Children’s pursuit of happiness in literacy

- Multilingual readers, transition issues in multilingual settings
- Phonics versus Whole Language
- Mother-Tongue Literacy: The Underappreciated Midwife

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Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to all our readers and appreciate those that have enabled us to publish this 2nd edition of “Literacy Matters” Magazine. To our sponsors and partners for the 4th Annual National Literacy Conference, thank you for putting us first whenever we approach you with this noble cause of the rigorous campaign of Literacy for all. Indeed this year's theme “Literacy for Sustainable National Development” is befitting the trend that we are all embracing; in availing information which promotes development at all forums. For example RAU has included Financial Literacy as one of the themes this year. This further affirms the reality that through literacy the development goals which Uganda yearns for will be attained.

I wish u all a wonderful 2 days Literacy Conference. For those that feel I may be of help to set up, train school librarians and promote the reading culture at their schools, feel free to contact me.

God bless you.
Enforcing Literacy Skills

One of the most important tasks of formal education in schools is to train children in understanding and use of language.

Children should learn to read quickly and with comprehension, to speak fluently and accurately, to listen with understanding and write intelligently. To meet the above elements, Kampala Parents’ School, has a number of activities in place geared towards the development and enhancement of different literacy levels of the learners.

The school has a well-stocked library with the most recent reading books for both infants and children in upper school. The pupils are encouraged to borrow these books which they must read and thereafter write a summary of the book they have read on a weekly basis. They hand in their books for marking to their respective teachers.

There is also book recitation done at the assembly by different classes as per the scheduled assembly days. This gives the pupil the advantage to read with comprehension and develop the confidence in speech.

The pupils also practice the writing skill through the element of News Writing which is an aspect developed to enhance listening and comprehension. The pupils are encouraged to listen to news from either radio or television and thereafter write what they got from the news and this too is marked by the teachers.

There is also presentation of news reading at the assembly by pupils who are chosen from different classes each week. To develop the domain of speech, the school has sessions for debates organized basing on class or stream. This encourages the pupils to develop speaking fluently, accurately and reasoning. This helps to enrich problem solving when faced with challenges.

We also have spelling exercises organized by teachers, this is taught as a subsidiary subject to English with a separate exercise book and marked by teachers once a week. There are also spelling competitions in the school, termed as ‘Spelling Bee Competition’. This helps to teach correct spellings and pronunciation of words.

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Violence against children/adolescents

It is everyone’s responsibility to end all forms of violence against children/adolescents

Did you know that violence/abuse against children is any action that causes harm to children and leads to physical pain and injury, emotional and psychological stress? Unfortunately, children in Uganda 0-18 years experience different forms of violence ranging from denying children the right to food, play, education and participation in all issues affecting them. Other equally serious forms of violence include property grabbing by relatives, corporal punishment, sexual violence against girls and boys of all ages and status, from poor and wealthy families alike. Sadly, the people who are close to children that they often trust most like their parents, step parents, other relatives, neighbors, teachers and so on are sometimes the ones who take advantage of the children and abuse them in different ways.

Even though homes, schools and sometimes churches/mosques/temples are supposed to be enjoyable and safe places for all children to enjoy their rights and study well, worship and live peacefully, a lot of violence happens in these places and children have no one to turn to and no safe place to hide.

The most common forms of abuse and violence against children are sexual violence and corporal punishment, like caning, parents and teachers using abusive language, sitting/kneeling in the sun, kneeling on stones, digging anthills, slashing the compound and digging for the whole day, fetching water and cleaning the toilet while other children are learning. Some parents and teachers also give heavy punishments for small mistakes, which is wrong. Even though work is good for children to

Children’s pursuit of happiness in literacy

More often than not in our lives, we seek happiness in a number ways. Reflect on your life and that of your children on how you pursue happiness. Where is your source of happiness? Is it in watching TV, reading or writing? I do take pleasure seeing children at home doing a lot of reading and writing with great happiness on their faces. Innocent as they are, do they get joy and take pride in their own reading and writing. Yes, we have to encourage them to develop the skills necessary for them to succeed and be able to change their lives. Children’s writing is always reflected in their drawings. Always appreciate their creativity and works of imagination. You can advise them on how to make their
learn life skills that can help them survive now and in future, parents, teachers and other caregivers must not use work as a punishment at home or at school for long hours and deny children their right to play and study, because this makes children develop negative attitudes towards work.

Every child deserves to enjoy a violence-free and safe environment at home, school and church/mosque/temple and in the community. Children should be helped to learn that if their parents, relatives, teachers and other adults abuse their rights, they can report to responsible people who are trusted in the community or call the Child Helpline that is a toll free telephone number called Sauti on 116 so that they can be helped.

