

University of Groningen

Adopting the child-centred pedagogy for teaching reading and writing in Local Language

Akello, Lucy Dora

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2018

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Akello, L. D. (2018). *Adopting the child-centred pedagogy for teaching reading and writing in Local Language: Experiences from Uganda*. University of Groningen.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

Adopting the Child-Centred Pedagogy for Teaching Reading and Writing in Local Language

Experiences from Uganda



university of
 groningen

Adopting the Child-Centred Pedagogy for Teaching Reading and Writing in Local Language

Experiences from Uganda

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. E. Sterken
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on

Monday 4 June 2018 at 11: 00 hours

by

Lucy Dora Akello
born on 19 October 1963
in Gulu, Uganda

Supervisor

Prof. M.C. Timmerman

Co-supervisor

Dr. S. Namusisi

Assessment Committee

Prof. M. de Winter

Prof. P. Kanyandago

Prof. A.E.M.G. Minnaert

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late sister Anna Stella Abur and to all the children who at their tender age lack the basic learning needs and to the teachers who lack the basic resources for teaching.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	i
Table of Contents	ii
Abbreviations.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Chapter 1: General introduction	1
Chapter 2: Local Language as medium of instruction: Challenges and way forward	34
Chapter 3: Teaching reading and writing in Local Language using the Child-centred Pedagogy in Uganda.....	71
Chapter 4: Formative Assessment: the role of Participatory Action Research in blending policy and practice in Uganda	97
Chapter 5: Children’s stories: a tool for teaching reading and writing within a Participatory Action Research framework.....	132
Chapter 6: General discussion	163
7. References	184
Summary.....	206
Samenvatting	213
Appendix 1: The major language groups and the major language families in Uganda	220

Abbreviations

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
CA	Continuous Assessment
CCP	Child-Centred Pedagogy
CCT	Centre Coordinating Tutor
DIS	District Inspector of Schools
EFA	Education for All
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
IDPC	Internally Displaced People's Camp
L ₁	First language
L ₂	Second Language
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education
LRA	Lord's Resistant Army
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoI	Medium of Instruction
MT	Mother Tongue
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
PTC	Primary Teachers' College

TC	Thematic Curriculum
UNEB	Uganda National Examination Board
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPE	Universal Primary Education
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Acknowledgements

I am glad that this project rests on the shoulders of great women and men who made it possible for me to get here. Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my promoter Prof. Greetje Timmerman for her diligence, patience, support and immense knowledge that motivated me during the PhD journey. She encouraged me into doing a PhD by publication, a choice I would not have made alone, but because I read in her eyes and heard in her voice the assurance that she would work with me, I ventured into publishing. Her guidance helped me during the field research and writing the articles that ultimately formed this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better promoter and mentor for my PhD study. I owe gratitude to my co-supervisor, Ass. Prof. Speranza Namusisi, whose input through feedback has shaped this study. I would like to thank Prof. Jacques Zeelen for motivating me into taking on a PhD study and for arranging my first visit to the University Groningen in order to develop my concept paper. He too was very useful during the field work in Gulu, Uganda. His input during the field work and feedback workshops in Groningen and Gulu cannot be underestimated. Besides my promoter and supervisor, I would like to thank the Assessment Committee Prof. Winter, Prof. Kanyandago and Prof. Minnaert for their insightful comments and encouragement which helped me to fill the gaps I had overlooked in the writing process.

I am highly indebted to Prof. Marjolijn Verspoor, Chair of English Language and Culture Department at the University of Groningen, who did not only take time to review my first article and gave me very constructive feedback but also offered me opportunities to join the weekly seminars with the PhD students in the Faculty of Arts.

The comments, affirmation and suggestions I got from the seminars contributed greatly to this thesis. Prof. Marjolijn Verspoor also funded the publication of stories authored by children and teachers in the Acoli and English, one of the tangible outputs of my PhD study. The story books made a big difference in the life of the teachers and children who were using them in class. My cordial appreciation also goes to the members of the Acoli Language Board for proof reading and approving the stories written by children and teachers for use in the schools where I conducted the study as supplementary texts. Special mention here is Charles who always went an extra mile by offering space not only for the research team to have meetings but also to conduct feedback workshops on the story writing process. Robinson too has been very supportive and encouraging to me. His openness about the challenges of using local language as medium of instruction was a big push for me in approaching the schools with confidence. For your big-heartedness, I am forever grateful.

Without the research participants in this study from the primary schools in Gulu and Amuru districts, this thesis would not have been completed. I would like to express thanks to the teachers who participated in the preliminary study for laying bare before me the disturbing language situation in the rural primary schools. Their honesty and eagerness to share the challenges they faced in implementing the local language policy gave me the impetus to explore more about children's reading and writing in the local language. In particular I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the twelve teachers who willingly worked with me for the entire period of the study. They always looked forward to the feedback meeting in order to share their findings and experiences of implementing, monitoring and evaluating the interventions and they looked forward

to learning from their fellow teachers. Without your dedication and diligence in the research process, I would not have accomplished much. In particular I would like to refer to Santa, Concy, Alice, Irene, Nusula, Francis, Jenifer, Lilly, Christine, Joyce, Florence and Alaroker, who in spite of the heavy school duties and teaching load dedicated time for the study. Your hard works were not futile. May God reward you in abundance.

