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Teaching with Sponsored Instructional Materials: Attitudes of Teachers in Uganda

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the teachers' attitudes towards using sponsored instructional materials provided by the Aga Khan Education Service (AES) to primary schools in Uganda. The objectives of the study were: to establish teachers' attitudes towards the AES materials in relation to the level of class taught, size of classes and the nature of subject (s) taught. Data was gathered from twenty five class teachers, using interview schedules. Majority of the teachers (93%) expressed positive attitude, while only 7% had negative attitudes over using the AES materials. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations focused on: sensitization of teachers on importance AES; improving on close work relationship between primary schools and AES; extending AES materials to non-project schools and; further research on other variables rather than teachers' attitudes.

Keywords: Attitudes; Sponsored; Instructional materials; Experience

Introduction

Background

Uganda is a developing country with inadequate facilities and services in all sectors, including education (NCHE, 2005). The country once had one of the best education systems in sub-Saharan Africa, but this collapsed due to the wars, political and economic chaos of the 1970's and the 1980's (Uganda Government, 1992). As a result of the mismanagement and neglect of the education sector in the above period, Uganda's education system faces many problems at all levels, including pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical, teacher and tertiary education. These problems include inadequacies of; school buildings, instructional materials, science equipment and well-trained and motivated teachers (World Bank, 2006; Munene, 1997; MS/DANIDA and Ministry of Education Tanzania, 1996; Uganda Government, 2000a; Uganda Government, 1992).

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The Government of Uganda set up the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC), in 1987, to find ways of streamlining the education system. The Commission produced the

Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) Report in 1989, code-named the “Kajubi Report”. This report, among other things, recommended the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and to equip the primary schools with the latest textbook publications, audio-visual aids and science equipment.

In response, the Government of Uganda strengthened the provision of textbooks and other instructional materials. The overall goal of the UPE program was to provide the necessary facilities and resources to enable all children of school-going age to enter and remain in school and complete the primary cycle of education (Uganda Government, 2000b). As a result of the UPE program, the number of children in primary schools rose from 3,000,000 at the end of 1997 up to 7,400,000 at the end of 2000 (Uganda Government, 2000a). This was more than double expansion of primary school enrolment in the country, hence culminating into additional pressure and strain on the limited instructional materials in primary schools throughout the country.

Government spending on instructional materials was increased under the Support Uganda Primary Education Reform (SUPER) Program and the Primary Education and Teacher Development Program Project (PETDP), according to Uganda Government (2000a).

The Government of Uganda also initiated and implemented a targeted program to expand and improve the quality of primary teacher education and management in the Primary Teachers Colleges (PTCs) under the Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS), according to Uganda Government (2000b)(Fisher, 2000).

School Improvement Program (SIP)

As a developing country, Uganda depends on foreign support for most of her primary, secondary and higher education systems. In 1994, the Aga Khan Education Service (AES) Uganda, initiated the School Improvement Program (SIP) for Kampala District. It was a joint support of the Aga Khan Foundation, the European Economic Community and the British Department for International Development (DFID). The SIP aimed at improving educational standards in Government-aided primary schools in Kampala district through providing instructional materials (Aga Khan Education Service, 2000).

Later the Enhancement of Universal Primary Education in Kampala (EUPEK), still under the AES, took over as continuation of the SIP. The daily

EUPEK activities included the production of low-cost instructional materials among others.

Attitudes of teachers towards sponsored instructional materials vary depending on willingness to take up and use new items and ideas. A report on the results of a study which examined K-12 teachers' attitudes towards sponsored materials provided them by the Consumers Power Company of Michigan in USA, revealed a positive attitude toward and acceptance of the educational materials. The materials were found to have great instructional value to the users (Duvall, et al, 1993).

A study conducted by Angela (1995) in Columbia and Sri Lanka revealed that since teachers did not have enough teaching materials they welcomed the use of sponsored materials, and had a positive attitude. In Columbia where an irrelevant passive teacher-centered curriculum had been used for some time, teachers could not readily adopt the use of new instructional materials.

On the African scene, two cases presented in a report by DANAIDA and the Ministry of Education and Culture of Tanzania (1996) reveal similar difficult situations in Eritrea and Mozambique. Both countries were ravaged by long civil wars which left them devastated and impoverished. These studies reveal that such situations, compelled teachers to resent innovations in education seriously, such as the development and use of sponsored instructional materials. On the contrary, the same report reveals that teachers from relatively stable countries like Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi were found to be taking full advantage of the challenges and were using the new instructional materials at their disposal, hence with a positive attitude.

