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ABSTRACT

Uganda introduced the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in primary schools in 2007. This was meant to promote interaction and participation in the learning process and improve children's proficiency in reading and writing. Drawing elements of interaction and participation from the socio-cultural theory, the child-centred pedagogy was introduced. This intervention, however, did not yield the expected results. Children taught in the local language still had problems in reading and writing. A participatory action research framework was used to gain insights into the child's learning to read and write within a re-emphasised child-centred pedagogy. In this paper, we argue that involving children at individual and group levels, conducting continuous assessment and using appropriate instructional materials help children to learn and improve their proficiency in reading and writing. Some pupils, however, still find difficulties in reading three syllable words, constructing simple sentences and punctuating their work. For the children to improve their proficiency in reading and writing in their mother tongue, the teachers need to use more instructional materials, carry out continuous assessment in small groups and design learning activities that promote children's interaction and participation.

1. Introduction

Recent studies in sociolinguistics show a shift towards using mother tongue (MT) or language(s) that the learner is familiar with as medium of instruction (MoI) for initial education (Akello 2009; Alidou et al. 2006; Butzkamm 2003; Government of Uganda 1992; Heugh et al. 2007; Linehan 2004; Ouane and Glanz 2006, 2010; Yazıcı, Ilter, and Glover 2010). This is because learners who understand the language they are instructed in are more likely to engage meaningfully with content (Gacheche 2010) and achieve higher levels of literacy (NCDC 2006). Using MT as MoI allows teachers and students to interact naturally and negotiate meanings together, creating participatory learning environments

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conducive not only for cognitive but also linguistic developments (Benson 2004; Linehan 2004). MT or first language (L_1) in a broader sense is the language(s) of the immediate environment and daily interaction which 'nurture' the child in the first four years of life (Ouane and Glanz 2010, 62). MoI is the language in which basic skills and knowledge are imparted to the learners and the medium in which the production and reproduction of knowledge take place (Ouane and Glanze 2006, 2010). In this paper, Acoli is the MT and L_1 as well as the MoI. MT and L_1 will be used interchangeably.

Since language is the means of communicating meaning in most learning activities, building self-esteem, sharing cultural values and promoting identity (Benson 2004; Linehan 2004; Tembe and Norton 2008), it is essential that a language which the learners understand and speak is used in education (UNESCO 2005). The use of MT for teaching and learning of all subjects, including foreign-language lessons, is the child's strongest ally and should, therefore, be used systematically (Adebayo 2008; Butzkamm 2003).

Most countries in Africa that use MT as MoI for initial education purposes, changeover to using a foreign language as MoI from grade four onwards. Uganda is no exception to this shift. In 2007 with the introduction of the thematic curriculum (TC), the child-centred pedagogy (CCP) and the use of MT as MoI were introduced in the lower primary school (Ahabwe 2011) since it was realised that pupils' proficiency in literacy was low. Over the years, reports from the national assessment of progress in literacy (Acana et al. 2010) reflected that grade three pupils had difficulty in reading and comprehending a story, while many pupils lacked the ability to spell words correctly and write grammatically correct simple sentences. The literacy level in the English of grade three pupils was equally low. The majority of pupils could not read and comprehend a simple story and lacked the ability to read and describe activities in a picture. In writing, many pupils spelt words wrongly and could not write names of common objects shown in a picture.

The problem of low proficiency is not unique to Uganda. A number of studies in Nigeria (Igboanusi 2008), Ghana (Owu-Ewie 2006), Malawi (Chilora, Jessee, and Heyman 2003), Zambia (Dzinyela 2003) and Kenya (Ogechi 2003; Muthwii 2002) have recorded low levels of proficiency at the lower primary school levels. The continuous low levels of proficiency in reading and writing of the pupils indicate serious problems that call for intervention. Since the CCP that was meant for teaching in the lower primary was not well implemented in Uganda (Ahabwe 2011), its implementation within a participatory action research (PAR) framework for teaching reading and writing in the local language was re-emphasised. This paper reports how CCP was implemented in teaching reading and writing in local language within the PAR approach in primary schools in Uganda.

The subsequent sections focus on the language policy in Uganda, the recent reforms in education, the socio-cultural theory that forms the background of the reforms, the methodology and findings of the study. The last sections discuss some preliminary conclusions and recommendations for future research and practices of educational reform in Uganda.