Other ways the government tried to protect children’s rights was set up by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports where a circular was sent to all schools in 2015 to end all forms of violence against children at school. The ministry has also developed a child-friendly booklet to help children learn about the steps to take when they are abused, called Reporting Tracking, Referral and Response Guidelines (RTRR). The education ministry is training student teachers to support other children to use the guidelines.

Even though there are better ways parents and teachers can discipline children without causing them harm, most parents and teachers prefer using violent and abusive means, believing that it is the best way they can understand. This is a wrong belief because it causes both emotional and physical harm to the children and sometimes it can lead to some of them running away from home or drop out of school. Adults can for example listen, talk and counsel badly behaved children, forgive them when they make minor mistakes and help them to be better children through corrective ways.

It is everybody’s responsibility to Take Action Now and protect the right of all children by creating a violence free and safe environment for children to enjoy their full rights and develop to their full potential.

Literacy nurtures both the old and young to know who they are, what they stand for and how to achieve it. It tells about their mood and personality.
Approximately 90% of African children don’t speak English (the language of wider communication) at home – so if they don’t become literate in an African language (as well as English/French/Portuguese), they don’t have the chance to become truly literate. Generally, people who are literate have access to complex information from finance to engineering to advertising, … and to computer coding. Those who don’t, risk becoming permanently underclass in a global and digital...
world – a new colonialism or underemployment that is profoundly inhumane and unjust.

For reading to become sufficiently automatic for children, a great deal of practice needs to be done in letter recognition and decoding, research shows. This is key if children are to read for pleasure, which is a foundation for successful school learning. Yet there is severe shortage of reading materials for reading practice in the languages familiar to young children in African countries. This calls for certain interventions.

The African Storybook Initiative (ASb)
The African Storybook Project (ASP) was initiated with a view to creating an explosion of reading materials in every African language so that children in African countries have the opportunity to become truly literate. For early readers to learn to read and enjoy reading, teachers need to understand not only how to teach reading in a sequenced way, but also provide sufficient reading practice and the opportunity of reading for enjoyment as well as learning.

An important principle for ASP was to consider the resources that African children currently get to help them to learn to read, and to aim to exceed this quantity and variety through the use of technology. Conventional publishers look at the size of the market, and are tempted to over-generalise the target audience. A digital website of openly licensed stories can give space to the particular, while at the same time providing the facility for versioning (adapting stories for the local context).

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The case of Kabubbu Community School teachers and the digital publishing model
ASP was introduced to Kabubbu Digital Publishing (KDP) in early 2014, by first having a memorandum of understanding between ASP and KDP an Early Childhood Development centre (ECD), a primary school as well as a community library. We expected teachers and other users to translate and/or adapt the stories, and to create their own stories in the templates provided on the website.

One of our major concerns was how we would support teachers, parents and communities to use the stories effectively for development. The teachers’ practice greatly changed since the introduction of the ASP digital publishing model that has helped provide free access to reading materials in spite of their lack of computer literacy at the beginning. This model has enabled the teachers to adapt the stories available on the ASP website and use them to promote reading in the local language among their learners.

Conclusion
Initial results show that it is possible to create an explosion of stories in many different languages by providing the tools for users to create their own stories or translate into a language familiar to the children. Teachers at Kabubbu are now downloading, versioning and using the stories from the website on their own.

Both teachers and children are motivated to use the stories in exciting ways (both digitally and in print). We are trying to build the quantity of good reading materials that children and all first readers need to build up their fluency. Cognitive scientists tell us that neurons are essential for wiring the brain for reading and complex logical thinking.

What this case study demonstrates is that through the digital publishing model and open licence, we can address the lack of reading materials in local languages. But most important is that this will lead to conventional publishing because we shall have created a culture of reading and, therefore, demand for more books.

Generally, people who are literate have access to complex information from finance to engineering to advertising ... and to computer coding
In Uganda, like in many other African countries, multilingualism plays a key role in success in literacy and education. All Ugandan children have to learn to read and write in English in order to succeed in education. However, hardly any child in Uganda comes to school having a good command of the English language. Most children in Uganda come to school knowing the language spoken well at home and they have to learn English at school.
This article attempts to provide some insights into this issue. There are two important concepts that shed some light on this. The first one is called the interdependence hypothesis, which says that in bilingual development, language and literacy skills can be transferred from one language to another (Cummins, 1979). This means that what is learned in the mother tongue will transfer to the English language. But in order for that to happen, there is another important concept that has to come into play, and that is the threshold theory. The threshold theory states that a linguistic threshold is necessary in order for a bilingual student to benefit from bilingualism (Cummins, 1979). This simply means that for a child to use the mother tongue to learn a new language, it must have reached a certain threshold of fluency in the mother tongue. These concepts tell us that learning in the local language helps learning the new language and that learning in the local language helps the learner build a foundation for the new language. Furthermore, learning in the new language (e.g. English) is only productive when children know enough of it. Based on this, therefore, it is mostly likely that when schools in Uganda start using English as a medium of instruction too soon, the students will have low results. They are not learning.