To the children in lower primary classes who courageously shared their experiences and views about the use of local language as medium of instruction, thank you for speaking up on behalf of the many children elsewhere who are facing similar challenges as you are. They helped me understand the challenges with the medium of instruction from their perspectives. Each time I observed them in class during the story telling sessions, the singing and dancing I got brainwave that boosted me for the next stages of the research. I still have very vivid memories of the times I spent with them. Children, you are so amazing.

I am also grateful to the school administrators of the three schools in Gulu and Amuru Districts that opened their doors to me right from the point of sharing my research interests with them up to the moment of winding up the study. I recall in my very first encounter in schools, one head-teacher told me, ‘you are welcome to help us solve the problem we have battled with for long’. Another one told me, ‘just leave the questionnaire with us, we shall give you all the answers you need and you can come and pick them after a week’. I told him that I did not have questionnaire and he asked me how I was going to collect data. I told him I shall be talking to them and planning how to improve children’s reading and writing in the local language. With great surprise, he

asked, 'talking for three years? That time is not there'. He, however, gave me the space to 'talk' with him, the staff and children. Before long, he asked for the schedule of my visits and the meetings with the different participants because he had seen the value of 'talking'. Even when he was transferred to a distant school, he continued to be part of the research group and even requested that his school be incorporated in the study. Mr Loum, thank you so much for trusting that I could work with the teachers and children to improve their proficiency in reading and writing for three years. Appreciation also goes to the school administrators and teachers who were transferred to other schools but still continued coming for the feedback workshops to share their views and to make contributions to the research. Important to mention here are Irene, Christine, Jenifer, Francis and Labeja.

To the feedback team, I don't have the words enough to express how I am indebted to your unwavering support, encouragement, criticism and advise for the entire period of the research process. Worth mentioning are Robinson, Charles, Samuel, Josephine, Irene and Nusula for going far beyond the call of duty.

To my colleagues at the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Science with who I had the privilege to work and interact, to consult in the PPC and attend the Action research methodology workshops with: Sandra, Jacqueline, Geerte, Vera, Femke, Alice, Peace, Frank, Marit, Nikhil, Proscovia, Dimitrievska, Alzira, Nathalie, Tuur and Wabike. Thank you to all the staff, PhD fellows and Master students who were with me for the Qualitative Research Methods in Zernike and the Academic Writing and Publishing course in the Language Centre. Important to mention here are Ajay, Wim, Lowa, Nikhil, Zaina and many more for their constant support and cooperation during my PhD

journey. Thank you so much for the inputs and stimulating discussions. I own lots of gratitude to the administrative staff in the Department of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences, who were always ready to receive me and direct me to Hans Knot to show me the office space where I would study for the three months I would spend in the University. Thank you so much for caring for me. The security personnel whom I met every morning as I picked the key to the PPC and in the evening as I returned the key, are heroes in their own right. Their wholehearted welcome and goodbyes always set me at peace. I felt they really meant well for me. Thank you and may God bless them.

The work presented in this thesis would not have been possible without my close association with those who mean well for me. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to Ass. Prof. Angucia Margaret for introducing me to action research. I appreciate your advice, inspiration, encouragement and continuous support throughout my PhD study period. She told me many times, 'I am sure you will manage', and indeed I have managed. The pressure she put on me pushed me to the completing of this study. Margaret, I thank you for always standing by my side and for sharing in my life. I feel honoured to be associated with you.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Dr Tukundane Cuthbert for his constant guidance, cooperation, motivation and support that kept me striving ahead in the PhD journey. He always helped me out when I got any difficulties or queries regarding field work or writing the articles. I cannot forget the first time I arrived in Groningen when he showed me St Joseph's Cathedral and Albert Hein Supermarket and as we moved around he told me, 'next year you will be in this place'. Little did I know he was being prophetic; his words came true when I was awarded a scholarship by Netherlands Fellowship

Programme (NFP). When I travelled alone to Groningen in order to embark on the PhD study, those were the two places I looked for first as I arrived at Antillenstraat. I will always cherish your kindness to me.

To the Congregation Leadership team of the Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu, past and present, words alone cannot express how indebted I am to you. Thank you for encouraging me to go for my studies. When I sought permission from you to apply for scholarship, you had no objection. Thank you for the spiritual and moral support you accorded me during my study period. I will put into practice the knowledge and skills that I acquired not only to the benefit of Uganda Martyrs University but also for promotion of the Congregation. To Sr Cecilia who lived with me in the same community, you were a great inspiration to me. The once-in-a-while discussions we had during meals of our PhD researches, opened my mind to see my study from a different angle. May God shed His light upon you. Fr Agapitus, thank you for reassuring me and wishing me well. I pray that God keeps inspiring you as you write your PhD thesis.