2. Language policy in Uganda

Uganda is a multilingual country with 43 indigenous languages spoken alongside English and Kiswahili (Gordon 2005). Of the 43 languages, only 5 area languages of wider communications were selected as regional MoIs for an estimated 80%−90% of the population in lower primary. These include Luo (Acholi, Lango and Dopadhola), Luganda, Lugbara,

Runyakitara (Runyoro/Rutooro and Runyankore/Rukiga) and Ateso (Ngakaramojong and its variant) (Ward, Penny, and Read 2006). In Uganda, English is the official as well as second language (L₂).

The language policy stipulates that schools, save for some in urban areas, should teach all subjects, except English, through MTs from grade one to three. Every school is to adopt the dominant language of the community it is situated in as a MoI or may retain English only if the dominant community language is unclear. English becomes the MoI from grade four onwards (Government of Uganda 1992). The multilingual nature of the population, however, has posed problems to policy-makers when it comes to MoI and examination in the primary school (Muthwii 2002, 4) since not every child, especially in the urban areas, is proficient in the selected area languages.

This language policy is faced with mixed reactions from some stakeholders. The elite parents think that the children in the rural areas are marginalised and denied the chance to compete favourably with their counterparts in the urban centres; moreover, the national exams are set in English and not in MT (Muthwii 2004). Some studies in sub-Saharan Africa also reflect parents' preference for English as MoI right from grade one (Arua and Magocha 2002; Namusisi 2010; Ngwaru and Opoku-Amankwa 2010; Tembe and Norton 2008) for purposes of children's upward mobility and the desire to be part of a wider and more international communities (Muthwii 2004). These sentiments point to the fact that it is difficult to determine the MT in multilingual situations since in some contexts children can have multiple MTs (Ricento 2002). Moreover, the selection of a local language is not just for pedagogical issues but has significant cultural and political implications (Penny et al. 2008). To understand the language policy better, let us look at the education reforms in Uganda.

3. Thematic curriculum in Uganda

The 1992 Education Review report (Government of Uganda 1992, 39) highlighted the language policy for the primary schools that was implemented between 2000 and 2002. This curriculum comprised four core subjects: language, mathematics, science and social studies and eight other subjects. The curriculum, however, did not pay sufficient attention to listening, speaking, reading and writing in the first three years of primary school (Penny et al. 2008). The teaching approach was mostly teacher-centred. Writing consisted of copying from the board or taking dictation. Interaction was characterised by choral responses, repetition, cued response and rote learning. More focus was and is still on the summative assessment. Soon it was realised that proficiency in reading and writing were continuing to decline because of badly implemented literacy programmes (Draku 2011; Penny et al. 2008). This called for another curriculum review in 2004 that brought in the TC.

The Government of Uganda introduced the TC in 2007 (Acana et al. 2010; NCDC 2006) to be taught in local languages from grade one to three. This was meant to help pupils improve their level of proficiency in reading and writing which was seen as a barrier to the children's full enjoyment of their right to education (NCDC 2006; UNESCO 2005). The TC seeks to develop basic language skills for lifelong learning. It is based on the following three main principles (NCDC 2006, iv):

(1) rapid development of literacy, numeracy and life skills at the lower primary school level,

(2) the treatment of concepts holistically, under themes of immediate meaning and relevance to the learner and

(3) the presentation of learning experiences in languages in which the learners are already proficient.

In the new curriculum, knowledge and competences are arranged in accordance with a thematic approach and the teaching methodology emphasised the child's activities rather than the teacher's (NCDC 2006, 9). It encourages active participation of all children in their learning by exploring, observing, experimenting and practising. The suggested activities, such as songs, games, acting and drawing, are intended to be enjoyable. As a result, a significant amount of class time should be taken up by group or pair work or by individual children working independently of the teacher. The teacher is to adopt a child-centred approach by putting the child's interest, experiences and needs at the centre of the curriculum in order to increase interest in learning the different subjects they are to study in later years (Draku 2011).

