



Original Article

Administrators' Perception of Teacher-educators' Exhibition of Pedagogical Skills and Implementation of Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Primary Teachers' Colleges in Eastern Uganda

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The major intention of this study was to assess the perception of college administrators on the extent to which Teacher-educators exhibit the required pedagogical Skills to be emulated by their trainees to the expectations of the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda. The authors of this paper were motivated by the notion that Teacher-educators ought to exhibit desirable pedagogical Skills as a mentorship strategy to their trainees. There is a persistent public outcry about the pseudo-trained graduates from Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs) in Uganda. The objectives of this study were threefold, namely: (1) identify the pedagogical Skills stipulated in the ECE curriculum for teacher trainees in PTCs; (2) establish the extent to which teacher-educators facilitate their trainees to acquire the required pedagogical Skills in the ECE curriculum; and (3) find out the challenges associated with Teacher-educators' competencies to exhibit pedagogical Skills in PTCs in Eastern Uganda. A phenomenology research design was adopted with a qualitative approach. Thirty-eight informant interviews and nineteen focus group discussion schedules were conducted with participants who included; Principals, Deputy Principals, the Director of Studies and an ECE Official from Kyambogo University. The key findings indicated that the Primary Teacher Education (PTE) curriculum of 2012 stipulates pedagogical Skills to be exhibited by Teacher-educators to their trainees; however, teacher-educators experienced the inability to exhibit desirable pedagogical Skills for their trainees to emulate. It was difficult for the Teacher-educators to offer what they never possessed. The greatest challenge reported by the majority of the participants was inadequate funding and yet ECE is a practical learning area and limited access to opportunities for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses for capacity building was yet another concern. It was therefore, recommended that Teacher-educators be trained to acquire desirable competencies in exhibiting pedagogical Skills so as to mentor and support their trainees. If the quality of teacher education is to be realised as expected, Teacher-educators' CPDs on pedagogical Skills are crucial. Trainees are

expected to tap into the vast experience of their Teacher-educators through mentorship as emphasised by the Vygotsky social-cultural theory.

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INTRODUCTION

In Uganda, despite the various initiatives and curricular interventions, teacher quality issues continue to persist as a public outcry (Mirembe et al., 2017; Ejuu et al., 2019). A case in point is that the majority of the children taught by the ECE graduates from PTCs are many times reported as failing to realise their readiness to break through into meaningful literacy (Uwezo Assessment Report, 2016 as in Wambi, 2020). Some researchers claim that Teacher-educators who train student-teachers in Primary Teachers' Colleges are stuck to traditional methods of teaching (Kagoda & Ezati, 2013; Muchanje, 2015). What makes matters worse is that Early Childhood Development (ECD) is to a great extent still under the control of the private sector in Uganda, most especially at the pre-primary level. In this study, Early Childhood Development (ECD) was treated as a component of Early Childhood Education (ECE).

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Teacher Education in Uganda

Currently, ECD in Uganda is among the key strategies for the implementation of the Education for [National] Development 2030 Agenda (Kisamba, 2015). As a result, the Government of the Republic of Uganda is working hand-in-hand with a large number of Education Development Partners through the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), e.g., the Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project (UTSEP) under the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), School Health and Reading Programme (SHRP) under Research Institute Triangle (RTI), Community Child Care Programme (CCCP), Quality Education Initiative (QEI) and many others to ensure improved Early Grade Reading (CEECD, 2013) Consequently, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in conjunction with MoES, managed to develop a National Learning Framework for ECD in Uganda with well-graded learning content and concepts which are age-group-specific (NCDC, 2005). As a result, PTCs in collaboration with the support of development partners in Education under the mandate of MoES, are currently training ECD

Caregivers at both Certificate and Diploma levels to ensure the availability of trained human resources. Interestingly, Kyambogo University and Makerere University have introduced ECD courses at both undergraduate and master's levels.

In this study, the researchers' focus was on the teacher-educator exhibition of pedagogical Skills to be emulated by teacher trainees who would consequently scaffold multisensory skills among learners to support them in realising their full potential in attaining meaningful learning. However, according to Allison and Tharby (2015), the majority of the teacher trainees have always failed to apply the desirable six pedagogical principles to enhance their ability to teach literacy which is the 'engine' of ECD. The six pedagogical principles include the following: challenge, explanation, modelling, deliberate practice, questioning, and feedback.

The problem identified therefore, is that there is a public outcry in Ugandan schools about the weak foundation of learners in schools highly attributed to the nature of teacher trainees who graduate from teacher training institutions every year. Unfortunately, teacher quality concerns are on the increase (Mirembe et al., 2017). On that note, if Teacher-educators fail to exhibit pedagogical Skills to a desirable level to facilitate their trainees to acquire the required competencies to interpret and navigate through the ECE curriculum to the expectations, children's breakthrough to meaningful literacy may remain an uphill task.

Background

Historically, Early Childhood Education (ECE) emerged as a field of study in European countries with intentions to boost literacy rates to cater for learning readiness and the future success of children (Eddy & Matthew, 2016). Elkind (2010) associates the initial curriculum and methodology of ECE with great Educators like Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, and Dewey. ECE consequently resulted in Kindergartens and Daycare centres in Europe and

North America (Marope & Kaga, 2015). In Africa, it is mainly South Africa where ECE is faring quite well, but Tunisia, DRC and Uganda face a lot of implementation challenges (Unicef, 2015; Ejuu, Serpell & Apolot, 2019). Uganda Developed a policy on ECD in 2007, but it is also still undergoing review to take care of Parenting, Early Childhood Development-Community Child Care, and Education (ECD-CCCE) etc. Kyambogo University in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports reviewed the ECE curriculum for primary teacher education in Uganda to improve teacher quality through the enhancement of teacher preparation and pedagogy with emphasis on hands-on learning (MoES, 2012).

