan note that teachers do not only move from across geographical borders but across cultural and social boarders. Thus, for them to teach efficiently, they assume English would be the best language of instruction as long as direction is driven towards the major themes spelled out in the thematic curriculum. This contradicts with the notion of reading in vernacular, writing in vernacular, communicating in vernacular and doing all other classroom work in vernacular.

Like many teachers in rural regions of East Africa, classes have 70 to 100 students in a single session. Students vie for spots on the floor, often sharing textbooks and pencil stumps (Adeosun, 2017). Teachers have limited hours to teach the standardized curriculum, and until now they have relied on didactic, teacher-centered instruction, where the teacher talks and the students simply listen. This tactic is more difficult in that many of the students are hard to keep engaged due to low energy; most walk nearly ten kilometers to reach their school and eat as little as once a day, (Jim, 2013).

Learning is dependent on the pedagogical approaches teachers use in the classroom. A variety of pedagogical approaches are common in schools, but some strategies are more effective and appropriate than others. The effectiveness of pedagogy often depends on the particular subject matter to be taught, on understanding the diverse needs of different learners, and on adapting to the on-the-ground conditions in the classroom and the surrounding context. In general, the best teachers believe in the capacity of their students to learn, and carefully utilize a range of pedagogical approaches to ensure this

learning occurs (Lane et al.,2017).

When teachers have a positive attitude towards their students, they are more socially responsive and attentive, they more often tailor their instruction to particular student needs, and they are more successful at drawing on students' experiences to make lessons meaningful and contextually relevant, (McKown and Weinstein, 2008). Conversely, students from disadvantaged social groups, such as females, minorities, or the disabled often suffer from teacher prejudices, which translate into low expectations of these students' capacities. Teachers who have low expectations of their students make less of an effort to help them learn, in addition to discouraging them in other subtle ways, with the final result that these students often achieve lower academic performance (Conn, 2016).

The thematic curriculum advocates for the use of instructional materials in teaching to make concepts clearer to learners for competent assessment. Lane, Carter, and (Lane et al., 2017) agree that print rich play with carefully structured learning experiences designed to meet the needs of all learners can enhance abilities of reading and writing among the young children. This implies that children need more significant, enjoyable, exciting reading materials and access to meaningful texts written in their own language or language of instruction and dealing with familiar realities.

Raymond and Wendy (2003) found that there were materials for reading in schools except they were in the English language other than the respective languages of instruction. In the report, the teachers found transferring concepts from English to local languages quite hectic and this proved challenging for the learners to conceptualize since the materials were not in the language of instruction. Several academicians in Uganda have endeavored to develop dictionaries in different local languages alongside the new curriculum to help teachers find the vocabularies that never existed before in respective languages.

Knight and Galletly (2017) noted that a library is an ideal place to offer literacy, as it provides materials for all age groups and reading levels. The Reading Pilot report in this regard encouraged teachers to develop reading corners and class libraries to enhance literacy among learners. The new primary school curriculum (2007-2011) has also included the use of library on the timetable of P.3 to P.7 to support literacy development. Meek (2017) identifies that a child's early positive experience with libraries and reading builds a foundation of pre-literacy skills and social confidence. The MOES with regards to access and use of literacy materials through a circular on books to all institutions instructs teachers to let learners touch and use them other than protect books from getting dirty or being torn apart.

EFA (2017:29) report also recognizes that libraries and community learning centres can offer space for classes plus reading materials. In addition, PTE curriculum trains teachers on how to make simple readers and materials during their training, expecting them to develop literacy easily. The MOES therefore advocates for classroom reading corners to expose learners to literacy rich materials for a smoother literacy development. A classroom that has been equipped with materials for learning helps children to learn even without the teacher's close instruction through incidental learning (Kate and Alice, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design, area of study, study population, sample size and techniques, data collection instruments, data quality control, measurement of study variables, data presentation and analysis and ethical considerations.

Research design

The study was conducted using a case study design. A case study design is applicable to contexts where a situation has been studied over time but results not yet tested in that particular geographical set-up (Marriam webstar, 2009). This kind of research design has been chosen because various researchers have been conducting studies on thematic curriculum and academic performance but a keen look at the available studies showed that they could not explain the current situation in Nakaseke district. In addition, whereas most studies explore the general implications of the thematic curriculum to the academic performance of learners, this particular study scales down the scope to the classroom environment and unpacks the classroom application of thematic curriculum.