CCP is accompanied by competency-based discourses and official shifts in curriculum and assessment policy designed to lessen the significance of examinations and enhance the importance of continuous assessment (CA) as a means of stimulating child-centred pedagogies. Contemporary understandings of the child-centred education are based on Vygotskian cognitive psychology, and differ from pedagogies based on the behaviourist psychology which has been the model of curriculum and instruction in Uganda (Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008, 197).

The teacher's role in the classroom is to motivate, facilitate and structure the child's own discovery and search of knowledge (Altinyelken 2010) by providing a supportive learning environment (Tzuo, Yang, and Wright 2011). This makes learning an active and interactive process between students since learning is constructed together in social activity.

The curriculum describes rich and varied literacy environment for the child and emphasises the need for and use of varied learning resources, including flash cards, word/sentence cards, wall charts, work cards, simple readers and the children's own written work. The learning materials used in the first three years of primary education are provided in the child's own language or a language familiar to the child (NCDC 2006, 10).

The TC further stipulates that whenever possible the children should learn in the home language or at least in a language that is familiar to them. This is because higher achievement levels are reached in literacy when children study in a language which they already have a strong oral command (NCDC 2006). In addition, all written tests that are used for assessment purposes are administered in the local language except the assessment in English language competencies.

The new curriculum emphasises CA as opposed to summative assessment. The main principles of CA are

- the assessment is to be carried out during the normal lesson time,
- teachers are to keep records of assessment of each child, showing the competencies achieved in each lesson,
- assessment is to be cumulative meaning that if a child has not achieved a competence in one lesson under a particular theme, the teacher should record the competence when achieved later,

- modes of assessing children's competences are
  - observation in the class,
  - listening to children in class,
  - reviewing their exercise books,
  - marking their handwriting (NCDC 2006, 12).

To understand more the CCP, let us look at Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory.

4. The socio-cultural theory

Vygotsky advocates for a child-centred approach to teaching/learning and emphasises that language is the major tool for interaction. He highlights the role of social interaction between the teacher and learner as a tool for transmitting specific knowledge for learning how to construct problem-solving activities (Vygotsky cited in Dorn 1996). During the class interaction, the teacher is to offer support to the learner by creating a rich and motivating learning environment in order to guide the learner in the process of constructing knowledge. The learners play active roles in the learning process by sharing experiences, taking part in the group or class discussions.

Vygotsky elaborated on the social dimension of learning, by developing the notion of a zone of proximal development. He placed the interaction with adults and more competent peers at the heart of this zone since it is in this zone that teachers and more experienced peers can lay their hands on the learning processes going on in the child's mind. To facilitate interaction, the MT or a language that the child is familiar with is essential since MT instruction increases the potential for students to interact with others around content (Brock-Unte 2007). Through using the MT, learners integrate school-acquired knowledge with prior knowledge and develop vocabulary as they interact with peers, family and teachers. Vygotsky captures the core of child-centred approach since he focuses on interaction, teachers' support and role of the learner for the purpose of knowledge construction.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory was used as ground for gaining insight into the teachers' experience of using MT as MoI in lower classes and transition to using English as MoI from grade four in the rural primary schools. The theory was useful in evaluating the impact of CCP during class observation, interview and review of pupils' exercise books.

5. Methodology

This is a PAR study conducted in three primary schools in Northern Uganda, from 2012 to 2014. PAR framework was used to gain insight into the child's learning to read and write within a re-emphasised CCP. In this framework, the participants jointly cooperated in the process of defining, analysing, implementing and evaluating the outcome (Mitchell, Reilly, and Logue 2009) of using CCP in the language classroom. Being cyclical (McTaggart 1991), the whole process was repeated after six months in order to address any emerging challenge that hinge on children's learning to read and write.

The study was conducted in six phases beginning with identification of schools and participants in July 2012. This was followed by preliminary data collection in August to establish the local language situation in the primary schools. Feedback was given to the

participants during a one day workshop in November 2012 and training of teachers was conducted in February 2013. The implementation of the CCP started in March 2013 and continued till August 2013. During this period, there was monitoring and evaluation of the effect of CCP on children's learning to read and write. In the sixth phase, feedback was given to the participants on the implementation of CCP in November 2013. Guided by the outcomes of the feedback, especially the area of weaknesses in the research process and in children's learning, we planned for the next cycle of the research and started another phase of implementing the CCP.