However, In Uganda, UNESCO Report (2012) shows that for several years, the private sector has been managing ECE fully until 1980 when the government made a strategy and the preschool programme for 3–5-year-olds was recommended to be run by MoES while the responsibility for 0–3-year-old children was assigned to parents (Elkind, 2010). In 1993, an ECE policy emerged in response to the Education Policy Review Commission Report which found lack of government control of quality, curriculum, pedagogy, facilities, and age of entry (EFA Assessment Report, 2000). The Report set out recommendations and the government committed itself to supporting a holistic model of ECE as a foundation for basic Education and the right of every child. The goal is to improve existing institutions for 0–1-year-olds, kindergartens for 1–2-year-olds, and nurseries for 3–5-year-olds which later served as the contents of the new Uganda National ECE curriculum implementation (Kamerman, 2006). Since Uganda's plan is to promote the implementation of ECE and ECD across different levels of Education, this study was specifically conducted in PTCs, where ECE specialists and caregivers are trained from.

Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs) in Eastern Uganda

In the context of this study, Primary Teachers' Colleges refer to institutions mothered by Kyambogo University to train Grade III teachers who eventually qualify with a teachers' certificate to teach in primary schools and ECD Centres. Those categorical institutions have been chosen over others because it is where the ECE curriculum implementation is done with set Skills and clear goals/objectives unlike in universities and other institutions of higher learning. This study was conducted in Eastern Uganda, covering Busoga, Bukedi, Teso, Sebbei, and Karamoja regions and by then, there were 19 PTCs, of which 13 were government aided and 6 were privately owned. The researchers considered PTCs which were affiliated to Kyambogo University because they possessed the official registration numbers which mandated them to train teacher trainees whose certificates were recognised by the Ministry of Education and other education partners. The study was constructed on a realisation that the majority of the ECE Teacher-educators in Eastern Uganda were trained many years ago before 2012 when Kyambogo University introduced the new ECE curriculum. The implication is that they lack adequate professional training and yet, the PTCs in which they operate lack appropriate reference materials for ECE implementation. On that note, therefore, with the ongoing graduation of teacher trainees who can barely prepare pupils to acquire functional skills, teacher-educators' pedagogical competencies have become a reference point, and till the problem is tackled by the PTCs, it cannot be pondered upon as an aftermath of teacher trainees' graduation (Wambi, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

For purposes of strengthening this study, the literature of relevant previous studies was reviewed as indicated in the subsequent paragraphs. However, before getting deep into the related literature, a need was realised to underpin this study; therefore, the

critical pedagogy theory was adopted given its relevance with the concepts of implementing the ECE curriculum.

Critical Pedagogy theory by Paulo Freire (1968)

The theory of Critical Pedagogy was found appropriate to this study because it encourages student-centred-learning which is one of the core pillars of hands-on-learning, the central focus of ECE curriculum implementation

The Critical Pedagogy theory was adopted to provide a sense of direction to this study and as a result. Therefore, a lot of lessons were drawn from the areas of relevance, as observed by Salmani and Pashapour (2016) and Arnold (2020) regarding the importance of Critical Pedagogy theory in teacher education, curriculum and training based on the following:

- The power of learning is distributed amongst groups of students. Students learn from one another and make use of the conducive platform provided by their teachers [Teacher-educators] and peers to share experiences widely.
- Teachers become facilitators of students' inquiry and problem-solving.
- Students are encouraged to acquire the freedom and ability to become self-directed.
- Critical pedagogy is a source of continuous reflective practice.
- Students and teachers share ideas and solutions.
- The critical pedagogy theory supports and encourages dialogue which builds confidence.
- The critical pedagogy theory encourages the application of theory into practice.
- The (CP) theory positions teachers to remain learners alongside their students and experts beyond their field of knowledge.

In terms of literature review, Wambi (2020) makes reference to the revised Primary Teacher Education (PTE) Curriculum of 2012 in which a variety of Pedagogical Skills to be acquired through various approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques of teaching are discussed and highlighted but not limited to eclectic, phonic, oral drill, listen and say, I do, we do and you do, situational games, panel discussion, expert interviews, dialogue, demonstration, guided discovery, look and say, substitution, storytelling, think-pair-share, round robin, role-playing and dramatisation (MoES, 2012). In applying those approaches and methods, strategies and techniques, Pedagogical Skills are supposed to be carefully put into consideration and they include; joint productive activity (JPA) whereby learning occurs most effectively when experts [Teacher-educators] and novices [Trainees] work together for a common product or goal, and are therefore, motivated to assist one another. Language and Literacy Development (LLD) has focused on activities like talking, singing, reading, storytelling, drawing and writing. Meaning Making (MM) is intended to enhance reading and writing. Complex Thinking (CT) focuses on the enhancement of continuous development of desirable competencies, and Instructional Conversation (IC); is intended to enrich the involvement and full participation of all learners in a learning situation (Goldsmith, 2013, Allison & Tharby, 2015). The summary discussion of the previous researchers who investigated pedagogical skills exerts that when pedagogical Skills are well exhibited by the trainers [Teacher-educators], the teacher-trainee is always consequently able to facilitate the children in the acquisition and development of desirable competencies which among others include the following as stipulated in the Primary School Curriculum; Scope & Sequence (MoES, 2006):

- Identifying letter names and sounds in both English Language and local /area language.