There is a common belief that the earlier children start to learn a new language the better they learn it. However, research shows that that is not always the case. It shows that children who began learning English at age 10-11 progressed more than two times in the same time compared to 4-6 year-olds (Enever, Moon, Raman, & (Eds.), 2009; Muñoz, 2008; Marianne Nikolov, 2009). Older children do better in an instructional setting like school, because they are mentally more mature. They can also use concepts they learnt in their local language to 'plot' the new language. The older learners have already learned different language strategies and are, therefore more efficient learners (Johnstone, 2002).

In order for young children to benefit well in learning English in class, there are certain key conditions that must prevail (Djigunovich & Vilke, 2000) that are not easy to reproduce in Uganda:

- Intensive interaction in class;
- Instruction for 45 minutes per day, five days a week;
- Class size of 10–15 children;
- Teachers who have a good command of the language.

If these key conditions are not fulfilled, then the second language instruction should not start at an early age as it might harm the children's attitude towards the language and language learning in general (M. Nikolov, 2000).

There is another important concept that is helpful to understand; and that is the differentiation between conversational language (language you use in everyday life) and academic proficiency in a language (language that is used in school).
Children tend to learn everyday language rather quickly in a new language. They can talk about everyday things; however, in order to do well in school in the new language, they need to learn the version of that language that is used in school – the academic language. Research shows that for children to benefit from English in the classroom, they need to know at least the 2000, but even better 3000 of the most frequently employed and useful words for school (Nation, 2006). If they know fewer words, the materials need to be graded. Research also shows that in a school setting like in Uganda children will learn about 500 new words in a school year (Van Ginkel, 2014). Thus, the research suggests that it will take children in public schools in Uganda about five to six years to reach the linguistic threshold when transfer from the local language to English can easily take place. This is not in line with the current policy that lets children use their local language for only three years and then transition to the English language in the fourth year. Research suggests that it is necessary to give the young pupils time to learn to read in a language they already know well and give them time to learn sufficient vocabulary in the new language, then have them learn to read in the new language, making use of their knowledge of reading in their first language.

It is therefore important to do more research in Uganda to understand how language learning is happening for children in public schools. It might mean that more time is necessary for children to learn English well enough to benefit from it in education. The current policy of using the local language as a medium of instruction is a good start, but research suggests that it might not be enough. It might be necessary to update the curriculum and develop a competency-based scale that states what students need to be able to do (knowledge and skills) in the new language at different stages of their education. Using the competency-based scale, determine the threshold level of vocabulary and competencies that enables learners to benefit from education in each second or foreign language to be used in school.
Library Literacy Connection
1: Mirembe Junior School leads in singing the National anthem
2: Dr. Robinah Kyeyune prepares to give a keynote address
3: Participants at the start of the conference
4: Dr. Yusuf Nsubuga launches “literacy matters” magazine
5: Participants follow closely during presentation
6: Entertainment from Grace primary school
7: Mr. James Tumusime of Fountain Publishers follows proceedings at the conference.
ABOVE/ Group photograph of participants at the 3rd Annual Literacy Conference opening ceremony.

BELOW/ Mrs. Loy Tumusiime, Patron RAU, addresses participants at The 3rd Literacy conference.
Mother Tongue Teaching and Learning; the link in literacy development

Prospects and challenges vis-a-vis policy makers’ perspectives.

By Deus Mandy, Principal Education Officer, Min of Education

Definitions of Mother Tongue (MT)

MT refers to a child’s first language; the language learned in the home from older family members. It also refers to the language or languages spoken in the learner’s home. Mother tongue is also the language that one learns to speak first - the first language. It also refers to one’s native language (as is the case for monolingual countries such as the US, China, Britain, Italy, Germany, Japan, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Somalia, among others. In the Ugandan context, MT seems to be used interchangeably with local language (LL). However, this is not entirely correct. Is one’s MT necessarily the LL in a given community, and vice-versa?

MT as opposed to LL

- MT should not be confused with Local Language (LL).
- Local language refers to the language spoken in and by a given community.
- MT is personal to the holder or user.
- It is possible to speak a local language (X) and have a mother tongue (Y) at the same time.
- It is also possible that one’s MT is the LL and vice-versa.
- To avoid getting lost and confused in linguistic arguments, however, this presentation will take MT to mean LL.
- In the Ugandan context, the two terminologies mean the same thing, especially with regards to teaching/learning.
- The definition and meaning of MT has been kept short and localised for simplicity and comprehension purposes.

