

Research Article

TO EXAMINE THE INFLUENCE OF TUSOME LITERACY MATERIALS ON READING SKILLS AMONG GRADE TWO PUPILS IN MASII ZONE, MACHAKOS COUNTY., KENYA

^{1,*} Joyce Muthini, ²Dr. Mutua Francis, ³Peter Koech

¹School of Education, Department of Educational Communication and Technology, Kenya.

²Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Department of Educational Communication and Technology, Kenya.

³Professor, School of Education, Department of Educational Communication and Technology, Kenya.

Received 02th January 2024; Accepted 03th February 2024; Published online 20th March 2024

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Tusome literacy materials on reading skills among grade two pupils in Kenya. The intervention was put in place by the Kenyan Government to improve literacy outcomes from an early age. Tusome is a program run by the Ministry of Education (MOE), but funded by the USAID and UKAID with the aim of improving literacy in Kenya since May 2015. The study was based on Donald Holdaway's theory of literacy learning (The Natural Learning Model of 1979). The target population consisted of 30 public primary schools out of which 9 were sampled. From each primary school, 2 teachers were sampled making a total of 18 teachers. From each school, 5 pupils were randomly sampled, making a total of 45 pupils. Therefore, total number of respondents was 63. The researcher developed and used three instruments to collect raw data, namely, structured questionnaires, tests and interview schedule. A pilot study was carried out in two schools, this helped to ascertain in the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments. Quantitative data derived from the demographic section and questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data generated from the interview schedule was presented and organized based on study objectives and presented in themes. The quantitative data was presented in form of tables, bar graphs and pie charts using Microsoft Excel 2010 Programme and deductions made. The study established that majority of teachers in masii zone applied Tusome methodology to teach. The study concluded that Tusome intervention programme affect reading performance among grade two pupils in Masii Zone, Machakos County. The research findings may be significant in identification of working interventions or shortcomings in the Tusome literacy program. The study recommends teachers should be motivated to use Tusome Methodology to teach literacy in lower primary grades, also continuous training would benefit lower primary teachers in their pedagogical development skills. This study may eventually help the Ministry of Education to identify appropriate strategies, instructional materials and in-service teacher training program for effective literacy achievements among lower primary school teachers.

Keywords: Literacy materials, Literacy skills, Reading performance.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

UNESCO (2010) posits that literacy is one of the most integral parts of any human development. In sub-Saharan Africa, the world literacy foundation reports that 27 percent of people are illiterate. More than one in three adults cannot read and 22 percent of primary aged children are not in school. According to the world literacy foundation, millions of classrooms in Africa have limited educational resources and no books. UNESCO defines a literate person as someone who can read and write a short, simple statement about their life. Illiteracy denies people opportunity because it impacts the individual active citizenship, health, empowerment and the state of their poverty. Literacy needs to be more inclusive of and responsive to other areas of life to improve the guarantee of adjustment to globalization rapid change and new challenges (Global Partnership Org. 2021).

In education practice literacy is a critical element in academics achievements. It is not only central in contributing to the ability to read and write (UNESCO, 2007), but also termed as a key driver for social-economic transformation of societies (National council for curriculum and Assessment, 2011).

Early grade reading assessments reveal that in some countries the majority of students in grade 2 are nonreaders, meaning they cannot correctly read even a single word in a simple paragraph. Researchers have shown continuous deterioration of literacy levels. According to the annual learning assessment (Ala, 2012) in Kenya 70% of class 8 pupils could neither pass English or Kiswahili reading test for class two level. "Tusome", which in English means "lets read" it's a nationwide literacy intervention program that was put in place by the government of Kenya Ministry of Education (MOE) in collaboration with the United Kingdom Agency for International Development (DFID) to improve literacy outcomes in the country (Tusome Fact Sheet, 2017). Tusome early grade reading is one of the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) first experience of taking a piloted program to national scale through government systems with overall goal being to improve literacy learning outcomes in Kenya, the program main intervention is to improve reading by ensuring a big percentage of learners are reading at benchmark. The set bench mark in English is 30 correct words per minute in Grade one 65 correct words per minute in Grade 2 while in Kiswahili is 17 correct words per minute in Grade one and 45 correct words in Grade 2 (USAID, 2017). To achieve this, the program focuses on teacher professional development, coaching and monitoring and evaluation system using the right instructional material. According to UWEZO Report (2013), Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) globally and Kenya in particular, has been recognized as a crucial programme that lays a foundation for a child's holistic and integrated education that meets the cognitive, social, moral spiritual, emotional, physical, and development needs. It is critical to invest in the early childhood

*Corresponding Author: Joyce Muthini,

¹School of Education, Department of Educational Communication and Technology, Kenya.