- Telling and retelling stories ranging from simple to complex.
- Listening, speaking, comprehension, reading, writing, and interpreting.
- Reporting events, situations, and happenings appropriately.
- Constructing sentences with a focus on clear audibility, voice variation, articulation, fluency, tone, confidence, etc.
- Singing/singing songs, telling riddles, proverbs, reciting rhymes, jingles, tongue-twisters, poems, lullabies, etc.
- Responding to commands and instructions appropriately.
- Talking about self, using both verbal and non-verbal gestures (eye contact, facial expression and movement)
- Identifying, classifying, ordering, sorting, sequencing, describing, and naming; things/events/places and people.
- Telling similarities and differences, arranging, re-arranging, pairing, increasing and reducing things, making number patterns, etc.
- Matching, cutting, pasting, naming shapes, tracing, fitting jigsaws, etc.
- Conceptualising numbers, money, measurements, fractions, time, algebra, space, graphs etc.

Basing on the related information obtained from the previous studies, the only gap for this study to fill is whether administrators in teacher training institutions have a proper perception of how teacher educators exhibit pedagogical skills as required for proper implementation of the ECE curriculum.

In another development, at the pre-primary school level in Uganda, a great deal of pedagogical Skills are stipulated in the Learning Framework for Early Childhood (3-6 Years); The production of the

Learning Framework for Early Childhood by National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) is a major breakthrough for ECD in particular and ECE in general as well as a great encouragement for all stakeholders committed to the education sector. The framework is anchored on outcomes and it is competence-based. It focuses on results rather than goals, aims and objectives; it greatly emphasises observable and measurable skills, competencies, life skills and values to be acquired by learners (Carleton, 2016). The only gap however, is that the role of administrators in teacher training institutions and their perception of how teacher educators exhibit their pedagogical skills to their trainees for positive mentorship and modelling is not well-reflected.

In addition, by National Standards, the Learning Framework was designed to allow every Ugandan child to enjoy the right to development, whether at home or in a formal or semi-formal preschool setting. For effective implementation, the framework was translated into Kiswahili and 16 other local languages, namely: Runyankole/Rukiga; Runyoro/Rutoro; Alur; Leb-Acholi; Ngakarimojongo; Ateso; Leb-Lango; Dhopadhola; Lubwisi; Lukonzo; Luganda; Lugbarati; Kumam; Lusoga; Pokot; Leb-thu (Botta, 2009). In view of pedagogical Skills, the inclusion of the highlighted local languages demonstrates the position of language as a powerful tool in pedagogy for content delivery. The only gap however, is that there is no adequate available information on how administrators in teacher training institutions support the teacher educators to exhibit pedagogical skills to their trainees for the effective implementation of the ECE curriculum.

From a positive point of view, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports developed a Caregivers' Guide to the Learning Framework (3-6 Years); This Guide provides guidance on how to assess the child, record the progress, and report to those who need the

progress reports on the child. This allows for regular monitoring of individual learners' progress, diagnosis of learning difficulties and providing necessary assistance (MoES, 2012). The Caregiver's Guide also provides information on the teaching and learning experiences that enhance the holistic development of a child. Emphasis is on learner-centeredness and provides for increased learner-teacher contact time, offering assistance to different ability groups and use of familiar language for initial literacy. Care should be taken in handling children at this stage because any mistake made may have a lasting impact and bearing on the learner. All stakeholders should play their role in ensuring proper childhood development (Carleton, 2016). Nevertheless, the role of administrators in teacher training institutions and how they support the teacher educators in their institutions to do proper modelling is not well articulated.

In another development, one response to educational reform initiatives has been the utilisation of professional development programmes designed to introduce teachers to new or alternative curricula for implementation in the classroom. As a result, teachers are often exposed to an innovative pedagogic intervention and subsequently expected to implement the intervention with little consideration for their viewpoints or for the operative classroom context (Kai, 2009). The intention of a qualitative approach to this study considers the influence of early childhood education teachers' beliefs and competencies on classroom practice, especially in relation to their willingness to implement a practical curriculum in their classroom (Botta, 2009). For that matter, therefore, practicality is a pedagogical skill. However, there is no available adequate information that reports on how teacher educators in teacher training institutions mentor their trainees for the effective implementation of the ECE curriculum with emphasis on practicability.

From the perspective of implementing the ECE curriculum and exhibition of pedagogical Skills

with a focus on 21st-century education, Seidman et al. (2018) share some relevant experiences that the education delivery system has a substantial impact on the way in which 21st-century skills develop in learners. Pedagogy, curriculum, school rules and climate, assessments, and benchmarking skill acquisition are all key factors in the way 21st-century skills develop and are monitored. Nevertheless, the classroom is the primary environment where the aforementioned factors culminate to bring knowledge acquisition and skills development. On that note, therefore, there is no adequate available information that the researcher has come across to indicate the efforts of teacher educators in a deliberate struggle to promote the 21st century skills to their trainees, particularly on the promotion of effective implementation of the ECE curriculum.