Links of MT learning to literacy development

Research has shown that children’s first language is the optimal language for literacy and learning throughout primary school (UNESCO, 2008a).

Children whose primary language is not the language of instruction in school are more likely to drop out of school or fail in early grades.

Concepts are grasped better in a language a child understands better than others and that is the Mother Tongue.

MT is the most important ally to foreign language learning (2000 years of documented foreign-language teaching has always held the mother tongue in high esteem).

MT is and should be, for all school subjects, including foreign-language lessons, a child’s strongest ally and should, therefore, be used systematically (Wolfgang Butzkamm: Language Learning Journal, Winter 2003, No 28, 29-39).

Background to the teaching and learning of MT in Uganda

The review of the primary education curriculum, which was in line with the Uganda White Paper on Education (1992), was completed in June 2004 and the report concluded as follows:

- The low level of acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills was the major learning problem in Ugandan primary schools.
- Remedial action in the form of thematic curriculum for P1-P3 focusing on reading, listening, speaking, numeracy and life skills was urgently required.
- An overwhelming body of international research evidence also demonstrated that: (Is this a new list or the continuation of the previous one?)
- The early acquisition of literacy is fundamental to successful education outputs throughout the education system.
Children learn decoding and literacy skills better.
In that regard the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports made a policy decision to proceed with the design of a literacy, numeracy and life skills-based thematic curriculum which was introduced (beginning with P1) in all primary schools in 2007.

Current Education ministry MT-related Policies

Thematic curriculum:
Introduced in 2007 in all primary schools, beginning with P1. Roll out to other classes was effected in the subsequent years.

Teaching and learning of MT: Nine LLs were rolled out to begin with (Luganda, Lusoga, Lukhonzo, Runyankore-Rukiga, Runyoro-Rutooro, Ng’akarimojong, Acoli, Ateso and Lugbarati).
- MT used as the medium of instruction in P1-3; English taught as a subject (especially in rural areas; in urban areas the situation is the reverse).
- P4-P7: MT taught as a subject; English as a Language of Instruction (LOI).
- Putting instructional materials in the hands of learners

Policy introduced in January 2003
P1-P3: policy talks about the daily use of non-book materials (e.g. work cards, wall charts, practice books, flashcards, readers etc).
- Wherever possible materials should be kept in the classroom for easy access and utilization by teachers and pupils.
- P4-P6:
  - Textbooks should be issued to pupils each term
  - Pupils should sign for receipt of books.
  - Pupils should share books in groups while in class.
- P7:
  - Textbooks should be issued to pupils on an annual basis and checked each term
  - Textbooks lent out to pupils must be collected one week preceding the final examinations.
  - SMEs should be lent out for a shorter period specified by the teacher librarian.

Each pupil should have at least one textbook specifically in his/her care.
A textbook should be lent to a learner at the beginning of every term. He/she will be responsible for its security for the whole term.
Supplementary Reading Materials (SMEs) should be lent out for a shorter period specified by the teacher librarian.

...continues on page 17
Relative illiteracy makes us stragglers in the civilisation race

The most costly inability of our ancestors was the inability to write. That inability made them stragglers in the civilization race, and eventually condemned them to slavery and colonialism.

While scientists in the West preserved their discoveries on paper for easy access by their descendants, our forefathers preserved theirs orally. Each generation of Western scientists started from the point at which the previous one had stopped, but each generation of African scientists had to start from scratch, for the oral method of transmitting information leaks a lot, and is quite futile when information is of the scientific kind. Isaac Newton did, in his own words, “look far by standing on the shoulders” of previous scientists, but any African scientist that lived at about the same time as Newton had no similar shoulders to stand on, since previous findings hadn’t been preserved. While the pen is often considered a tool of the Arts, it is arguable that, over the centuries, it was the most powerful tool even in Science. Inability to use it doesn’t only explain the absence of an African Shakespeare, but also explains the absence of an African Einstein.

Colonialism, which was made possible by African illiteracy, became the means by which literacy came to Africa. Since the advent of colonialism, the African has learnt to read and write. But an examination of the sales records of a typical African bookstore will reveal that, more than a century since literacy was introduced by colonialists, the only writing and reading that’s done on a considerable scale on the continent is that of academic books. Outside the school context, we find that the African still does not write and does not read!