The schools and the participants were purposively selected. The schools involved in the study used local language as MoI from grade one to three and transition to English as MoI in grade four. The teachers were those who have used local language and English as MoI from 2009. The three years of uninterrupted experience was considered as providing adequate exposure to the language situation in the lower primary classes.

The choice of PAR was to help teachers of literacy from grade one to three and teachers of English in grade four not only to conduct research in their own practice in order to improve it (Burton and Bartlett 2005), but also to engage in collaborative research with others from inside and outside the school. Through PAR, teachers reflected and shared their experience of implementing the CCP in the lower primary classes. The reflections gave them better understanding of how to implement CCP for teaching reading and writing in the local language.

The District Inspector of Schools (DISs), head teachers, deputy head teachers, Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCT) and pupils provided preliminary data that exposed the language situation on the ground and it helped in designing the study. In the actual study, nine teachers of literacy, three teachers of English in grade four and 945 pupils of grade one to four from three primary schools participated in the first year of study. As the pupils were promoted to the next class, their number reduced because the new entrants in grade one and those pupils promoted to grade five were left out. A feedback team consisting of DISs, a head teacher, CCT, a primary school teacher, a tutor and a representative of the parents played the roles of 'critical friends' by offering advice and support during the research process (Kember et al. 1997).

The teachers participated in focus group discussions (FGD) since they are at the centre of translating the curriculum from English to local language, interpreting it, planning for teaching and implementing it. The discussion helped to gain insight into a range of views from the perspective (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2011) of the teachers who are practically using local language as MoI. The DISs, head teachers, deputy head teachers and two CCTs were subjected to in-depth interviews because they play roles in monitoring and enforcing the implementation of the language policy in schools.

The observation of 18 lessons in seven classes focused on the level of interaction between the teacher and pupils and among more competent peers during the actual teaching process. The more competent peers in this paper are pupils who are more proficient in the local language than others. We paid attention to the learning environment to ascertain whether or not it supported learning. The observation was recorded on an observation checklist form. Observation complemented the findings (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2011) from FGD and in-depth interview and it facilitated in finding out how (Flick 2009) CCP was being implemented for teaching reading and writing using local language. Review of the exercise books of the pupils helped in identifying the areas of competencies

and challenges that the pupils had in writing. The use of four data collection instruments was intended to increase validity of the findings (Burton and Bartlett 2005).

The findings, majorly pedagogical in nature, were presented to the participants during a feedback workshop for the purpose of confirming authenticity or lack of it (Tukundane 2014) and also for getting feedback from the participants (Burton and Bartlett 2005). During a feedback session, the teacher-centred approach was identified as a challenge contributing to the pupils' low proficiency in reading and writing in the local language. This prompted the adoption of the CCP as an intervention.

Prior to the implementation of the CCP, a one-day training workshop was conducted to provide more skills for the teachers of literacy. After the training, the teachers adjusted their schemes of work and lesson plans by incorporating more learning activities, appropriate instructional materials and new strategies of conducting CA. The CCP was implemented for six months and monitored through class/lesson observation, review of pupil's exercise books (NCDC 2006) and interview with teachers and pupils. Teachers kept a research journal for documenting their own practice (Zeni 1998), for reflection-on-action (Leitch and Day 2000) and improvement of classroom practices. The qualitative data were analysed through Atlas.ti software and they are presented and discussed below.

6. Findings

In this section, we report our findings on two issues: the experiences of the teachers in using CCP for teaching reading and writing in local language, and how the use of CCP has facilitated the children in learning to read and write in a local language.

6.1. Teachers' experiences in using the child-centred pedagogy

The teachers shared experiences during follow-up interviews on the use of CCP and revealed that generally teaching was easier and lighter. One teacher said:

> The innovation is so good. The pupils were able to participate actively, generate the content of the lesson and learn. When I put them in groups they share ideas together and those who are fast in grasping the concepts teach the other pupils. They were so interested in group work. (Sarah. Interview by author. Gulu April 22, 2013)

Another teacher related her experience of using the CCP to the activities and learning materials that she used in teaching reading and writing:

> I enjoy being with them when there are many activities. I involve them and make fun. When you teach them well, they understand but if you don't teach them well, sometimes they get bored. You need a lot of planned activities that will challenge them and also a lot of learning materials to help them grasps the new concept and link it to the old. (Stella. Interview by author. Gulu April 26, 2013)