Furthermore, the classroom is the space where learners observe the modelling of these skills by their teachers [teacher-educators] and can practice themselves. Therefore, it is equally important to prepare and train teachers in not only the acquisition of 21st-century skills but also the dissemination of these skills. Measuring the classroom processes and teacher practices that are enabling and supportive of the development of 21st-century skills in the classroom can serve as an essential step in the right direction. According to Seidman, therefore, Teacher-educators should not only endeavour to exhibit pedagogical Skills to their trainees as a curriculum requirement but also do it in view of the 21st century skills.

Unfortunately, available literature indicates specific components of the ECE framework that teacher-educators in colleges find challenging to implement. The majority of the Teacher-educators reported that not all of them in their colleges were appropriately qualified to teach all the learning areas as specified in the training framework. They also do not have adequate, relevant reference books or instructional materials, and their colleges were still experiencing inadequate human resources, most especially those

that were privately owned (Merill & Melanie, 2013).

At the institutional level, most colleges are started by individuals and, therefore, run as a family business; thus, changing this set-up to encourage them open and network with other stakeholders as demanded by the framework is yet still a challenge. In addition, many such private colleges operate in personal homes; others operate within other institutional premises, while the rest operate in different premises every semester or term. In other words, they are mobile. If the MoES is to strictly enforce Skills as specified in the framework, some of the colleges in which this study was conducted will face closure (Baker et al., 2008 & Wambi, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A phenomenology research design was adopted with a qualitative approach to this study. Thirty-six informant interview sessions and twelve focus group discussion schedules were conducted with participants who included; Principals, Deputy Principals, an ECE Officer from Kyambogo University and the Director of Studies in PTCs in Eastern Uganda. In addition, ten (10) participant classroom observation sessions were conducted with Teacher-educators of ECE for purposes of cross-validation of data. In addition, for purposes of anonymity, the Primary Teachers' Colleges under study in Eastern Uganda were not identified in this document by their real names but were identified using alphabetical letters, i.e., from A to S.

Study Area

The study was conducted in thirteen (13) Government Aided and six (06) privately owned Primary Teachers' Colleges in Eastern Uganda. This geographical scope attracted the researchers on the grounds that Eastern Uganda had a reasonably big number of very old public PTCs and the greatest number of privately owned PTCs with a relatively

high enrolment as compared to the rest of the country by the time this study was carried out.

Study Target Population

The study targeted 19 Principals, 19 Deputy Principals, 19 directors of Studies, 38 tutors of ECE in PTCs under study and 01 ECE Official from Kyambogo University.

Sample Size

By the fact that the researchers' cardinal aim was to specifically obtain the required data from college administrators, a sample of 58 participants was finally taken and used as the key participants for the study.

Sampling Techniques

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select Principals, Deputy Principals, Directors of Studies, and an Official from Kyambogo University as participants for the study. The reason for the highlighted participants was that the categories selected were the custodians of standards who make up the group of top administrators in the PTCs under study. In addition, the officer from Kyambogo University was selected from the Department responsible for training teacher-educator trainees specialising in ECE.

Tools of Data Collection

The researchers organised all the 19 Directors of studies from the 19 PTCs for a focus group discussion on Zoom in recording. The researchers first obtained the consent of all participants to allow the recording of the focus group discussion on Zoom to be done, and it was so as requested. In addition, a document analysis guide was also employed as a data collection tool to obtain relevant data from the Primary Teacher Education (PTE) documents which included the ECE syllabus.

In this study, 38 informant interview sessions were conducted with Principals, Deputy Principals across all the PTCs under study in Eastern Uganda and 1

Officer from Kyambogo University. Those highlighted participants were in charge of the PTCs under study as the topmost administrators and the officer of ECE from Kyambogo University represented their mother training institution for the teacher-educators. They were engaged in those informant interviews to generate relevant opinions, perceptions, ideas, views, and experiences about the topic under investigation. This was deemed the most suitable method to obtain data from participants who were heavily preoccupied and had no time for other alternative tools that would be time-consuming in nature.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Qualitative research findings were presented and analysed qualitatively under relevant themes and sub-themes and reported in verbatim form backed up with quotations of participants for the authenticity of the information. The nature of the identified problem required describing the situation as it existed in the area of study.

Ethical Considerations

The main ethical issues considered included deception, informed consent, and privacy. Confidentiality was, therefore, taken into account to protect individual respondents' and participants' images since some of the issues pertained to the security of their work. Respect and dignity were accorded while setting the focus discussion guide and the interview protocol. Thus, all respondents were given equal treatment to enable each of them to either withdraw at any stage or participate willingly in the study.

RESULTS

Planning for Teaching and Learning in PTCs by Teacher-educators

Views of the Principals

In an initiative to obtain responses, the researchers prompted the participants to explain the instructional methods commonly employed by their

Teacher-educators in the implementation of the ECE curriculum

In an effort to find out the extent to which Teacher-educators exhibited their pedagogical Skills to their trainees, the researchers employed items in the research protocol to prompt the participants to generate the required responses. In one of the informant interview sessions held with Principals and Deputy Principals, storytelling, demonstration, and role play were identified as the most common methods employed by their Teacher-educators during the teaching of ECE as a subject in PTCs in order to exhibit teamwork, confidence, innovativeness, technological skills, effective communication skills, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills among their trainees. In further interactions between the researcher and the participants, one of the principals asserted as quoted;

...currently, the most commonly applied methods of teaching by Teacher-educators of ECE are those that are learner-centred and participatory in nature. The reason for Teacher-educators to employ learner-centred methods of teaching is that teacher-trainees always copy from their mentors who are automatically the Teacher-educators of ECE. It is almost impossible to assume that when the student teachers qualify with gaps, may make a big improvement in the application of participatory methods of teaching out there in the field if they missed a proper dosage during their training... (Informant interview session with a principal of college F in Eastern Uganda, September 2018).