5 years ago, I came across this passage in an online article: “Recent research shows that Brazilians read 4.7 books per year, and if you exclude books read at school, this number drops to a mere 1.3 books per year. What is responsible for this low number? Is it a genuine lack of

Perhaps it has to do with the fact that literacy was introduced by colonialists, but we Africans have never really taken to it. We are grudgingly literate.
interest in reading?” I found it interesting that a reading rate of 1.3 non-academic books per capita per year was being condemned as too low. I found it interesting because most people I know (and most of my acquaintances happen to be educated) fall below the reading rate of 1.3 non-academic books per year. The average Brazilian (and peasants are incorporated in the statistics) will read 13 non-academic books in his 20s, another 13 in his 30s, etc., and it is deplorable, but it seems the typical Ugandan elite will go a decade or longer without reading a single non-academic book, and it is normal. There are countless people - and I am not referring to the peasants - in their 30s, 40s or 50s who have never read a non-academic book. The article was written by an American for an American publication, and from his vantage point and that of his typical readers, it may make sense to precede the average of 1.3 books with the adjective ‘mere’. But, from the Ugandan vantage point, that average is something of a dream – and one that may never come true.

Perhaps it has to do with the fact that literacy was introduced by colonialists, but we Africans have never really taken to it. We are grudgingly literate. We only read when there is an examinations to write and a certificate to earn. Our ancestors’ absolute illiteracy kept them at the tail end of the civilization race; our relative (non-academic) illiteracy can only keep us in the same position.

Mother Tongue Teaching and Learning

...from page 17

Prospects

- Increased pupil enrolment (increased access to education): from 2.5m in 1997 to 8.3m today (thanks to UPE of which MT is part and parcel).
- Preservation of indigenous culture through songs, dance, proverbs, etc.
- Cultural identity: having pride in where one comes from; what one eats/drinks; dressing style and art.
- Improved literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- Economic development: Literate citizens are a strong economic base because they are:
  - Knowledgeable and skilled
  - Employable
  - More productive than illiterate citizens. [MT acquisition is key in having a literate and self-sustaining citizenry].
- Funding (other interventions-WB): USD100M to be injected in the education sector over the next three years (2015-18) to improve on teacher effectiveness and classroom teaching. Part of this money is to be used for buying Pupils textbooks and primers in English.
- Roll out of more MT/LL in schools:
  As opposed to the assertion that there are 65 languages in Uganda, recent research conducted by the Summer Institute of Languages, Language Education and Development (SIL-LEAD, 2009) indicates that there are 36 languages spoken in Uganda. The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) considers the SIL-LEAD findings the most plausible alternative to guide government on the number of languages to be taught in primary schools.
- Misconceptions about LL (some people think learning LL causes mental retardation and is an “unthinkable” innovation in the 21st century).
- Lack of parental support (some parents say MT teaching will hamper the learning of English).
- Low funding from government: the current PBR for English and LL readers in the lower primary (P1-P3) is 14:1. If funds were sufficient, the ideal PBR would be 1:1.
- Lack of trained teachers in LL.
- Lack of reading materials.
- So many languages to handle at the same time.
- Minority languages (e.g Aringa-ti, Lubwisi, Lugungu, Luruuli, Pokot, Kakwa, Leb-thur, etc do not attract publishers).
- Politicisation of LL: as an indirect way of canvassing for votes, some politicians agitate for their MT to be taught in their constituencies without following the due process.
- Delayed policy decision: 65 LLs are recognised by the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. However, GWP (1992 pg.17) limits the languages to be used to those of “wider communication”. A decision remains to be taken as to how many LLs (or MTs) should be taught in primary schools. Currently the number of LL taught in primary schools stands at 27.

Conclusion

MT/LL teaching in Uganda has enabled many children to access meaningful education (despite the challenges and on-going criticisms).
- The program can only achieve good results if all stakeholders embrace it.
- MT/LL acquisition by all children can help to transform Uganda economically, politically, socially and culturally.
Phonics versus Whole Language

The dilemma for teachers of Lugbarati in Uganda’s Mother Tongue Education Policy

This article discusses learning and teaching of literacy in primary schools in the context of Uganda’s current mother tongue education policy, whose implementation within the Universal Primary Education (UPE) framework has tended to lean on the whole language methods of teaching reading, which critics are now blaming for the deteriorating reading abilities of pupils in the country.

Information from selected teachers and pupils revealed that pupils taught using the whole language method were not only less confident in reading words and sentences than those taught using phonic method, but they also performed poorly in spelling exercises as compared to their counterparts taught using the phonic method. There is therefore no one best way of teaching reading and writing, and efforts should be made to adopt an eclectic approach to teaching reading and writing to children in primary schools.
**Introduction and Background**

This article describes the experiences of Lugbarati language teachers in the implementation of Uganda’s mother tongue education policy that kicked off from 2007 (Ahabwe, 2011) in the context of the UPE described in Ngaka (2005) and which has been associated with a multiplicity of challenges: huge class sizes, high pupil dropout rates, children completing primary school without acquiring the needed reading and writing competencies; lack of local reference materials and deterioration in quality and performance of children at primary levels (URLCODA, 2007; Ssentanda, 2014; Ngaka and Masagazi, 2015).