Area of study

Nakaseke is one of the districts found in central Uganda. It is bordered by other districts such as; Nakasongola to the North, Luwero to the South East, Wakiso to the South, Mityana to the South West, Kiboga and Kyankwanzi to the West, and Masindi to the North West. Nakaseke is divided into seven administrative units-Kapeeka, Ngoma, Kinyogoga, Wakyaato, Nakaseke Town Council, Kaasangombe, Semut and Kikamulo (Kityo, 2014).

With over 80 primary schools, Nakaseke is reported to be facing challenges in implementing the thematic curriculum. Besides lack of enough local language teachers, implementation of the thematic curriculum is surrounded by challenges whereby in some areas, parents want their children to master English thus giving teachers hard time to implement and make children with

biased minds understand the key concepts in the thematic curriculum. Whereas the government strongly advocates for implementation of measures to enhance use of local language for instruction, there is need to unpack the aspects of this curriculum right from classroom level.

Study population

The study population consisted of various categories as illustrated in the (Table 1). The study population consisted of head teachers, teachers and pupils. For the teachers, three teachers for early grade classes in each school, totaling to 342 teachers in the 114 schools. For convenience, four pupils were randomly selected from each school in such a way that two were boys and the remaining 2 were girls.

Table 1: Study population.

Category	Number
Head teachers	114
Teachers	342
Pupils	456

Determination of sample size and sampling procedures

Determination of sample size

The researcher applied Krejce and Morgan (1970) which is chosen as the most appropriate technique in this study because it contains standard values whereby the total population (N) can be easily classified. The table below shows sample size that was used for the study (Table 2).

Table 2: Sample size of the study.

Category	Total	Sample for the 86 schools
Head teachers	114	86
Teachers	342	181
Pupils	456	214
Total	912	481

Primary data

The sample size of the study was categorized in (Table 2). For the head teachers, the sample size was 86. This is because according to Krejce and Morgan (1970) table guide, the most appropriate sample for 114 head teachers is 86. The number of teachers is 342 and the most appropriate sample for this figure according to table in appendix 1 is 181 respondents got from the 86 schools. The Table also illustrates the number of respondents selected from each school as shown in the last column. Due to uneven distribution of the number of teachers, some schools had fewer teachers than others.

Sampling techniques

Four techniques of sampling were used in the study, these are; Cluster sampling, stratified sampling, purposive sampling and Simple random sampling as explained below;

Cluster sampling

In this study, cluster sampling was used to consider the study area into sub sects based on common characteristics. In the context of this study, government aided primary schools were targeted. To identify the government aided schools, all schools in Nakaseke district was clustered into two-private and public. Then only public schools were selected to make the population of 114 which later became 86. This sampling approach was used because Nakaseke district consists of both private and public primary but the aspect of thematic curriculum is commonly assessed basing on activities in public schools. This is because many private primary schools do not rely so much on the thematic program. Indeed, many parents, who have negative attitude towards the use of local language for instruction, end up taking their children to private schools. This explains why private schools could not be good sources of information for this study.

Stratified sampling

This is an approach to sampling which involves consideration of the study population based on common characteristics. The study population is divided into subgroups called strata, and then simple random sampling is used to generate the total number for items in each stratum. Whereas cluster sampling was used to consider the study population by type of school, the stratified approach to sampling was used to categorize the study population into males and females. This applied to pupils, teachers and head teachers. This was done to avoid being gender biased during distribution of tools for data collection.

Purposive sampling

This is a type of non-probability sampling where units of investigation are based on judgement of the researcher. It is important for this study because it is used to select a population whose findings can be generalized. In this study, the people who were included for particular purpose are the head teachers. They were included

directly as heads of schools whose findings contain responses about the entire school environment. They know more than teachers. In fact, their responses can be used to back-up responses from teachers.

Simple random sampling (SRS)

For selecting individual respondents from each stratum. As the most commonly used sampling technique, it is chosen for being free from errors in classification, it is suitable for the use of inferential statistics given the fact that this study has a quantitative part, and it is free from bias and prejudice. The study used SRS to select each pupil after considering the aspect of gender.

Data collection instruments

The researcher used tested questionnaires which she administered to respondents randomly. According to Francesca (2001), questionnaires have advantages which include; containing demand for detailed data such as age, marital status, etc.; being well organized according to the objectives, giving respondents freedom to give answers at their conveniences, and being good for large groups of people such as teachers.