Based on the assertions of the interviewee, the researchers were attracted to go ahead and observe some lessons of ECE in the same institution. With the help of the Direct Observation Guide, the researchers became participant observers and for all three lessons of ECE, which were conducted by Teacher-educators, in PTC F, the brainstorming method was the most frequently employed and

demonstration was the least used. There was, therefore, a mismatch between the information provided by the college administrator (Principal) and what the researchers directly observed in the lessons which were conducted by the Teacher-educators of ECE within the same college, a situation which left a lot of questions to be desired. The perception of the researchers was that some college administrators did not closely supervise Teacher-educators' lessons, but they just assumed what was happening in the classrooms hypothetically.

The researchers still deemed it necessary to cross-validate data using different tools. As a result, the researchers as participant observers, continued to engage with the Direct Observation Guide in other PTCs under study. The following areas of concern regarding pedagogical Skills with a focus on Language and Literacy Development, Complex Thinking, Joint Productive activity and Instructional Conversation were investigated according to individual teacher-educator instructional sessions and they included; conducting lessons using learner-centred methodologies to promote teamwork, creativity, and innovativeness, critical thinking, effective communication skills through pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and technological content knowledge. Finally, the majority of the Teacher-educators whose lessons were observed employed teacher-centred more than learner-centred methodologies. In terms of pedagogical Skills, a few were exhibited in the form of taking care of individual needs, use of verbal and non-verbal gestures, instructional materials development, usage, and storage but the Skills that are technologically related were not exhibited to a greater extent. The perception of the researchers was that pedagogical Skills among Teacher-educators of ECE are still wanting in view of 21st century education.

Views of the Deputy Principals

In further proceedings, the researchers continued to assess the experience of Deputy Principals on Teacher-educators' exhibition of pedagogical Skills required in the implementation of the ECE curriculum. The guiding informant interview question, which was posed to the participants (Deputy Principals) was to provide views on (a) how Teacher-educators handled ECE curriculum content during their day-to-day teaching. In response, contradicting views were provided by the participants in that almost one-half of them observed that Teacher-educators of ECE in their colleges cross-referenced and integrated curriculum content in the Kyambogo University documents with real life-situations, concrete examples and teacher-trainees experiences. However, the other half of the participants expressed a deep disappointment in their teacher-educators of ECE being theoretical, lacking practical examples, and doing a great deal of transferring information from Kyambogo University Modules and other textbooks directly to the teacher trainees in a theoretical manner. The impression of the researchers was that whereas some College Administrators seemed to be in the know of what goes on in class with Teacher-educators of ECE and the teacher trainees, some Principals (Deputy Principals) banked on assumptions. This situation leaves a lot of questions to be desired.

During other different subsequent informant interview sessions, the researchers engaged individual Principals and Deputy Principals to provide their views on the nature of preparation that their Teacher-educators of ECE undergo and what they may need so as to get well equipped with effective ECE curriculum implementation in the PTCs under study. Among the most frequently shared views, Principals and Deputy Principals observed that; material development skills, display skills, handwriting/ printing skills, drawing skills, reading skills, effective listening skills, speaking skills, critical thinking skills, creative thinking

skills, and ability to employ learner-centred pedagogy which make the instructional process 'fun' and interactive were crucial to package a Teacher-Educator of ECE with, most especially in the 21st-century education. The participants continued to observe that through such arrangements, creativity, innovativeness, teamwork, networking, and effective communication skills could be heavily enriched in the teacher-educators' and teacher-trainees' pedagogical skills.

In the researchers' further engagement with the college administrators (Principals & Deputy Principals) over the nature of the current Teacher-educators existing in the PTCs under study, one of the Deputy Principals in charge of the pre-service programme (*Deputy Principal from college H*) commented during one of the informant interview sessions as quoted:

... it is seemingly becoming very difficult for Primary Teachers' Colleges to produce well-equipped and practical teacher trainees because of the nature of their Teacher-educators in terms of failure to model their trainees in a number of areas [skills] across the ECE curriculum. ECE by nature requires a very practical teacher-educator, lively, active, with effective communication skills, highly creative, self-motivated, and very inspiring, but the majority of the Teacher-educators of ECE we have are short of such Skills... (Informant interview session with a Deputy Principal from College H in Eastern Uganda, September 2018)

Divergently, few, in fact, the minority of the principals reported that the nature of the preparation of their Teacher-educators of ECE was done effectively by Kyambogo University (where Teacher-educators are traditionally trained from). That the Teacher-educators of ECE in their PTCs were able to exhibit pedagogical Skills of practical teaching by use of participatory methods, engage teacher trainees in instructional material development, display assessment skills, class

management skills, and feedback to the teacher trainee-specialists in ECE. The researcher wondered at the contradicting views of the college administrators regarding the pedagogical Skills exhibited by their Teacher-educators to the trainees. According to the perception of the researchers, it is possible that whereas some administrators volunteered genuine views, others were just defensive for reasons well known to them.