Some critics have attributed these challenges partly to the introduction of the use of mother tongue for teaching reading in lower primary levels and the shift from the usual phonetic method of teaching reading to the whole language method (see Johnson, 2001; Krashen, 2002; Pearson, 2004).

This study drew insights from a project dubbed APPLE discussed in Ngaka and Masagazi (2015) and Ngaka, et al., (2016), which was conceptualized to address the deteriorating children’s literacy abilities in UPE, highlighted above by comparing the phonetic and whole language methods of teaching reading.

‘Phonic’ and ‘whole language’ methods are terms used to describe the different ways of teaching reading and writing. While whole language refers to a method of teaching children how to read by recognizing words as whole piece of language in which language should not be broken down into letters and combinations of letters and “decoded,” but be considered as a complete system of making meaning in a given context (Wagner, 1989; Bomengen, 2010), the phonic method refers to a way of teaching children how to read by correlating sounds with letters or groups of letters in an alphabetic writing system which involves learning how letters or letter groups represent individual sounds (Johnson, 2001). These approaches are discussed because Uganda is still grappling with reducing levels of illiteracy among its population (see Mwesigye, 2007; Batre, 2009, 2010 and 2012; and Bwambale, 2013). Unfortunately, very few studies, if any; have been conducted to examine which approach to teaching reading would enable them learn how to read better and faster. This study used the experiences from APPLE to find out the extent to which the teachers were prepared, how they felt about using the whole language method of teaching reading in vernacular, the challenges they were facing and what could be done to improve the situation.

**Behaviourism and constructivism: A theoretical framework**

Behaviorism assumes that children learn to do tasks when positively rewarded and extinguish behaviors when punished. On the other hand, constructivism assumes that learning is a social process linked to past experiences that then connects new knowledge to things learnt earlier – meaning that if we fail to connect new knowledge to the old one, we find it difficult to memorize it and consequently fail to gain a real understanding of what we are learning, hence no learning.

**Key findings from the study**

Research shows that there was inadequate preparation of teachers to handle the transitions from phonic to whole language approach to teaching reading under the thematic curriculum. Teachers perceived the whole language approach to teaching reading as being political and as a result developed negative attitudes towards it. Pupils instructed using phonetic method appeared to be more confident and did better in spelling exercises than their counterparts instructed using the whole language method. Lack of literacy materials complicated the work of the teachers and added onto the burden of some teachers actually not being fluent in Lugbarati, in which they were expected to teach reading.

**Conclusion and implications**

Although what Bomengen (2010) and Pearson (2004) refer to as ‘reading wars’ have been going on for a long time, there has been no agreement on which approach best helps pupils to learn reading more easily than the other. Neither of the two approaches can claim to offer the best help to learn to read better and faster. What is important is to equip teachers with skills for using both methods so that a mixed methods approach can be adopted to produce the desired results. The implication of this recommendation is that there is need to invest in research and retooling teachers to strike a balance between the two methods to enable the country attain what Desmond (2004) describes as the literacy for today and tomorrow.
The State of Education in Uganda - Uwezo Insights

Mary Goretti Nakabugo and Judith N. Tumusiime,
Uwezo Program, Twaweza East Africa

Uwezo, a programme of Twaweza East Africa, has for the last six years conducted citizen-led household-based assessments of learning. Every year, hundreds of children are assessed from their homes in literacy and numeracy and key assessment findings disseminated and shared with various stakeholders at different levels with the aim of stimulating debate and action towards improving learning outcomes.

In September-October 2014, Uwezo partnered with 1,738 citizen volunteers and assessed literacy and numeracy competencies of 28,174 children aged 6-16 years from 17,340 households, 860 villages across 28 districts in Uganda. A total of 860 public schools were also visited during the assessment. An analysis of the results of the assessment highlights five key issues related to the status of schooling and learning in Uganda. The five issues relate to the extent to which Uganda met the Education for All (EFA) goals as well as establish the baseline for assessing progress towards attaining Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030. Below are the five issues and suggested policy choices from Uwezo’s 5th learning assessment:

1. Early childhood development (ECD) prepares children to enter school at the correct age and learn well

ECD does not only help children start primary education at the right age but also gives them a good head start in learning various skills. Uwezo found that among the six-year-olds who had attended ECD, 63% were in Primary 1, whereas 51% of those who had not attended ECD were in Primary 1. This shows that those who have attended ECD were more likely to start primary school at the correct age. In terms of reading skills, Primary 3 pupils who had attended ECD were almost three times (25%) more likely to read a Primary 2 level story than those who did not (8%). Yet despite these advantages, ECD in Uganda remains a private commodity to be afforded by the well-to-do who mainly reside in urban areas.