A structured questionnaire was used for lower grade teachers and head teachers to find out their understanding of the thematic curriculum specifications for the development of early literacy skills. The questionnaire is preferred because it gives clear and specific responses and enables respondents to express freely their interpretation of the curriculum. The tool can capture all issues concerning study variables right from the background information of the study. This questionnaire composed of both open and close-ended questions were used allowing the teachers and head teachers to provide enough information about the study.

In addition, a focus discussion guide consisting of open ended questions was developed to obtain pupils' views on development of literacy skills courtesy of classroom application of the thematic curriculum.

Data quality control

This explores two issues-validity and reliability of research instruments

Validity

Validity of research instruments was studied using content validity. In order to ensure validity of data collected various Subject Matter Expert raters (SMEs). The researcher subsequently increased on the number of panelists who rate items as "useful", "useful but not essential" or "not necessary" till a 90% validity value for the items will obtained.

Reliability

The reliability of the instruments will be tested using the Cronbach Apha method automatically programmed in Statistical package for social Sciences (SPSS) software. A uniform scale of 5-point Linkert was used measure responses towards items for each variable. The items were computed to generated statistics/coefficients that were reported as results for the test. Normally, a reliable study variable contains standard coefficients of not less than 0.7 (70%). Results from Cronbach Alpha Tests were obtained as indicated in the (Table 3). Results showed that the independent and Dependent Variables have contents with reliability coefficients which meet the required percentage of 0.7(70%). Early Grade Reading was measured using nine (9) items resulting into a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .729 which is translated into 72.9%. On the other hand, Thematic Curriculum with 22 items had a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .736 which is translated into 73.6%. Therefore, results obtained for each variable are highly reliable and acceptable.

Table 3: Results of Cronbach Alpha Reliability of the study variables.

Variable	No. of Items	Coefficient obtained	Percentage
Early Grade Reading	9	0.729	72.9
Thematic Curriculum	22	0.736	73.6

Measurement of variables

Variables were measured based on the study objectives

Teachers' understanding of the content specifications of the thematic curriculum

This was measured using a model called Thematic Instructional Approach (TIA) that was recently used by Okoro (2005) to establish teachers' understanding and use of thematic approach in teaching and learning social studies in Rivers State of Nigeria. Okoro (2005) used a 4-point likert scale of; 4-Very Great Extent, 3-Great Extent, 2-Low Extent and 1-Very Low Extent, which was modified into a 5-point Linkert from 1-Strongly Disagree (SD) to 5-Strongly Agree (SA) in order to establish the extent to which teachers understood the content in the

thematic curriculum.

The literacy content that teachers deliver in the lower grades

The literacy content was measured by items used to measure reading and writing. Quite a number of tested questionnaires exist about writing skills in primary and secondary schools. From these, 12 items were used for writing and 10 for reading in order to come up with a 22-item scale for measuring development of literacy skills. The scale for writing is "Yes, Fairly well, Not very well or No" and for reading is "Always, Sometimes, Rarely."

Teachers' delivery methods to the thematic curriculum

A 4-item scale suggested by Okoro (2005) following its testing in Nigeria for the same purpose of assessing teachers' delivery methods of the Thematic Curriculum was used to establish responses towards teachers' delivery methods of the Thematic Curriculum in Nakaseke district. This delivery approach is reflected in the extent to which teachers are more inclined to learners than centreing on themselves. A 5-point Linkert scale running from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" was used to assess respondents' remarks towards the items.

Data management and analysis

The researcher collected the questionnaires, sorted and coded them. In the coding process, a coding sheet was constructed and a number was assigned to each questionnaire. Following this preparation, findings were presented and analyzed based on research tools. For the findings from questionnaires, analysis was done using statistical figures. First the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents were presented in a summary Table showing frequencies and percentage distribution by category (Table 4). The relationship between each of the Socio-demographic characteristics and study variables was established using the Chi-Square (x^2) test of independence at $p<0.01$. Summary tables were presented containing Mean Values (M) specifically to establish the Lower Grade teachers' understanding of the content specifications of the thematic curriculum (Table 4), and to establish the literacy content that teachers deliver in the lower grades in comparison with the specifications of the curriculum (Table 4). On the other hand, linear regression was used to assess the suitability of the teachers' delivery methods to the curriculum's purpose of enabling children in the lower classes acquire reading and writing abilities, and to determine the extent to which day to day processes in lower grade classrooms are supportive of early literacy acquisition at P-value <0.01 or 0.05 (Table 4).