The case of South Africa as reported by Wilson (2000) reveals an interesting situation. This is due to the fact that the Government of National Unity inherited an education system that was discriminatory from the racist apartheid era. As such, there was need for thorough curriculum renewal and development of new instructional materials that did not reflect racial bias. The production and distribution of new instructional materials and the attitudes of the teachers largely depended on their political and racial attitudes.

Studies conducted in Uganda generally show that most schools and institutions do not have enough instructional materials (Munene, 1997; Carrasco, 1996; Uganda Government, 1992). Kyeyune's (1993) study on the use of the Integrated English Syllabus and Teachers' Guide for Uganda (Akabway, 1983), reveals that much as this syllabus was tailored to suit the teaching and learning needs of teachers and students in the country, it was not being used in the secondary schools. What is challenging is the fact that teachers refused or failed to use the complete set of textbooks for O-Level

based sponsored by the ministry of education. This resistance is attributed to teachers having negative attitude.

Angura (2000) agrees with Kyeyune above that the attitudes of teachers towards sponsored instructional materials affect and shape those of their students and determine their interest in studies and performance in the long run. She also correctly reveals that, oftentimes, the teachers are unaware of the relevance of the sponsored instructional materials and thus stick to using traditional ones.

Statement of the Problem

In classroom situation, teachers would feel proud of using instructional materials designed and produced by themselves. The Aga Khan Education Service (AES) in Uganda provides already made instructional materials to some primary schools. Success in the use of sponsored educational programs is highly dependant on end- users' attitudes (Rugayah et al, 2004). Attitudes also influence learning and training and since teachers do play a key role in the school system, it is essential to examine their attitudes (Carrasco, 1996; Zubin et al., 2006).

Objectives

The study examined teachers' attitudes towards using sponsored instructional materials provided by AES. It was guided by the following objectives:

1. to establish teachers' attitudes towards the use of AES materials in relation to level of class taught.
2. to establish teachers' attitudes towards the use of AES materials in relation to size of classes
3. to establish teachers' attitudes towards the use of AES materials in relation to the nature subject (s) taught

Methodology

This study was a descriptive survey, based on qualitative research design. The design was adopted and used due to the fact that focus was on investigating the attitudes of the respondents. The qualitative design was deemed best because it allows respondents' free self-expression, hence access to collecting first hand data from the true perspective with a greater level of depth and detail (O'Neill, http://www.roboneill.co.uk/papers/research_methods.pdf). The intention was to capture users' opinions and to get the dynamics of the field of research. Given a small sample size, it was possible to probe deeply into the teachers' perceptions through this design.

Study Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

Study Population

This study was carried out in Uganda in selected government-aided primary schools that used instructional materials sponsored by Aga Khan Education Services. A list of primary schools using the AES instructional materials was obtained from the EUPEK office. There were fourteen schools by then. Out of these schools, five (5) primary schools were randomly selected/ picked. Slips of papers with each bearing the name of the school were folded and then five (5) schools were picked randomly out of all the fourteen.

Sample

The sample consisted of twenty five (25) participants that included five teachers from each school using instructional materials sponsored by AES. There were fourteen (14) primary schools under the EUPEK program. Five (5) primary schools were selected, contributing to 30% of the total number. This sample was based on a suggestion that in descriptive research, one can select from 10% and above of the accessible population, and that the main factor considered in determining the sample size is the need to keep it manageable enough (Warwick and Lininger, 1975). This enabled the researcher to derive from it detailed data at an affordable cost.

Sampling Technique

The study adopted a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was used since it involves the selection of samples based on a certain purpose in order to increase utility of the findings (Enon, 1998). It was the intention of this research to select both male and female teachers that were engaged and well versed with the AES sponsored instructional materials with the teaching experience of five years and more so as to document the true picture of the issue under study. Teachers who had been in the EUPEK aided schools for five years and more were selected. Such teachers were more knowledgeable, experienced and with ability to describe situations concerning AES sponsored materials fully. In all, twenty five (25) teachers were interviewed, five (5) from each of the selected schools to get detailed data from their different perspectives about the sponsored instructional materials; hence ensure the authenticity of the responses.

Details of the samples are evidenced in the tables I and 2 below. The twenty five teachers selected included both the male and the female. 10 (40%) were male teachers, while 15 (60%) were female.

Table 1 Respondents by gender

School	Male	Female
A	01 (04%)	04 (16%)
B	02 (08%)	03 (12%)
C	02 (08%)	03 (12%)
D	03 (12%)	02 (08%)
E	02 (08%)	03 (12%)
Total	10 (40%)	15 (60%)

According to years of teaching experiences, all the 25 (100%) teachers had a 5 years and above teaching experience, while none of them (00%) had teaching experience of five years and less as reflected in the table below.

