



To examine the extent of application of Tusome literacy intervention methodology in daily learning and teaching literacy skills among grade two pupils in Masii Zone, Machakos county, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess Tusome literacy intervention Programme on reading performance among grade two pupils in public primary schools in Masii Zone, Machakos County. 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 objective 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 for its upholding and make recommendations on its influence or contributions to existing literature on literacy skill development among early grade learners in lower primary schools. 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 skill, intervention methodology, reading performance*

Background to the Study

According to UNESCO (2010), literacy is one of the most integral parts of any human development. A report from the World Conference on Education for All (EFA, March 1990) articulated the significance of childhood years as foundation of an individual. Therefore, it is important to impact proper reading approaches in early childhood in order to enhance literacy development. 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. The reading crisis has led to several strategies for improvement. 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). Lifelong learning requires a solid foundation acquired through literacy on which to base the building blocks for the other skills levels. The skill of the ability to read is not acquired naturally without instruction. Studies suggest that without quality instruction, a child who reads poorly in the early Grade will continue to read poorly in the Upper Grades and will require more and more instructional intervention in order to catch up (Juel 1988). The more and better children learn to read, the longer they tend to stay in school. (Patrinos & Velez 2009). According to UWEZO Report (2003), 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.

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. The programs believes that when children are able to read grade and age appropriate materials at bench mark, they will be more likely to understand at least 80% of what they read (USAID, UKAID TM-2017). Kenya Vision 2030 recognizes the need for a literate citizenry. Literally, the overall goal is to provide a globally competitive quality education, training and research for development to reduce illiteracy, improve the transition rate from primary to secondary schools and raise the quality and relevance of education (Kenya Vision 2030).

Statement of the Problem

Tusome which is a nationwide program aims to ensure growth in the literacy level of learners. It is a program run by the Ministry of Education but funded by the USAID and UKAID with the aim of improving literacy outcomes in Kenya. 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). It is against this backdrop that this research sought to do

an assessment of Tusome literacy intervention Programme on reading performance among grade two pupils in public primary schools in Masii Zone, Machakos County.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess Tusome literacy intervention Programme on reading performance among grade two pupils in public primary schools within Masii Zone, Mwala Sub-County.

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

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.

Literature Review

The role of reading intervention programs cannot be undermined. Interventions for struggling readers have a long history in education and varying degrees of success. For example, one of the most widely used reading programs in the united states Reading Recovery (RR) which was developed in the 1970s’ and targeted first graders for specific reading instruction. Its four-year study revealed that students in the program realized significant gains in reading ability equivalent to 6-7 months of learning in a 5- month period. (Clay,1991). Among approaches that made it possible was teacher training and development in reading instruction, materials and their supplies. Thus instructional coaching on practical classroom-based experiences seems to increase teachers’ efficacy and their capacity to deliver quality instruction for positive literacy outcomes.

The education policy in Kenya Vision 2030 emphasizes on the provision of globally quality education, training and research for her citizens for development and enhanced individual well-being (GOK, 2007a). Despite government ceaseless efforts to combat illiteracy, studies show illiteracy levels remain high among our learners,

especially in the basic levels of learning. This calls for literacy interventions, mobilization, collective and comprehensive involvement of all education segments to address illiteracy in the country and the world at large. In order to realize Kenyan Vision 2030 targets, quality education through improved learning outcomes is critical for every child. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Article II, articulates detailed provision on the right to free and compulsory basic education for the child. The Convention on the rights of the child, Article 28, 29 and 30, secure the right of a child to free education. The Kenyan government among other East Africa countries has been in the frontline in fight against illiteracy. This is in consistent with international conventions to which Kenya is a signatory. This includes the Jomtein Protocols (1990), The Accra Accord (2002) which established the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) among many others. Research has shown the significance to provide quality early education if we expect children to walk through the doors of lower grade classrooms with reading readiness they need to succeed in academics. Learning how to read and how to read well will help children succeed in all disciplines of education. Literacy is a problem plaguing many developing countries. Lacking literacy skills hold a person back at every stage. Good early Childhood Education provides opportunities to learn emergent literacy skills-to identify letters, to recognize frequently encountered words, write one's name, to know what sounds the initial letters of a word represent, to rhyme, to use knowledge of letter names and letter sounds to produce intended spelling. (www.rti.org). Many researchers attest that advanced literacy is a prerequisite to adult success in the 21st century that is the ability to use reading to gain access to the world of knowledge, to synthesize information from different sources and to learn totally new subjects.

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 Extent of Application of Tusome Literacy Intervention Programme Methodology to Teach Literacy in Lower Primary School.

The study sought to examine the extent to which Tusome intervention methodology was applied to teach literacy skills in Masii zone Machakos County. Data was collected from the teachers and the findings are shown below.

Table: Application of Tusome Literacy Intervention Programme

Competency	S.A %	A %	N %	S.D %	D %
Teacher taught following the direct instructional model	60	35	0.0	2.5	2.5
Teacher moved through the lesson at a perky pace	14	26	0.0	38	22
Teacher gave formative feedback	32	48	0.0	9	11
Teacher ensured that every lesson has all the literacy element	57	33	0.0	4.5	5.5

From the table above, majority of teachers apply Tusome Programme methodology in their daily instruction. The findings shows that 60% of the teachers strongly agreed to usage of a method of teaching called Direct Instruction, that is (I do, We do, You do) in Tusome, while 35% agreed, 2.5% strongly disagreed and 2.5% disagreed to teach using direct instructional method respectively. Many teachers had challenge to minimize time given for each lesson with 38% strongly disagreeing on the ability to use perky pace when teaching, 22% disagreeing, 26% agreeing and only 14% strongly agreeing to move at perky pace. The strong feeling reflected here have to do with time management, it seemed that most teachers had challenge in proper pacing. Perky pace refers to a quick but not rushed pace of moving through a lesson which is important strategy in literacy learning. According to Tusome, teachers who use perky pace will keep learners actively engaged by moving through the lesson just fast enough to keep learners' attention but not so fast that the learners get confused. On the other hand, majority of the teachers ensured that every lesson had all literacy elements as per Tusome programme with 57% strongly agreeing to integrating all areas of literacy that is (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in the activities of the Tusome lesson, 33% agreeing, 4.5% strongly disagreeing and 5.5% disagreeing to prepare the lesson plan accordingly. This teaching approach enabled them to give the required feedback on literacy skills acquisition and performance. This indicates that the Tusome programme innovative teaching methods especially the direct approach model had the greatest impact on early grade literacy success more so in reading. Tusome emphasized on varying the amount of instruction a learner receives, improving on the efficiency of instruction and improving on the quality of instruction as the best ways to change the learner's experiences. Implementation and application of this approaches greatly influenced reading performance of Grade 2 pupils largely.

These findings concurs with Clay(1991) views that intervention programs cannot be undermined for they have a long history in education and varying degree of success for struggling readers. These study findings depicts a true picture of a well-researched approach, that research based approaches to teaching literacy do not over emphasize reading. Instead, they focus on how to use a balanced approach that does not ignore reading as a key element of a literacy approach embracing all four macro language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Piper et al 2018).

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the study based on the objective, 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. 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.

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