The follow-up interview with the teachers after class observation gradually brought in positive change in attitude towards paying attention to individual learners as compared to when the study started. The teachers confessed that the use of CCP has helped them to be keen on what the pupils go through in the teaching and learning process. One teacher recounted her experience:

Teaching in local language is so interesting. It helps to create good relationship between teacher and pupils. I am able to know who is following the lesson and who is not following. The pupils are active and are able to answer questions since they are using their own mother tongue. It also makes the children build the interest of coming to school all the time because they know that what is going to be taught in class is not strange to them. (Teddy. Interview by author. Gulu April 22, 2013)

Implementing the CCP has gradually helped the teachers to reflect on their teaching practice. One teacher reported:

From the beginning it was not easy because I thought that when they are in grade four, they should switch to English straight away without using the local language any more. I really fidgeted with them because I wanted them to learn and speak English. But I started changing because I realised that I should go slowly with them by involving them more in the learning process. (Annet. Interview by author. Gulu April 24, 2013)

In the course of sharing experiences on using CCP, two challenges emerged: lack of reading materials and the difficulty of doing CA on a daily basis. The causes were varied but a prominent one was the high enrolment of pupils. Most classes had between 97 and 105 pupils. On the lack of reading materials, a teacher recounted:

With the big enrollment, there is the challenge of using or sharing the few reading materials that was provided for by the Ministry of Education. Children learn better when they have something in their hands to read. They do not know how to share a book. (Tolit. Interview by author. Gulu April 24, 2013)

On the challenge of managing CA, another teacher said, 'I personally cannot handle children alone in the classroom. They are so many for me. They are about 92. How can I assess them individually on a daily basis objectively?' (Paula. Interview by author. Gulu April 30, 2013).

In one feedback meeting, the teachers discussed the two challenges in groups and made proposals. For the reading materials, they proposed and agreed that teachers of grades one and two would make the pupils tell the stories and they write them out for them, while the pupils of grades three and four would write the stories and the teachers would improve on them. The teachers and pupils set to writing the stories and as this report is being shared, the stories have been published and are being used in the classroom. The detailed report on the writing exercise will be documented elsewhere.

The second proposal was to have plans for managing CA: assessing learners according to their seating arrangement and in small groups. Each teacher chose a plan that she taught was appropriate for her class taking into account the number of pupils. During another feedback meeting, the teachers gave a report on how they managed CA. A class teacher of 97 pupils reported that she assessed learners according to their seating arrangement. In this approach, she started with the pupils on the first desk and then moved on to the next child. At the end of the lesson, she took note of where she had stopped. She picked up from where she had stopped in the next lesson. This made it possible for her to assess all the pupils in the class at least once in a week.

Four other teachers on the other hand divided the pupils into small groups of ten and based the assessment at group level. In this approach, they were able to assess the whole class in each lesson. It was, however, observed that with the second approach the individual pupil's reading and writing needs were not adequately attended to. The teachers relied

on the participation and responses of the dominating members of the group to draw conclusions on the competencies achieved. Four other teachers also divided the children into groups of 10 but assessed them individually within the group both in reading and writing. One teacher reported:

> I am doing individual assessment in a class of 76 pupils. I have divided them in groups of ten. I call them one by one to read and write and I record. I assess ten in each lesson and ten on the next day. This has worked quite well for me. (Caroline. Interview by author. Gulu April 30, 2013)

In two schools, the instructional materials prepared were destroyed and the teachers had to make others. A teacher expressed her disappointment:

> Sometimes we draw pictures and write letters and display on the wall but then sometimes other pupils come and remove them from the classroom. When you come back the next day, they are nowhere to be seen and then you have to make another one. It is discouraging and it takes up the time for teaching because you have to prepare another one. (Hellen. Interview by author. Gulu April 26, 2013)

During the class observation, it was noted that the charts that were used for teaching and learning on the previous day were missing. The charts that remained on the wall had additional writing on them that did not relate to the theme covered in that particular lesson. Most of the charts were old and the writings were fading away. Coupled to that most of the charts displayed in grade one to three classrooms were provided by the Ministry of Education and were labelled in English. This denied the child the supporting environment for further learning in the local language.