Ethical considerations

The researcher requested the Dean of the School of Education, Makerere University to write a letter of introduction to the selected schools for the study to be carried out officially. The researcher then dispatched the questionnaires to the respondents and picked them a week later after they were filled. The data was compiled, edited and decisions were made on how to use it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Suitability of delivery methods to enable learners acquire reading and writing skills

This was also reflected in the discussions whereby pupils consulted each other and three pupils would pronounce an answer unanimously, a sign of cooperation hence good relationships. Mbatha (2009) also identifies that the Thematic Curriculum brings societies together through transmitting accepted norms and values of a particular society and that vernacular prepares people with focused goals towards education. Further, Reiser and Dempsey (2001) acknowledge that local language is a tool for socialization which helps in shaping behaviors and enhancing participatory methods such as group participation used in classrooms plus gaining skills which are effective in learning at lower primary levels.

The regression model in (Table 4) shows that day-to-day processes by preschool teachers in lower classroom practiced have a positive statistical effect of the development of literacy skills among learners, *(R^2= 0.121; F= 3.538; p=0 .000)*. In other words, 12.1% adjustments in the development of literacy skills for Lower primary learners in Nakaseke District, is attributed to ten aspects of the day-to-day process in lower grade classrooms by teachers.

However, B-coefficients for each factor show that some factors are not significant (5, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Therefore, out of the ten factors, five explain the extent to which day to day processes in lower primary classes are in support of the development of literacy skills among learners either negatively or positively.

Table 4 shows that on daily bases, teachers in lower primary teach concepts from known to the unknown which helps learners to develop literacy skills *(B= .329; p= .026)*. This implies that 33% of the developments in literacy skills of learners are attributed to the fact that the teaching process follows an approach of enabling children digest new concepts from known to unknown. The findings are in support of one of the contents of the thematic curriculum which also advocates for teachers to

Table 4: Day to day processes and development of Literacy Skills.

Model	B	Sig.
Constant	2.255	0.000
Teaching children new concepts from known to unknown	0.329	0.026
Content taught in the old curriculum that appears and in the thematic curriculum	-0.318	0.012
Relationship between old and New Curriculum	-0.401	0.002
Participation in the learning fluently with the language you use to teach reading	0.551	0.000
Children use English to play while at break or with each other	0.102	0.061
children learn local language as a subject or use it to learn other subjects	-0.279	0.016
Terms and concepts in the thematic curriculum teachers find hard to teach	-0.044	0.700
Materials to help teachers translate concepts for the literacy hour into the language of instruction	0.038	0.710
Development of life skills and values	-0.006	0.937
Planning the literacy hour using objectives or competences	-0.064	0.651

Source: Primary Data (November, 2016)

a.Dependent Variable: Literacy skills

R= 0.348

R^2 = 0.121

F = 3.538

P = 0.000

use questions like "What do you know about…?" such that learners express their views about a subject and then this serves as a ladder to take them to another level. The study further established whether the content taught in old curriculum appears in the thematic curriculum so as to influence the process of literacy skill acquisition. Table 4 reveals that integration of curriculum to include some features in the old curriculum, to a certain extent, explain how day to day processes in lower primary school lead to development of literacy skills *(B= -0.318; p= 0.012)*. However, the results show a negative coefficient implying that teachers who integrate content of the old curriculum in the thematic approach affect the development of literacy skills of learners by 32.9%. This approach of integrating concepts of revised and old curriculum calls more for a teacher centred approach, which is totally against or parallel with the new system whereby all teachers must make learners the centre of learning process.

The study also established whether there is a relationship between the old and new curriculum in such a way that the two, combined lead to the development of Literacy Skills among learners in lower primary school. The findings in (Table 4) show that the coefficients obtained are also negative just like in the previous sub section *(B= -.401; p= .002)*. This means that 40.1% of the challenges faced in developing literacy skills are attributed to teachers' belief that the old and revised curriculum can be integrated to aid development of literacy in lower primary schools.

