

English Newspapers Availability and Promotion of Literacy in Ugandan Primary Schools

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Abstract. The use of the mass media as a teaching instrument in the classroom has increased considerably at all levels in the past few years. Therefore, this study was conducted on English newspapers availability and promotion of literacy in Ugandan primary schools. The objective of the study was to determine the level of English newspapers availability in Ugandan primary schools. When conducting the study, the sample size selected is 93 out of 209 target population of primary five pupils and English teachers of selected primary schools. Therefore, two sets of questionnaires (one for the teachers and the other for the pupils) were administered during the data collection.

As a result, the study established that English newspapers meant for younger children are not adequately available in Ugandan primary schools. Therefore, recommendations were made based on the finding that enough English newspapers meant for younger children should be provided in enough quantity in primary schools. However, newspapers should be included among the recommended texts for teaching reading in primary schools.

Keywords: Newspapers, availability and literacy promotion.

1. Introduction

The importance of maintaining a very good reading culture by pupils cannot be over emphasized as it has direct connection with performance of an individual learner in other subjects of the curriculum. They should leave the school as lifelong readers, writers and learners. Over many decades, educators have been drawing attention to the need for effective reading programmes. Nnamdi, (2005), stated that the purpose of an effective reading programme is to develop the child's ability to grasp the meaning of what is read, by teaching him or her how to analyze a sequence of ideas and make logical conclusions. The programme should appeal to every child, meeting his or her needs, abilities and interests by constructing a positive attitude towards reading. Teachers should be able to develop clear learning objectives, and the scope and sequence of a reading programme that should lead to achieving them. This can be done by the use of appropriate learning activities, motivational materials and a variety of teaching approaches in which the children are actively involved.

Being able to read is important, not only for academic success, but a general life skill that is necessary in a literate society. So, identifying ways to improve children's reading through engagement in reading activities is crucial.

This research work focuses on how English Newspapers promote literacy in primary schools in Uganda. The study investigated the extent to which the English teachers are utilizing newspapers in teaching reading, how available the newspapers are and their effectiveness in promoting the reading culture of the younger ones.

2. Objective of the study

The objective of the study is:

To determine the level of availability of English newspapers in literacy promotion in Ugandan primary schools

3. Hypothesis

The study tested the following null hypothesis: English newspapers are not adequately available in literacy promotion in Ugandan primary schools

4. Literature Review

The availability of English newspapers and literacy promotion in primary schools Instruction of reading skills depends on the availability, quality and utilization of relevant instructional resources and the skill of the teacher. This is because instructional resources facilitate the understanding of difficult concepts as well as the teaching and learning of the reading skills. Onchera, (2013) conducted a study on the pedagogical hindrances to oral communication skills in English in Kenya and found out that many schools are not able to provide variety of instructional resources needed for English instruction. However, availability of essential instructional resources is a condition for effective teaching of reading skills. Another study by Nalusiba, (2010) investigated the strategies for the development of reading culture in Uganda primary schools and revealed that inadequate reading resources inhibited the reading culture among the pupils. Similarly, Wangui, (2012) found that instructional materials are inadequate in most schools both in terms of quantity and variety. Similarly, Omuse,

Onchera and Kimutai, (2016) carried out a research titled availability and use of instructional resources for teaching and learning of English reading skills and found that the instructional resources are not adequately provided in the schools. According to Newspapers Association of America Foundation (2007), Newspapers exposed the curriculum with an unlimited amount of information to use as background for reading activities. News develops every day. The beauty of the newspaper in the classroom is that it is fresh each day. It comes to you with the latest news and information and unlike other media comes beautifully written with lots of detail. Stories unfold as reporters unearth more information to reconstruct what happened. There is truly no better record of the world's happenings than a newspaper. Yet, Headlam, (2005) talked about the effort of some newspapers in making available specialized materials for use in schools and briefly present their format consisting shorter stories, more illustrations, larger print size, and localized stories. Walter, (1996) opined that in much of Africa, as in other developing areas of the world, where textbooks may be the only reading materials found in classroom, children often miss the opportunity to read for enjoyment, which results in their reading skills being severely under-developed. Nonetheless, Namata, (2010) revealed that NIE is a strategy in which a teacher uses all kinds of newspapers content as the raw material to help teach lessons in all kinds of subjects. In addition, NIE is the use of newspaper as educational resources for any subject.

A wide variety of resources for purposeful language activities communicates the importance of literacy and places materials in English language learners' hands so they can practice and develop their new language. In stocking a classroom, teachers might include: children's and young adult literature, books on tape, textbooks, business, pamphlet, magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, telephone books, cards, posters, maps, story objects etc. Muwanga, et al, (2007) asserted that majority of primary school pupils highly focused on the need to pass examinations read little else besides the prescribed textbooks (where the books are

available). Therefore, unless pupils are given access to a variety of reading materials (non-textbooks reading materials) and unless NTBRMs are both accompanied by and reinforced through appropriate policies and practices, poor reading habits and low levels of literacy among Uganda's school children are likely to persist.

Kortner, (1988) opined that the use of the mass media as a teaching instrument in the classroom has increased considerably at all grade levels in the past few years. The journal of reading carried a regular series "use the News" on integrating the reading of Newspapers into the most widely used of the media, the direct result of a national campaign by publishers, known as "Newspapers in Education" (NIE). Therefore, according to Newton, (1985) this initiative encourages the use of newspapers as an educational tool both to complement and supplement traditional classroom texts and resource materials. Similarly, Namata, (2010) states that it is clear that children participating in NIE programme are enthusiastic about the newspaper and are actually relating well to it. Therefore, the myth that newspapers are considered an adult medium does not seem to hold because children seem to relate positively to the newspapers.