Two policy options are suggested to expand ECD provision to the majority of Uganda’s children:
- Government to partner with existing ECD providers and seek, through subsidy and regulation, to raise standards and to minimise fees for poorer households
- Or attach a reception class (for children aged five years) to existing primary schools as a general provision. South Africa provides an example of this option.

2. The continuing struggle for adult literacy and lifelong learning

Uwezo assessments have shown a relationship between adult literacy, especially the literacy of mothers, and child literacy. Yet the national levels of adult and child literacy have remained consistently low. Uganda faces not only the challenge of helping older generations of illiterate adults but also a huge quantity of unfinished business in the form of primary school leavers and dropouts who have not acquired the literacy and numeracy skills that are vital for vocational training and improved wellbeing. Many secondary age children (72%) are neither enrolled in secondary schools nor Business, Technical and Vocational Education.

What can be done?
- Transfer responsibility for adult education to Ministry of Education for better coordination and monitoring
- Increase funding by specialized tax for vocational training and tax incentives for training opportunities from corporations.
Recognizing the many facets of inequality in education

As is the case in other developing countries, children in smaller and less urbanized settlements in Uganda tend to be at a disadvantage in all aspects of education; for example, certain districts face particular difficulties that impede formal education of any kind. The best known examples are Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit districts in Karamoja sub-region.

Uwezo assessment and review of literature also highlight inequalities relating to orphanhood and disability. Orphans and children with disabilities have a relatively high risk of non-completion of schooling, especially at the secondary level. Separating the two categories, children with disabilities in general have poorer educational prospects than orphans.

Evidence from research shows great inequalities exist, which affect children’s attendance at school, as well as the inputs, processes and outcomes of their education. Major factors in these inequalities seem to be regional and level of urbanization, parents’ wealth and level of education, school ownership, orphanhood and disability. Although such inequalities are present in all educational systems to some degree, their extent in Uganda reflects the long road the nation still has to traverse to achieve equality of opportunity.

What can be done?

- Greater ECDE attendance can decrease late entry
- Outreach efforts to parents on the importance of enrolling at the correct age could help
- Decrease direct and indirect costs, especially by ensuring schools receive the funds they are supposed to
- Disincentivise repetition — right now it can mean schools get more funds and schools use it to make sure more children pass examinations
- Reconsider whether seven is really the right length of time for primary school

Learning Outcomes are very low nationally

The 2014 Uwezo assessment reveals learning levels in Uganda remain very low and skewed in favour of private schools and some geographical regions (with children in the central and western regions possessing higher literacy and numeracy competencies than their counterparts in the eastern and northern regions). Nationally, only 13% in Primary 3 and 74% in Primary 7 were able to read a Primary 2 level English story and correctly solve Primary 2 level division.

Addressing the challenge of low learning outcomes needs systematic reform of the education sector and getting policies, evaluation and assessments to focus on learning outcomes as a measure of success. We in Twaweza have also identified critical areas that we believe can significantly influence learning outcomes. In particular, we are focusing on the curriculum, teacher motivation and accountability, and school leadership. Our work over the years has led us to conclude that despite the myriad factors influencing learning, addressing these issues could deliver real change.

Twaweza is carefully reviewing all available evidence and developing a series of hypotheses in these issues on what works to improve education, and running a range of experiments to validate our hypotheses, from small scale single school interventions to a fully representative randomized control trial. We particularly emphasize an approach known as positive deviance which helps to uncover local community-generated solutions to social issues.

Most of all we believe that Uganda’s state of education, and learning outcomes in particular, will improve if we all play our role, from parents to the Head of State.
Humpty Dumpty is a character in English nursery rhyme, probably originally a riddle and one of the best known in the English-speaking world.

Mother-Tongue Literacy: The Underappreciated Midwife

In simple terms, literacy means the ability to read and write. Here we’re not looking at literacy’s other meaning of competence or knowledge in a specified area. Hand in hand with literacy goes numeracy, which is the ability to understand and work with numbers. I view both literacy and numeracy as midwives: they deliver to us the really important knowledge, skills and values without which we would find life very difficult to live.
In Uganda, there have been arguments against teaching children to read in their mother tongue first before they transition to reading in English. These arguments are not limited to towns; they are also found in rural areas. Opposition to teaching literacy to children in their mother tongue first even became stronger when the thematic curriculum, which recommends that mother tongue be used as a medium of instruction from Primary 1 to 3, was introduced. What are the merits of mother-tongue literacy then?