Teachers were asked whether children are prepared to participate in learning fluently with the language used to teach reading. Responses in (Table 4) shows that there were positive responses obtained *(B= .551; p= .000),* such that 55.1% of the improvements in reading skills of learners is a result of the fact that both teachers and learners are fluent in the Local language which is Luganda, used as a medium of instruction and as an indigenous language in Nakaseke District.

To test the relevance of day to day activities in support of development of literacy skills, pupils in all centres targeted were asked to respond to various issues during the discussion sessions. First, they were asked to mention the language that they commonly use at school. In almost all centres, Luganda is commonly used by pupils except for some who can hear and understand but cannot speak Luganda fluently, hence use English. In the same vein, pupils reported that teachers commonly use English to instruct them perform certain tasks. The use of English is controversial to the demands in thematic curriculum and may not fully enable pupils who need transition from known to unknown, to register success in acquiring literacy skills.

When instructed to construct some sentences containing the word house, the following were some of the many sentences constructed:

1.The house is big.
2.Come and we go in the house.
3.My father is in the house.
4.I sleep in the house.
5.That is a house.
6.This is a house.
7.He is building a house.
8.The bird is on house.
9.The house is down.
10.The house is high.
11.House…house…hahaa..house
12.My father want to build house me. hahaa
13.Go house
14.I am sweep house
15.Houseboy
16.Housefly
Etc

The above indicates that to a great extent, preschool teachers have prepared learners to organize words and come up with some sentences. However, there were still areas of weakness observed, for instance, some pupils could not even find words to formulate a sentence. In some other cases, pupils could not identify the content of a sentence. They could for instance say “housefly, houseboy, etc” and assume that they were constructing sentences.

Finally, lower grade learners were asked to spell words beginning with letter “G” in order to test their creativity skills. The following words were spelled, among many others:

1.Girl
2.Go
3.Givi
4.God
5.Group
6.Get
7.Grace
8.Galagi
9.Goal
10.Genda
11.Gulu
12.Gam
13.Greet
14.Give
15.Golola
Etc

More than 30 words were spelled from various centres. However, most importantly, some of the words were proper nouns (Givi for soap yet it was even wrongly spelled, Golola also proper noun, and so is Grace and others); Gam, was wrongly spelt, and other words. Generally, children attempted to demonstrate spelling skills.

Reading vowels in their order, majority were able to pronounce all the variables though in some schools, pupils were picked at random and others were missing out certain vowels. They could instead pronounce alphabetical letters in place of vowels.

Conclusion

From the study, it was realized that lower grade teachers of Nakaseke District understood the thematic curriculum as one where: teaching needs creativity, it is integrated in nature, themes are drawn from different areas of the curriculum, learners are actively involved in the thematic curriculum, it involves a lot of critical thinking, it is interactive, and gives ground for balanced contribution for both teachers and learners. Comparing the content delivered by teachers in lower primary with the specifications of the curriculum, the study establish that lower grade teachers to some level delivered required content especially in: creating a platform to attract interest of learners in the subject, preparing pupils to write sentences so they are clear to readers on the first reading, advocating for interaction of learners among themselves and seeking help from the instructor or teacher, enabling them pupils to think critically and generate lots of ideas and words fairly quickly and freely without being stuck, and preparing pupils to generate lots of ideas and words fairly quickly and freely without being stuck.

The study revealed that teachers of lower primary are in position to orient learners to the lesson in line with content and skills to be mastered, use creative methods to teach, and combine value, skills and knowledge between subjects while teaching.

The extent to which day to day processes were supportive of early literacy acquisition was determined by factors such as; enabling children to digest new concepts from known to unknown, and children are prepared to participate in learning fluently with the language used to teach reading.

Recommendations

It is recommended that lower grade teachers be involved in regular on-job training to prepare them into mastery of content specifications of the thematic curriculum. Mastery of the content by strong performance assessment systems increases on teachers’ competence and implementation of the curriculum.

Second, the study found out that in some cases, lower grade teachers in Nakaseke District delivered content which could not match what they conveyed as their understanding of the contents of the thematic curriculum. It is therefore recommended that teachers be subjected to monthly tests in the thematic curriculum to check on the relationship between what they know as contents of the thematic curriculum and what is implemented in lower primary classes.

It was recommended that the ministry of education and sports should carry out more sensitization campaigns to help teachers use suitable methods of delivering the contents of thematic curriculum.

Through self-assessments, teachers should be in position to find out whether the day to day processes in lower grade primary school are supportive of literacy acquisition.

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