Consequently, the researchers based on the information provided by the College Administrators during the various informant interview sessions and the direct observation guide to further cross-validate data using the document analysis guide. The intention was to establish whether the practical skills which Teacher-educators were emphasising in the PTCs under study were in congruence with those recommended in the ECE syllabus (MoES, 2012). Coincidentally, the researchers discovered that the same skills such as instructional material development using low/no cost resources, exhibition skills, display skills, writing/printing skills, problem-solving skills, creative thinking skills, manipulative and effective communication skills were highly recommended in the ECE syllabus of 2012.

In further findings, the ECE syllabus copies which were found in the colleges under study were strictly accessible to Teacher-educators of ECE not to the teacher trainees who were specialising in ECE, except in only two colleges; (J and K) PTCs in Eastern Uganda. In terms of other ECE support reading materials, the modules containing content to be covered in the teacher trainees' first year of study were available in the ratio of 4:1, but there was no single module of ECE covering work in their second year of study across all the PTCs under study in Eastern Uganda by the time this study was conducted. In further analysis of the findings, the content of ECE in the available documents was well graded, clear, rich, and suitable but required teacher-educators/teacher trainees' competence to integrate it with real-life situations and practical

experiences which could mainly be brought out through meaningful technological and pedagogical means.

Views of the ECE Officer at Kyambogo University

In further proceedings, the researchers continued to find out the opinion of an officer of ECE at Kyambogo University as regards Teacher-educators' exhibition of pedagogical Skills required in the implementation of the ECE curriculum. The guiding informant interview question which was posed to the participant was to provide views on how teacher-educators on-course [tutor-trainees] were prepared by Kyambogo University to exhibit the required pedagogical Skills in the implementation of the ECE curriculum. In response, the participant stated as quoted:

... tutor-trainees [teacher educators on course] of ECE are always prepared during their training at Kyambogo University to exhibit creativity, innovativeness, teamwork, networking, problem-solving and effective communication skills in both English Language and a local/area language. In addition, the tutor-trainees are also required to exhibit technological competencies of material development and use, ranging from those that are made out of local resources from the environment to those that are sophisticated or commercially purchased materials but with much emphasis on improvisation (informant interview session with an Officer of ECE from Kyambogo University, September 2018)

Following the views of the ECE Officer from Kyambogo University, where Teacher-educators are always trained from (mother institution), the impression was that the training background was good. Nevertheless, the researchers wondered whether the Teacher-educators' training was good, but implementation was the problem, or if the environment under which teacher-educators worked could not facilitate them to exhibit pedagogical Skills for their students to emulate!

Overall, informant interview sessions with participants who shared their views and opinions about the extent to which Teacher-educators exhibited pedagogical Skills during ECE curriculum implementation, further probing was done by the researchers to dig deep inside about other Teacher-educators' exhibition of pedagogical skills, which included; sense of humour, effective body language, (movement, eye contact, with-it-ness, and facial expression) among others. However, verbal skills, voice variations and practicality were still wanting. The perception of the researchers was that the results did not align well with the principle of Vygotsky's social-cultural theory which emphasises the aspect of modelling, scaffolding and mentorship, thereby strengthening the relevance of the theory to underpin the problem under investigation in this study (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Teacher-educators' Pedagogical interaction with their trainees in ECE classes

Observations of the Directors of Studies in the PTCs under study

The majority of the participants (Directors of Studies) viewed that Teacher-educators of ECE managed to exhibit pedagogical Skills in areas of instructional materials development (*mainly 2 Dimensional*), made displays, provided positive feedback to their learners, exhibited class management skills (*positive tutor-learner relationship*) and Assessment skills (*mainly 'pen & paper'*). The participants went ahead to observe that if ECE curriculum implementation was to measure the Skills of 21st century education, then, Teacher-educators ought to be well equipped with practical skills which would enable them to exhibit all the pedagogical Skills in aspects such as designing joint productive activities for teacher trainees, facilitating language development skills for effective communication, re-contextualisation of the existing pedagogy, enforce complex thinking skills by subjecting challenging tasks to teacher trainees and initiate interactive/collaborative learning. The

perception of the researchers was that results never aligned well with the principle of Vygotsky's social-cultural theory regarding mentorship. The opinion of the researchers is that the trainees were supposed to copy the desirable pedagogical Skills from their trainers/educators and yet, the educators were also not able to offer what they did not possess! The concept of mentorship was almost absent across the PTCs which were used for this study. In the process of probing so as to generate and obtain more views from the Directors of Studies, one of them made an observation during the recorded Zoom focus group discussion as quoted:

...among the issues which are so much hurting is that the ECE curriculum was designed with high hopes to prepare and produce high-quality teachers of lower primary (Primary one to Primary three). The major reason was to save struggling learners who had been reported by many researchers (Uwezo, 2016 & NAPE Report, 2017) that children in those lower primary classes had for a very long time failed to acquire their readiness to have a breakthrough to meaningful literacy and realise their full potential. Unfortunately, the efforts of Kyambogo University in conjunction with MoES regarding curriculum review may seemingly end up being futile! (Informant interviews with a Director of Studies from College B, September 2018)

Based on the foregoing statement in the quotation indicates that the preparation of Teacher-educators is not meeting the desired expectations of those who designed the ECE curriculum, particularly as regards adequate training of teacher trainees' competencies to facilitate their learners in the acquisition of literacy skills. The issue of low literacy skills among learners of lower primary classes (P.1-P.3) has remained a public outcry, and it is to a great extent attributed to Teacher-educators' failure to exhibit the desired pedagogical Skills for their trainees to emulate.