Table 2 Respondents by years of teaching experiences

School	5 years and above	Below 5 years
A	05 (12%)	0 (00%)
B	05 (16%)	0 (00%)
C	05 (08%)	0 (00%)
D	05 (08%)	0 (00%)
E	05 (12%)	0 (00%)
Total	25 (100%)	0 (00%)

Research Instruments

In order to collect detailed data suitable for this qualitative descriptive survey, interviews were used for teachers. The instrument was designed by the researcher, tested and adjusted twice using a similar sample of the respondents in Kampala District. It was also discussed with researcher's academic colleagues for clarity and appropriateness of content. These measures were intended to ensure the validity of the instrument and reliability of responses.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was qualitative in nature, of course. The interview elicited verbal responses. The data was sorted out and then grouped into categories. The resulting different categories of responses were interpreted and used for the discussions from which the conclusions were drawn and recommendations made.

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The general objective of this study was to examine the attitudes of teachers towards using AES sponsored instructional materials and the extent to which the teachers utilize them in their day to day teaching. EUPEK operates in some government-aided primary schools of Uganda. A total of twenty five teachers were involved in the study. The study was guided by three research questions, which were as follows:

1. what are teachers' attitudes towards the use of AES materials in relation to the level of class taught?
2. what are teachers' attitudes towards the use of AES materials in relation to size of classes?
3. what are teachers' attitudes towards the use of AES materials in relation to the nature of subject (s) taught?

The interview protocols for the twenty five (25) teachers from the selected schools were used to collect data. The data collected was presented, analyzed and interpreted. The interview items used to collect data are indicated in appendix A.

Research Question One:

What are teachers' attitudes towards the AES materials in relation to the level of class?

The interview items to the above research question were:

1. Which AES Instructional materials do you commonly use in your class?
2. Comment on the suitability of these instructional materials in relation to the level of class you teach?

Responses from the teachers to the above items:

In the first case, teachers were asked to name the instructional materials commonly used in class. They mentioned models, diagrams, charts, word banks, activity cards, graphs, play boards and maps.

For the second interview item regarding the suitability of AES materials to levels of classes taught the comments of teachers on were as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 3: Teachers' attitudes towards the AES materials in relation to the level of class (n = 25).

Responses given	frequency	%
The materials match with the average age of my pupils	12	48
I enjoy using the AES materials since they are in line with my class syllabus	8	32
AES materials are relevant to my pupils' intellectual ability	3	12
I fear using them since do not cater for my class's exam needs	2	8
Total	25	100

As illustrated in Table 3 above, 12 (48%) of the teachers agreed that the materials do match with the average age of pupils in their classes. Another 8 (32%) said that they enjoy using the AES materials since they are in line with their class syllabus. 3 (12%) of the teachers said that the AES materials are relevant to their pupils' intellectual ability. The remaining 2 (8%) expressed fear in using the AES materials on the ground that they do not meet the exam

needs of their classes. The data above shows that majority of the teachers (92%) were in favor of the materials and hence have positive attitude.

Research Question Two:

What are the teachers' attitudes towards the AES materials in relation to size of classes?

Two items of the interview protocol used for obtaining responses to the above research question;

3. What is the size of your class?

4. How suitable are the AES materials in relation the size of your class?

The responses to item 3 showed that majority of the teachers were managing large classes, ranging between eighty (80) to one hundred twenty (120) pupils. Such sizes created limitations to effective use of materials. The responses of teachers in the forth interview item on the suitability of the AES instructional materials in relation to size of classes were as in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Teachers' Rating of the Suitability of the Instructional Materials in Relation to Size of Classes AES (n = 25)

Responses given	frequency	%
I like using them because they are enough to reach all pupils in a large class.	17	68
I enjoy using the materials since they are large, they are seen by every pupils in class	5	20
I fear using them since they consume a lot of time to use in especially for our large classes.	2	8
I fear using them since at times they are not enough for our large classes.	1	4
Total	25	100

The teachers' responses in the table above show that 22 (88%) of the teachers (in the first and second responses, i.e. 17 + 5) were in favor of the AES instructional materials. Of these, 17 (68%) liked using the AES instructional materials because they are enough to reach all pupils in large classes; while 5 (20%) enjoyed using these materials because they are large and can be seen by every pupils in class. Only 3 (12%) of the respondents (in the third and fourth responses, i.e. 2+ 1) expressed fear over using the materials on the ground that they are too time consuming and at times found not enough for use in large classes. The general impression here is that majority of the teachers' (88%) attitude towards the use of AES instructional materials is positive; though challenged by the difficulty of the hostile classroom environment, characterized by large numbers.

Research Question Three: what are teachers' attitudes towards the AES materials in relation the nature of subject the taught?

The interview items that addressed the above research question were;

5. Which subject(s) do you teach in your school?
6. How do you find the use of AES materials in relation to the subject(s) you are teaching?