literacy because it is the foundation for a lifetime of success. Early literacy skills are core for any education system to work.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the status of literacy capabilities in schools, there has been increased growth in the implementation of literacy and numeracy programs as intervention measures of addressing the low literacy outcomes in many countries all over the world. Across Kenya, literacy rates in primary schools were lower than expected despite decades of investment and implementation of evidence-based innovations (Piper *et al.*, 2018). The Kenyan Government in the same way as others is seeking to improve learning outcomes by providing quality education to their children with great interest to the centrality of education.. Tusome early grade literacy program is implemented in all public primary schools and low cost private schools across Kenya (USAID, Tusome fact sheet-2017). One of the main interventions of Tusome is to improve reading. Early grade reading assessments reveal that in some countries the majority of students in grade two are nonreaders (Gove,A,and Cvelich 2011). Implementation of Free Primary Education by the GOK in 2003, led to a drastic increase in enrollment jeopardizing the quality of education with literacy and numeracy most hit. Partly the decline in literacy skills was attributed to the increase in pupil enrollment that was not accompanied by an increase in supportive services and resources (Piper and Mugenda, 2013). It is in view of this that this research sought to examine the influence of Tusome literacy materials on reading skills among grade two pupils in Masii Zone, Machakos county., **Kenya.**

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Tusome literacy materials on reading skills among grade two pupils in Masii Zone, Machakos county.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influence of Tusome Literacy Materials on Reading Performance
 Literacy materials facilitates literacy development, acquisition and development and also creates a literacy rich environment. Literacy rich environment emphasizes the importance of speaking, reading and writing in learning. According to (snow, burns, & Griffin, 1998), this involves the selection of materials that will facilitate language and literacy opportunities, reflection and thought regarding classroom design, and intentional instruction and facilitation by teachers and staff. Tusome Early Literacy Programme ensures that pupils have access to a variety of resources.

The Tusome activity supports literacy development and fosters a reading culture among early grade pupils by developing and distributing textbooks, workbooks and supplementary readers to pupils. Tusome activity puts greater attention and focus on access to reading materials that are responsive to the interest and learning needs of learners. The relevance and meaning of the information they gain from the literate material increase their knowledge, wisdom and competences. According to (UNESCO, 2003), good quality reading material should target: all types of learners from children who are new readers to competent readers. Fortunately, for Tusome programme, lower primary schools are a priority. Lower primary needs are taken with a lot of weight. Identified problems and challenges are addressed to best suit the interest of learners. Tusome provides and develops pupil's books that go hand in hand with the teacher's guide. Supplementary readers are also developed to be used by learners to supplement the other Tusome materials, visual and audio visual materials has made learning even easier especially with the advent of

modern technology that allows learners to view images and hear sound repeatedly. The resources are valuable in enhancing teaching and learning of languages in lower grades.

Theoretical Framework

This research was guided by Holdway Theory of Literacy Learning developed in 1979. Holdway Theory of Literacy Learning was advocated by Donald Holdway. His theory is the natural learning model. He believed that all children can learn how to read by experiencing the text over and over. By following the four steps process in his learning model children can then go through the four processes of the learning model he refers to as the "Natural Learning Model". The four processes include the following:-

- i. **Demonstration:** Children watching or listening to a more knowledgeable other, while s/he reads a book or story to him or her.
- ii. **Participation:** Child is watching and listening to a more knowledgeable other while interacting with his/ her reader making sure not to skip or omit their favorite parts of the story being read to them.
- iii. **Role play/ practice:** At this phase, the child is practicing what s/he had experienced from the more knowledgeable other on their own limiting then.
- iv. **Performance :** After participating in the skill for quite some time, the child then shows off their skill to an audience.

According to Godwin (2013), Holdway's theory of literacy further contends that literacy development begins in children's home and is based on meaningful learning experiences. The classroom application or characteristics or natural literacy development include: rich Literacy environment, parent - child interactions of model literacy behaviors, rich Literacy classroom environment by labeling key items around the room, wide variety of high quality reading materials, meaningful language experiences and use of books and shared reading to foster natural literacy development.

Research Design and Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research design to achieve its objectives. Orodho (2005) noted that this research design enables the collection of information about people's attitude, opinions, values and behaviors on educational or social issues. It is a systematic method of studying behaviors that cannot be observed or experimented without manipulating the environment. The method for collecting and analysing data was both qualitative and quantitative

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The influence of tusome litracy materials

The study sought to examine how the provision of Tusome literacy materials influenced reading performance of grade two pupils in Masii zone. The data was collected and the findings are shown as follows in the table:

Statement	SA %	A %	N %	SD %	D %
Ratio of the materials to learner is 1:1	65	30	0.0	1.5	3.5
Teachers use the materials daily in teaching	75.5	20.5	0.0	1.5	2.5
Pupils use the materials daily for learning at school	80	18	0.0	0.5	1.5
Learning materials are to the level of the learner	85	12	0.0	0.5	2.5

Structured teachers guide were available	85	10	0.0	0.5	4.5
--	----	----	-----	-----	-----