6.2. Children's learning to read and write in local language

As the teachers implemented CCP, lesson/class observation was done purposely to see what goes on in class in relation to children's learning to read and write in the local language. In a class of 97, pupils enjoyed the lesson and their participation was manifested by show of hands and by their willingness to move and pick picture cards to read and match them with writings on the chalkboard. Out of 10 pupils who picked the flash cards, seven of them read the words correctly and matched them with pictures on a chart.

During the class observation in grade three, 15 pupils participated in reading as individuals, 9 of them read well by pointing at each syllable in a word, while 6 of them had difficulties in reading. This was reflected by pupils' hesitation or silence while pointing at words before reading them. Three of them individually pointed at a word but articulated another word that they had heard being read earlier. The mismatch between pointing at a word and actually articulating it triggered reactions from other pupils. They murmured in disapproval that their colleagues had read some words wrongly. The teacher responded by encouraging the pupil to point at each syllable as they read them loud and clear. If they did not succeed, another pupil was asked to read. The children's reaction was an indication that learning was taking place, though at different levels and at the same time it showed their commitment towards learning through self and peer assessments. The more proficient pupils, however, took on a supportive position by prompting the less proficient pupils in reading by whispering from the background.

Pupils of grade two and three participated in class discussion based on a story they read in class in groups of ten and as individuals. Participation was reflected by raising hands, responding to question and listening to another pupil responding to the questions. In grade three, pupils murmured in the background to dispute wrong answers but whispered as they offered correct answers while others smiled or nodded in approval of the correct answers. When the teacher was explaining a concept they focused attention on her, though a few of them were attentive for a short time. That explains why from time to time the teacher had to intone a song as an interlude or ask them to stand and do some exercises to awaken them and help them to refocus their attention to the learning.

In classes where pictures were displayed, pupils read on their own especially during break time, lunch hours or when the teachers were out of class. In grade two, 23 out of 97 pupils remained in class during morning break and randomly formed groups of threes and fives and identified charts. They took turns in reading to each other. There was a pupil who took the lead in reading and also helping those who had difficulties with one or two words. This was made possible because of the rich classroom environment which facilitated incidental learning.

There were other groups of pupils reciting the syllables by heart. When another pupil pointed at isolated syllables randomly, for example, li, la, lo, le and lu, only 6 out of 12 pupils could read them well. This was an indication of cram work which is typical of the teacher-centred approach. The fact that the pupils take initiative to read and learn from the instructional materials displayed in their class emphasises the importance of continuous development and use of instructional materials to promote active learning, incidental learning and continuous generation of knowledge.

The findings from the review of exercise books showed improvement in proficiency in writing. Fifty out of 93 pupils in grade three could make differences between upper and lower cases that was challenging to them six months before starting the implementation of CCP. Thirty of the pupil, however, had challenges in writing letters that were written both on and below the line, for example, y, g, p, j, s and w. When the letters were in the lower cases, the pupils wrote them either as upper cases or on the line even if they were to be partly written below the line.

In grade three, 70 out of 93 pupils were able to space the letters and words correctly though 23 of them found difficulties in letter and word spacing. This created challenges for both the pupils and teachers when it came to reading and making meaning out of them. Sometimes the meaning was completely changed or the word did not make sense at all. On average, the pupils could spell some words correctly though others had difficulties in spelling words of three syllables and above. The spelling difficulties manifested themselves in the work they copied from the chalkboard, in the free responses they made and in spelling their names.

In grade three and four, hardly any pupil used punctuation marks and if they did, it was incorrectly done. The teachers, however, marked wrongly punctuated sentences as right: an act encouraging pupils not to take punctuations seriously and yet the use of punctuations play great roles in determining the meaning that is conveyed.