Challenges experienced by PTCs in modelling their teacher-trainees in ECE:

Views of the Directors of Studies

The researchers posed a guiding question to the Directors of Studies about the challenges associated with the exhibition of pedagogical Skills in the PTCs under study in Eastern Uganda. In response, the majority of the participants reported the challenge of difficulty in using the local language as the language of instruction in the lower primary classes (P.1-P.3). Other challenges which were highlighted included: inadequate instructional materials, inadequate ECE (teacher-educator) specialists, inadequate access to Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) in the form of workshops, seminars, conferences, and in-service training on carefully selected courses which would build Teacher-educators' capacity to improve their efficacy. In one of the record Zoom focus discussions, a Director of Studies from PTC H observed as quoted:

... other challenges may be easy to deal with, but the issue of inadequate proficiency in using the local language as the language of instruction is an uphill task for some of our teacher-educators who lack background training in the local language. In most cases, they try, but the majority of the trainees also possess inadequate experience in using the local language, most especially in writing the correct grammar according to the right orthography. What makes matters worse is that at the college level, there is language pluralism (multilingualism) and serious cultural diversity, all of which make literacy skills development in the local language yet a serious challenge (focus group discussion recorded session with Directors of Studies on zoom in Eastern Uganda, September 2018).

Following the views of the Directors of Studies in the quotation, it was clearly reported that the issue of literacy development in the local language as the

language of instruction (LoI) is still a serious challenge. In the researchers' views, it may not necessarily require a teacher-educator to speak many languages so as to facilitate learners in the development of literacy in the local language, but training is crucial in how to support learners to realise the required readiness to have a breakthrough to meaningful literacy.

Views from Deputy Principals

The researchers conducted a total of nineteen informant interview sessions with Deputy Principals across the PTCs under study in Eastern Uganda. Major issues were mainly centred on challenges associated with the exhibition of pedagogical Skills by teacher-educators in the PTCs under study. Much focus was put on areas which included joint productive activity (JPA), whereby learning occurs most effectively when experts and novices work together for a common product or goal and are therefore, motivated to assist one another. Language and Literacy Development (LLD) which has a focus on activities like talking, singing, reading, storytelling, drawing and writing. Meaning Making (MM) is intended to enhance reading and writing. In summary, the majority of the Deputy Principals reported serious gaps in mentorship initiatives with their experts (teacher-educators) who generally had no sufficient time with the trainees. Other gaps reported by the majority of the Deputy Principals included challenges in handling language and literacy development among learners of lower primary classes (P.1-P.3) and the least reported challenge was their incompetence in instructional development and use. In the subsequent informant interview sessions with Principals, the Principal of College C stated as quoted:

... for purposes of proper role modelling, our trainees surely need a lot of time with their mentors (Teacher-educators of ECE). Unfortunately, the opportunity for our trainees to work closely with their Teacher-educators is very minimal as they keep claiming to be busy!

In addition to facing the challenge of inadequate staff, the time for close interaction between the mentors (teacher-educators) and their mentees (trainees) is always reported to be insufficient! (Informant interview session with a Principal in PTC C in Eastern Uganda, September 2018).

Following the views of the principals which were similar to those of the Deputy Principals regarding challenges associated with the exhibition of pedagogical skills by teacher-educators of ECE, the researchers discovered that the idea of modelling as advocated by Vygotsky's Social-Cultural Learning theory which was adopted to underpin this study is really still wanting among teacher-educators in PTCs in Eastern Uganda!

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The extent to which Teacher-educators exhibited pedagogical Skills to their teacher-trainees in the implementation of the ECE Curriculum was established using qualitative results. The study established that instructional material development skills but mainly of 2 Dimensions, assessment but mainly of 'pen and paper', use of reinforcement, verbal and non-verbal cues were exhibited by Teacher-educators of ECE to some extent in the PTCs under study. Among the most frequently shared views, Principals and Deputy Principals observed that; material development skills, display skills, handwriting/ printing skills, drawing skills, reading skills, effective listening skills, speaking skills and the ability to employ learner-centred methods of teaching which make the instructional process 'fun' were crucial in the package a teacher-educator of ECE ought to exhibit to the trainees. To the researchers, the highlighted aspects are in total agreement with the views which form the heartbeat of Vygotsky's social-cultural theory which was employed to underpin this study, thereby strengthening its relevancy to this study (Berk & Winsler, 1995). In addition, by standard, the majority of the Teacher-educators of ECE exhibited some technical skills in the development of

instructional materials made out of resources from the local environment, for example, balls, ropes, hoops, puppets, beads, counters, and pictures developed from cut-outs for use in the teaching and learning process. On that note, therefore, these results would have aligned very well with the concept of Mishra and Koehler (2006) regarding TPACK only that in this study, much emphasis was on 2 Dimensional instructional materials, thereby getting closer to the 21st century education is still an uphill task.