The table above show results which demonstrates that,65% of the teachers strongly agreed that the ratio of the literacy materials to learner was 1:1 while 30% agreed on the same, only 1.5% strongly disagreed with the ratio, and 3.5% ended up disagreeing on the 1:1 proportion. On the aspects of teachers using the materials daily in teaching literacy, most teachers (75.5%) strongly agreed to use of Tusome literacy materials in teaching literacy skills in all lessons. 20.5% agreed, 1.5% strongly disagreed and 2.5% disagreed on the same respectively. With regard to the practice of pupils using Tusome materials daily for learning, the study show 80% strongly agreed to the practice that learners use provided Tusome materials in learning all areas of literacy and components of reading. 18% agreed, 0.5% strongly disagreed and 1.5% disagreed. On the aspect of the learning materials being to the level of the learner, 85% strongly agreed that the Tusome materials were to their level and suitable for learning literacy skills which included the reading skills since learners were being exposed to the appropriate materials, 12% agreed that the materials were to the level of learners 0.5% strongly disagreed and 2.5% disagreed. On the aspect of availability of structured teachers guide 85% of the teachers strongly agreed that the Tusome programme provided them with teachers guide, 10% agreed, 0.5% strongly disagreed and 4.5% disagreeing respectively.

The results shows most of the teachers responses to the question on 1:1 ratio provision of material to learners strongly agreed to the fact that Tusome Programme ensured a pupil to text book ratio of 1:1 became a reality. However, small proportion of teachers said the materials weren't enough. A great percentage also strongly agreed that they used teaching and learning materials in learning process. Most of teachers strongly agreed that Tusome materials were to the level of learner and that the teacher's guides were provided. One of the Tusome core objectives was to improve learner access to appropriate texts and supplementary reading materials and resources because each of the literacy material has its relevance depending on the teaching /learning situation. These findings on value of literacy materials are in congruent with Kale (2005) views that a child is developed fully through the use of learning materials when she or he interacts with them. In an even strong statement by ADEA-(2012), reading materials of sufficient quantity, quality and variety serve a significant role in successful early grade literacy acquisition. The relevance of these findings is also emphasized by Neuman (2004) that access to textbooks and other reading materials is critical for children in the lower grades who are learning to read. Tusome program ensured that children were exposed to good and quality text from an early age by providing most of the literacy materials which in return contributed to improved reading outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, it is clear that Tusome programme has influenced the reading performance outcome among grade two pupil and the literacy skills levels. The application of Tusome methodology improved reading skills. Secondly provision of reading materials was paramount to improving pupils literacy skills among grade two learners. The study recommends that the government through KICD should develop and provide the lower grade with playing materials which include digital devices to involve learners to play digital literacy games. The County Governments, stakeholders and parents should help with play equipment's and spacious playground. It also recommends that the teachers should embrace the Tusome approaches to improve literacy levels especially in reading. This is possible if the government through the MoE, and TSC ensures

Continuous training and coaching, capacity building, classroom observations and monitoring to support teachers which could contribute to the programme success.

REFERENCES

- ADEA-(2012). Triennale on Education and Training in Africa-Early grade literacy in African classroom: lesson learned and future direction-sub theme1: common core skills for lifelong and sustainable development in Africa
- UWEZO (2013). Are our children learning? Annual learning assessment report Kenya 2012 by UWEZO , pg 78 p Twaweza organization
- Baseline report prepared under, USAID Education Data for Decision Making (Ed Data A) Project Task.
- Donald Holdway (1979). Model of Natural Learning in Literacy Development. Heinemann
- Godwin, E. (2013). Theories of Literacy Development 1930's – Present day. Available at <http://hillerspires.wikispace.com/file/view/Theories%20of%20Literacy%20Development%201930%27s%20-%20Present%20day>
- Gove, A, & Cvelich P. (2011). Early Reading : Igniting Education for all a report by the early grade learning community of practice N.C : Research triangle institute (RTI).
- Ministry of Education Science and Technology, (2001). Teaching and learning English in the Primary classroom English module. Nairobi; Jomo Kenyatta foundation.
- Orodho, J.A (2009). Elements of education and social science research methods masola publishers, Nairobi
- Piper B & Mugenda, A-(2013). The Primary Maths and Reading (PRIMR) initiative: impact evaluation. prepared under the USAID Education Data for Decision Making (Ed Data II) Project ,Task OrderNo.AID-623-M-11-00001(RTI Task 13).RTI International, Research Triangle.
- Piper B. & Mugenda, A (2013). The primary Math and reading (PRIMR) Initiative; Baseline report prepared under, USAID education Data for Decision making (Ed Data II) Project – Task
- Snow, C,E burns M.S & Griffin P. (Eds). (1998) Preventing reading difficulties in young children Washington, DC National Academy Press.
- Snow C.E burns, MS, & Gritton, P (eds.) (1998). preventing reading difficulties in young children Washington DC, National Research Council
- The Republic of Kenya (2007) Kenya vision 2030. Economic, social and political pillars. Nairobi: The National Economic and Social Council of Kenya(NESC).office of the president.
- UNESCO (2010). Global Literacy Challenge. A profile of Youth and Adult Literacy at the Midpoint of the United Nations Literacy Decode 2003-(2013). Paris.
- Uwezo (2013). Improving Learning Outcomes in East Africa) 2009-2013 Strategy).