During lesson observation in grade two, the pupils named real objects shown by the teacher. For example, in that particular lesson, the topic was on the foods eaten at home. The teacher brought sweet potatoes, egg plants, maize and groundnuts. The 12 pupils who put up their hands, named the foods presented easily and even named others that

the teacher had not brought in class. The teacher wrote the words on the board and they read them in small groups and as individuals. Of the 10 pupils who participated in the individual reading, 8 of them pointed at each word and read them loud and clear. The teacher later on asked them to construct sentences using the words written on the board. Individual pupils were able to construct a variety of sentences following a given structure that required pupils to fill in the missing word. For instance: An amaro bango … ki … . (I love eating … and …). The pupil's construction: An amaro bango layata ki odii pul (I love eating potatoes and groundnuts paste). Two pupils, however, created new sentence patterns that the teacher had not given them. One of them said: Bango layata ki odii pul mit caa angwen (It is nice to eat sweet potatoes and groundnuts paste at ten o'clock). This demonstrated elements of creativity through generating a new complex sentence pattern. This new sentence pattern was more exciting to the pupils than the one the teacher had given. The use of real objects made the learning experience more exciting and memorable for the learner. We, however, observed that the real objects were taken away from class after the lesson. This denied the children the chance of going back on their own to study the objects and learn more about them.

7. Discussion

The implementation of the CCP for teaching reading and writing in the lower primary classes within PAR framework showed some positive outcomes and also areas of weaknesses that the teachers need to focus on in the next phase of the study in order to be able to guide children in learning reading and writing. In all three schools, the nature/level of children's participation in the learning process were characterised by responding to questions asked by the teacher in one word or a phrase or by a 'yes' or 'no' answer. In other occasions, participation was in the form of storytelling and individual or group reading. These occasions of participation, however, were prompted by a question or a request from the teacher to a child to perform a task, making the teacher still maintain centre stage in the teaching and learning process. This is contrary to the philosophy of the CCP in which the child is to be at the centre of the learning process in order to influence the direction of learning (NCDC 2006). In the CCP, the teacher is to play the role of a facilitator by structuring learners own discovery and search of knowledge (Altinyelken, Moorcroft, and van der Draai 2014).

Pupils, however, had moments when they took initiative to read the charts displayed in their classrooms in the local language. Some of them asked questions that initiated interaction among them and some peers helped the others who did not know how to read the writings on the charts. This brings in Vygotsky's point on scaffolding that is done between peers or the more knowledgeable one in order to stimulate the mind of the struggling learners to pick up and continue on their own. The charts displayed were effective since their contents were familiar, realistic and depicted a single activity (Hawthorne and Tomlinson 1997). They helped learners to associate new information to concepts they had already learnt more efficiently than they could if using just words alone (Oxford and Crookall 1990).

Much as there were charts displayed in some classes, they were old and some of the writings on them had faded. The old charts denied the children the opportunity to relate new concepts to visual aids. This practice does not support the successful implementation of the CCP that is partly hinged on the use of instructional materials to help the pupils

see and relate the abstract or new concepts to real life situations (NCDC 2006). The teachers are, therefore, encouraged to prepare new and appropriate instructional materials on regular basis in order to provide an environment that motivates learning.

The NCDC (2006) recommended the conduct of CA on a daily basis. This is a very brilliant recommendation but experience from the study showed that CA on daily basis is not practical because of the high teacher:pupil ratio of 1:95 on average. The teachers, however, during a research feedback session proposed and agreed to assess children individually and in groups. Though the group assessment has helped teachers to assess children at least once a week, it, however, gives false pictures of the competencies attained in each lesson by the child since it relies on group performances. More so, it does not take care of the individual learner differences.

Implementing the CCP within the PAR has contributed to teachers' change of attitude towards their teaching practices. They are able to record, reflect and share the experiences they go through as they teach. The shared experiences have led them to write reading materials with the children. The collaborative efforts among the teachers and pupils put the teachers as researchers into their own practice in order to improve it (Burton and Bartlett 2005) and also gave the pupils occasions of participating in research.

8. Conclusion

The implementation of CCP for teaching reading and writing in the local language within the PAR has yielded some positive changes in the children's learning to read and write and a change in the teachers' attitude to teaching in the local language and developing instructional materials. In order for this positive trend to continue, there is need for continuous professional development for the teacher who is at the centre of the implementation of CCP. This is because teachers' mastery of CCP is one determining factor, among others, in helping children improve their level of proficiency in reading and writing in local language. Much as there was improvement, the children still have some weaknesses in constructing simple sentences, developing paragraphs and using punctuations correctly. Therefore, there is need for continued implementing of CCP in the next phase of the study with focus on the areas of weaknesses with particular attention being paid to individual assessment.

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