In terms of pedagogical Skills, the majority of the participants (College Administrators) reported on their Teacher-educators' being quite well grounded in hands-on-learning by use of participatory methodologies, knowledge of thematic curriculum implementation (Primary school curriculum of P.1 to P.3), continuous assessment implementation, implementation of life skills/values and functional literacy for life-long learning as in (MoES, 2012). On the contrary, however, the visits made by the researchers to directly observe Teacher-educators' lessons indicated that the majority, around three-quarters of those whose lessons were observed, expressed an inability in the use local language as a medium of instruction and exhibited pedagogical gaps in the exhibition of instructional materials of 3 Dimensions. For that matter, therefore, the views of the different groups caused controversy. To the researchers, the controversy between what was reported and the observed reality could be a result of Administrators endeavouring to defend their positions as immediate supervisors to the Teacher-educators; they feel where things fail, they are held responsible and accountable. In addition, it is also possible that the Administrators fell short of the ideal situation. In brief, it is possible that controversies also existed as a result of failure on the side of the administrators to conduct support supervision of teacher-educators' lessons and just imagine what was being done in classes. Teacher-educators' failure to exhibit the required pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and some areas of the technological Skills, e.g., in the

development of 3-Dimensional learning aids, never matched well with the principle of mentorship and scaffolding as advocated by Vygotsky social-cultural theory which was adopted to underpin this study. Furthermore, results clearly indicated that the preparation of teacher trainees in PTCs in Eastern Uganda still had serious gaps, most especially with regard to an exhibition of pedagogical Skills to the expectations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the extent to which Teacher-educators exhibited pedagogical Skills in implementing the ECE curriculum, in terms of technological Skills, employing learner-centred methodologies to stimulate teamwork among the teacher trainees, having a sense of humour, and projecting a personality of being approachable, inspiring the teacher trainees and conducting impressive lessons were but to a less extent. In addition, the integration of content with media and modelling was not exhibited to a reasonable extent. The perception of the researchers is that if the Teacher-educators of ECE and their teacher trainees are to measure the required Skills focusing on 21st century education, the existing gaps require immediate attention:

- The majority of the teacher-educators in the area of study possessed some knowledge of the ECE Pedagogy, but examination pressure bent their teaching to traditional methodologies.
- The majority of the teacher-educators in the area of study did not implement the ECE curriculum practically on claims of inadequate time, inadequate staffing, and inadequate funding.
- The required Pedagogical Skills were not exhibited by the majority of the Teacher-educators of ECE to model their trainees to the expectations, and yet, ECE is a living subject.
- Challenges associated with teaching and learning, management, environment,

inadequate funding, inadequate supervision/inadequate monitoring, and limited relevant facilities/ equipment subdued the holistic preparation of teacher trainees, thence impacting negatively on the initiative of hands-on learning, which was intended to improve teacher preparation for quality education.

In summary, based on data generated using various tools, the researchers discovered that the Teacher-educators of ECE in PTCs, among the many required skills, they to some extent mainly possessed the following: Instructional material development, Assessment skills (*mainly 'pen & paper'*), Material Display (*mainly 2 Dimensional*), Feedback skills and Class Management skills, whereas, they fell short of the skills of facilitating learners to acquire comprehension reading skills, Handwriting (letter shapes & formation) skills, interpretation skills, fluency and articulation skills in the use of both English and Local Language. Results also revealed Teacher-educators' inability to aid teacher trainees in developing 3 Dimensional instructional materials and inability to facilitate teacher trainees to acquire sound-letter skills in both English and local language(s). The worst gap was reported in the aspect of mentorship and scaffolding initiatives contradicting Vygotsky's social-cultural learning theory, which was used to underpin this study.

Recommendations

In the ECE Curriculum of Kyambogo University in conjunction with MoES (2012), it is clearly indicated that Teacher-educators of ECE are expected to be well grounded in pedagogy that promotes 'Hands-on-learning'. However, by the fact that the findings of this study revealed a smaller extent of Teacher-educators' exhibition of pedagogical Skills to their trainees than what was expected of them in the implementation of the ECE Curriculum, the following recommendations are hereby put forward:

- There is an immediate need for equipping Teacher-educators with the required aspects of pedagogical Skills stipulated in the ECE curriculum as the first step in the direction of improving their role-modelling practices for their teacher trainees. Among the desirable qualities and skills required of Teacher-educators of ECE, a sense of humour, organisational skills, mentorship skills, practicality, and pedagogical leadership skills are very cardinal. The arrangement to improve the quality of Teacher-educators in pedagogical Skills should not wait for MoES but could as well be an approach of a down-up (bottom-top) initiative, thereby making it an individual college-based approach. This recommendation makes the findings of this study a huge contribution to tutoring, scaffolding and mentorship initiatives as clearly stipulated in the Vygotsky Social-cultural learning theory which was adopted to underpin this study.
- For purposes of capacity building, Continuous Professional Development Courses (CPDs) in the form of seminars, workshops, Dialogues and Conferences, as well as other relevant in-service courses are crucial for specifically Teacher-educators' professional growth and development. If CPDs are well aligned with the ECE policy, this recommendation becomes a very strong contribution to the desired quality of Teacher-educators required in PTCs and the kind of ECE teacher trainee graduates the world of work is in dire need of.
- In order to adequately address the challenges Teacher-educators face in their effort to exhibit pedagogical Skills to their trainees, there is a need to improve on the supervisory mechanisms, starting with the identification of training needs so as to follow up particular Teacher-educators through mentorship initiatives by the subject experts.
- It is important for MoES to design deliberate in-service courses as a matter of policy for

Teacher-educators' career progression to enrich their experience and cater for the breadth and width in terms of subject content knowledge and pedagogical skills.

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