Ajuna, (2016) stated that, with the discovery of children as ardent readers, New Vision came up with a number of children-friendly sections and pullouts to meet their needs. With the challenge of many schools not being able to purchase teaching aids like textbooks, New Vision started the publication of weekly pullouts of questions and answers, which were set by some of the best teachers in Uganda. However, in promoting the reading culture among the children New Vision started the children's vision which was first published on 15th April, 1989 in Saturday Vision, the four page pullout was the first of its kind in Uganda. It is meant to address the reading and writing skills of the younger children. Similarly, Toto magazine has become of late a household name for children. This magazine was well-received and it has played an important role in providing reading content for the children. It is a magazine for the children and by the children, hence promoting children journalism.

Adeniji and Omale, (2010) conducted a study on teaching reading comprehension in selected primary school in Oyo State, Nigeria where they stated that reading is indispensable to primary school pupils. With the appropriate reading materials, conducive environment and teachers with adequate educational qualifications, good reading skills will help produce pupils who perform well in English as well as other subjects.

However, American Newspapers Publisher Association Foundation (ANPAF), (1981) explained the intent of the program and provides a variety of classroom activities using newspapers. At the present time, about 600 newspapers in the United States and Canada participate in the NIE program which involves approximately three million students, 90,000 teachers and 16,000 schools each year. Before the advent of NIE, Newspapers tended to be used only by secondary school Social Studies teachers in two-week units or for Friday current events sessions. Now, Newspapers are used throughout the school year in every area of the curriculum, (Kossack, 1987).

Thus, the success of this broad initiative is evident in programs such as "Newspapers are for kids, TOO!" This was designed for young children and their parents. It contains creative ideas to help children improve reading, writing, Social Studies, Math and science skills. It can easily be modified for classroom use in the elementary grades (Hermann, 1981)

5. Methodology

5.1 Research design

The study used quantitative approach. The quantitative approach was based on variables measured with numbers and analyzed with statistical procedures (Amin, 2005). Therefore, mean and standard deviation were used in describing the level of availability of English newspapers in literacy promotion in Ugandan primary schools.

5.2 Population/sample of the study

The target population of the study is 209 primary five pupils, and 13 English teachers of the Children Railway Primary School and Kansanga Hill Primary School. Therefore, the

sample size of the study is 93 respondents; this comprised 83 primary five pupils and 13 English teachers of the selected primary schools.

Table 1: Target population/ sample size of pupils

School	Target population	Sample size
Children Railway Primary School, Kampala, Uganda	161	64
Kansanga Hill Primary School, Kampala, Uganda	48	19
Total	209	83

Table 2: Target population/sample size of English teachers

School	Target population	Sample size
Children Railway Primary School, Kampala, Uganda	7	7
Kansanga Hill primary school, Kampala, Uganda	6	6
Total	13	13

5.3 Research Instruments

The researcher administered two sets of questionnaires; one for the pupils and the other for the English teachers. The content of the questionnaire was divided into two parts (A and B). Section A is the profile of the respondents, and section B tested the variables of the study. The instrument is rated on a four Likert scale. It is an instrument for data analysis where the mean in the analysis was divided and graded into four categories as follow:

- 3.21 - 4.00 highly sufficient
- 2.61 - 3.20 sufficient
- 1.81 - 2.60 low sufficient
- 1.00 - 1.80 insufficient

6. Findings

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of mean showing the level of availability of English newspapers in primary schools based on the teachers responses

Newspapers	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Availability	13	1.40	2.60	2.0462	.37553
Valid N (listwise)	13				

The above table presents the teachers responses on the level of the newspapers availability in literacy promotion in Ugandan primary schools. The number of teachers participated in this study is thirteen (13) from the selected primary schools. The statistical mean is 2.046, while the standard deviation is 0.37553.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of mean showing the level of newspapers availability in primary schools based on the pupils response

Newspapers	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Availability	83	1.80	3.20	2.3807	.43349
Valid N (listwise)	83				

The above table presents the pupils responses on the level of the newspapers availability in literacy promotion in Ugandan primary schools. The number of pupils participated in this study

is eighty three (83) from the selected primary schools. The statistical mean is 2.38, while the standard deviation is 0.43349.

7. Discussions

Availability of English newspapers in primary schools

The objective of the study is to find out the level of English newspapers availability in literacy promotion in Ugandan primary schools. According to the finding of the study the mean of the teachers' response is 2.0462, while, in the pupils responses, the mean is 2.3807. Therefore, both teachers and pupils' responses revealed that the provision of English newspapers in Ugandan Primary schools is low sufficient being that both statistical means of the two response categories (teachers and pupils responses) were interpreted as low sufficient. As a result, the null hypothesis which states that English newspapers are not adequately available in literacy promotion in Ugandan primary schools is hereby accepted.

The findings here agree with Omuse, Onchera and Kimutai, (2016), Wangui, (2012) whose study on the availability and use of instructional resources for teaching and learning of English reading skills revealed that the instructional resources are not adequately provided in the schools.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study was conducted with a view of finding out the level of newspapers availability in literacy promotion in Ugandan primary schools. Consequently, the study established that English newspapers are not adequately provided for proper nurturing of the primary school pupils reading culture.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and discussion of the findings, the following recommendation were made by the researcher:

- (i) Enough newspapers should be provided in Ugandan primary schools. This can be done by the

education ministry in collaboration with Parent Teachers Association (P.T.A.) of the respective primary schools.

- (ii) Policy makers such as the education ministry should include English newspapers (pullout) among the recommended texts to be used in primary schools. This will encourage both parents and school authorities in providing enough English newspapers in literacy promotion in their respective primary schools.

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