The subjects taught by teachers were mainly four namely; English, Social studies, Science and Mathematics. In case of upper primary section, many teachers were teaching one subject, unlike the lower primary. The responses of the teachers on the sixth interview item are shown in the table below;

Table 5: Teachers' Responses on the Suitability of AES materials in relation to the nature of subject the taught. (n = 25)

Responses given	frequency	%
I like using them because they are in line with my subject objectives.	12	48
They are friendly since they ease the expression of some concepts in my subject.	8	32
They are good because they keep pupils active in my subject.	4	16
Some of them are not relevant for subjects like Mathematics	1	04
Total	25	100

As illustrated in Table 5 above, 12 (48%) of the teachers like using the AES materials and that they are in line with their subject objectives. Another 8 (32%) felt that the materials help them to express the details of some concepts in their subjects. 4 (16%), of the respondents especially from lower primary; felt that the materials were good because they keep their classes active. The remaining 1 (4%) of the respondents, teaching mathematics in primary five, six and seven, felt that there are some of the materials not relevant, hence a burden to their subject. The data above showed that majority of the teachers (96%) had a positive attitude and were in favor of the materials.

Discussion

The findings show that the most widely used materials include charts, diagrams, models activity cards and card games, almost all of which are used in the lower classes. This was in line with FEMSA (2000), Matiru (1995) and Kasambira (1993) studies noting that the key instructional materials in schools do include textbooks, reference books, handouts, models, charts, flow diagrams, maps, video and cassette tapes and systems.

Sponsored instructional materials play a key role in teaching; they are readily available and less costly to individual teachers and the schools. The

findings from the interviews showed that teachers generally had a positive attitude towards using the instructional materials sponsored by Aga Khan, with 93% of them expressing positive attitudes, with 7% having negative attitudes.

As noted in the AES Report (Aga Khan Education Service, 2000) teachers do express positive attitudes by using sponsored instructional materials. A wide range of sponsored instructional materials are usually adapted to the needs of pupils. Since AES materials are designed by experts, they have the following advantages:

- i) Stimulate meaningful communication, hence effective learning realized as a result of pupils employing a wide range of them;
- ii) Since designed and produced by AES personnel who are experts in pedagogy, they ensure that the materials are stimulating and motivating to pupils;
- iii) User friendly and stimulating; they are among the avenues of ensuring pupils' retention in UPE schools and hence making learning permanent;
- iv) Since many of the materials are locally produced, they cater for first hand experience with the realities of the pupils' social and physical environment; and
- v) The AES provides free training to all instructors in EUPEK schools on how to administer these instructional materials; hence realizing a common framework of experience on which learning can be developed among teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn basing on the three research objectives that guided the study:

1. The attitude of teachers towards the use of AES materials in relation to the level of class taught was generally positive with a few exceptions related with fear of not catering for some class's exam needs;
2. The teachers' attitudes towards AES materials in relation to size of classes was also good, though hampered by the difficulty of using them in large and congested UPE classes on the ground that they consume a lot of time to use and that at times at risk of not being enough to all pupils.
3. The teachers' attitudes towards the AES materials in relation the nature of subject the taught is also positive though some of them are said to be irrelevant for subjects like Mathematics. This was attributed to the need to drill pupils and pass highly in Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).

Recommendations

Basing on the discussion and conclusions made, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should recruit more teachers to eliminate the problem of congested classes which is frustrating the use of the AES instructional materials.
2. The AES should work closely with Kyambogo University and Primary Teachers' Colleges to improve the student teachers' interest in, and skills of using instructional materials. This would mean curriculum innovation in the teachers' colleges.
3. There is need to break the culture or practice of over-emphasizing examinations in the primary education sector, because this is affecting the teaching and learning methods and activities in schools negatively.
4. Teachers should be encouraged to produce their own materials to supplement those of the AES which are said not to be enough for our large classes.
5. Regular user-friendly monitoring and evaluation should be carried out by head teachers and other Education officials to assess how teachers of upper primary are fairing in the day-to-day utilization of instructional materials. Later there should be sensitization workshops conducted for teachers on the importance of using the instructional materials in schools.
6. The AES program should be extended to cover the private schools as well. This will help majority of teachers and pupils in the district to benefit from the AES.
7. Further research on AES such as community contribution, should be carried out other than about sponsored instructional materials.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

1. Which AES Instructional materials do you commonly use in your class?
2. Comment on the suitability of these instructional materials in relation to the level of class you teach?
3. What is the size of your class?
4. How suitable are the AES materials in relation the size of your class?
5. Which subject(s) do you teach in your school?
6. How do you find the use of AES materials in relation to the subject(s) you are teaching?