I express my heart-felt gratitude to Hans and Dineke for always hosting us to special dinners in their house in Eelde. As we waited for Dineke to set up the table, Hans always engaged us in discussions that broadened our minds. In particular his scientific inputs opened my eyes to insights that I as an action researcher might not have seen. He provided invaluable feedback. I am grateful to Josje for diligently reading my first article. Her scientific inputs, personal helps and friendly nature has always made me feel at ease with her and I looked back on her for support during the course of my PhD. Each time I was in Groningen she shared with me books from her library that helped to broaden my understanding of Action research. She is one of the people who

encouraged me into publishing articles. I can't thank you enough for encouraging me throughout this experience.

To my employer, Uganda Martyrs University, I heartedly thank you for making it possible for me to take leave every year for three months to undertake my studies in the University of Groningen. In a special way I would like to thank Prof Olweny Charles for generously writing a recommendation to NFP for funding and for always according me support and granting me permission to travel to the Netherlands.

I would be unfair if I do not acknowledge the staff in the Faculty of Education and those in the Directorate of Quality Assurance at Uganda Martyrs University where I worked while at the same time pursuing my studies. I would like to heartedly express my gratitude to Ass. Prof. Mutonyi Harriet for inducting me into Action Research during the methodology classes. She increased the love for action research in me. Your ingenuity, generosity and understanding of my situation as a student encouraged me a lot. Mushabe, I am indebted to you for sharing with me the milestones in your PhD ventures. Each time I listened to you, I got consoled and gained courage to move on. I cannot underestimate the enormous contribution of Bro Byaruhanga into my studies. In particular I thank him for all the books and other reading materials that he shared with me. It reached a time when the books were too many for me and I had to tell him that I had enough to keep me going. Keep up the resourcefulness. I fondly thank Creatoris, Veronica, Agrace, Josephine, Constance, Geoffrey, Modest, John Paul, Christopher, Naris, James, Richard, Brian, Jesca, Juliet and Victoria for being patient with me and for sometimes taking over my workload when I was overwhelmed with studies. I look forward to the time when I can give you a hand too.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by the Netherlands Fellowship Programme (NFP) to fund my entire period of the study in the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences, Department of Pedagogy and Educational Science. NFP provided resources for my travels, research, conferences, books, insurances, housing and other necessities. This PhD project would not have been possible without their financial input and support. At this point too I would like to appreciate the innumerable contributions of Erik, Wiebe, Gonny and Ivita for always ensuring that the travel arrangements, insurances and housings were in order before I travel to the Netherlands. Gonny and Ivita, it was not by coincidence that you were put in the international office. You all played immense roles in creating a home for me in the Groningen. May God reward you abundantly.

To the Ugandan community in Groningen with whom we shared light moments either in the apartments or restaurant, you provided the much needed destruction that refreshed my mind. Special mention goes to Proscovia, Kennedy, Debora and Luwa. Special gratitude also goes to Zaina, my Tanzanian friend with whom we had discussions of our work progress and occasionally had meals together in Hofstede de Grotokade. I can't forget Karadee and Bhagyashree whom I shared apartments with in Kraanvogelstraat. You two are wonderful. I wish you God's blessings in the pursuit of your PhD.

As always it is impossible to mention everybody who had an impact to this work however, there are those whose spiritual support is even more important. Last but not the least, I feel a deep sense of gratitude for my beloved parents, Muzee Justin and Jaja Mary Julia, who formed part of my vision and taught me good things that really matter

in life. Their infallible love and support has always been my strength. Their patience and sacrifice will remain my inspiration throughout my life. Each time I was to travel to the Netherlands I would go home to inform them of the journey. They always blessed me assured me that God would protect me and that I would come back and find them still alive. I would like to thank my sister, Anna Stella Abur (May she Rest in Eternal Peace. Amen) for encouraging me to pursue PhD. I had agreed with her that she would travel with me to the Netherland for the viva voce but unfortunately, she passed on before I could complete the study. Anna, you neither need visa nor air ticket to reach Groningen. I am sure you will be with me in spirit during my defence and with a smile congratulate me quietly. To Francesca, my niece I am grateful for your prayers. To my little friends, Apio and Acen I appreciate your childlike prayers that the plane should bring me back home quickly.

Finally and most important, I thank God for paving way for me to obtain full scholarship and for seeing me through all the ups and downs of my studies. I am now able to express gratitude to all those who in one way or the other contributed to the successful completion of my study, because God allowed it. I experienced God's providence and intervention day by day and I am sure that he had a hand in letting me finish my study. I will keep on trusting in your providence forever. Thank you, Lord.