First and foremost, our mother tongues are stores of our cultures and the knowledge, skills and values that come with them. Second, research has shown that from birth up to the age of three years, we naturally pick up language rather than learning it. It is this language that we have picked up, then, that we should first learn to read in rather than one which is simply being imposed from the outside. As children acquire vocabulary skills and as their vocabulary expands, they develop awareness of language. In the process, children learn that objects can carry different names, that concepts and ideas can be explained in different ways, and that they can be looked at from different viewpoints. Once a child can, in written form, confidently and accurately label and describe objects as well as express concepts and ideas in his mother tongue, he will have laid a solid foundation for the next stage. This next stage is the transition to literacy – as well as numeracy – in a second language. This transition will be a lot easier for the child because he will only now have to put a fresh set of words on the objects, concepts and ideas that he can confidently deal with in his mother tongue. The transfer of language skills from his mother tongue to the second language will also not be too difficult.

I will use my own example, besides that of the famous poet and scholar Okot p’Bitek, to support the argument in favour of first teaching literacy in the mother tongue. When I first joined Primary 1, in the late 1960s, I went to a school, Lugore Primary School, where for the first two years of primary education, Acoli was the language of instruction. To all intents and purposes, Acoli was my mother tongue in the sense that it was the language that I had first learnt and that I spoke fluently. Today, several decades later, I can still recite – even sing – with ease, see in my mind’s eye and connect emotionally with the items in a chapter of the Acoli primer we used in Primary 1. The primer was entitled Cako Kwan i Leb Acoli (‘Learning to Read in Acoli Language’). These items are: Lajok, Jako, Jatara, Jeba, Jelejele, Jora, Jokon, Lajaja. All these words, with the accompanying pictures, referred to things and ideas I was familiar with, that were drawn from a physical, philosophical and cultural environment that I could connect with. I, therefore, had a lot of fun reeling off the items – frequently at the top of my voice.

Then came a rather strange English rhyme when I got to Primary 3, ‘Humpty Dumpty’:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men
Couldn’t put Humpty together again.

First, I remember the difficulty of understanding who, or what, this Humpty Dumpty was and what business he (it) had sitting on top of a wall and then falling off only to scatter into tiny pieces. (And this only after the teacher had explained to us why there was need to put Humpty Dumpty together again.) Second was the difficulty of pronouncing some of the words!

Now about Okot p’Bitek, whose name is mostly associated with his most famous long poem, the classic Song of Lawino. First written in Acoli as Wer pa Lawino, the Acoli version is generally considered a better version by almost all the Lwo speakers who have read it. Besides its surging energy, it benefits from two things that the English version lacks: it is written in couplets and has a musical rhythm. Okot’s great mastery of his mother tongue did not stop him from excelling as a writer and scholar who operated mostly in English. If anything, in his writings and lectures, there is clear evidence of cross-pollination between the two languages.

My final word, then, is that the importance of mother-tongue literacy in education should not be underrated. Languages have a way of reinforcing each other. Furthermore, cross-transfers of language skills from one language to another can only enrich them and broaden opportunities to acquire knowledge in other areas.

From birth up to the age of three years, we naturally pick up language rather than learning it. It is this language that we have picked up, then, that we should first learn to read in rather than one which is simply being imposed from the outside.
Factors against literacy development in East Africa:

Reasons for concern over sustainable schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Research into early literacy development in Sub-Saharan Africa is premised on the reality of the sustainable schooling prospects for school-going age children. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) pointed out that an estimated 61 million children of primary school age were out of school in 2010.

Introduction

Progress has slowed mainly because the number of children out of school has remained at about 30 million over the last five years, leaving more than one half of the world’s out-of-school children living in sub-Saharan Africa. More than one in five (22%) primary school age children in the region have either never attended school or left before completing primary school, demonstrating that the region is not able to cope with the rising demand for education from its growing school-age population. In Uganda, as indeed in the rest of East Africa, the situation mirrors that of the sub-continent closely and is in need of intervention initiatives.

State of Literacy Development and sustainable schooling

The major growing concern in Uganda is that school children are not attaining the desired levels of literacy proficiency and learning with 59% of pupils in Primary Six failing to get the required level of literacy in spite of the governmental focus and financing (Uwezo, 2012). Researches focusing on Uganda illustrate that reading and literacy challenges facing the country include failure of effective curriculum implementation, inconsistent application of the language policy; poor reading instruction methodology and lack of harmonization between the teacher education curricula and that of primary education as well as lack of relevant and adequate reading materials. Wider research in sub-Saharan Africa, however, indicates that risk factors against literacy are multi-facetted and require multi-pronged approaches (Ngwaru, (2015), Ngwaru & Oluga 2015). Ngwaru (2014), Ngwaru (2013), Ngwaru, (2012), Ngwaru, (2011). The more direct questions to ask therefore become:

- What are the risk factors emanating from family and community socio-historical, cultural and economic factors that influence literacy development parameters?
- What strategies could be embarked
upon to adequately redress the full extent of such risk factors?

- How can sustainability be built into both pedagogies and innovations to retain momentum once schools and communities have bought into effective approaches?

**Parent Teacher Empowerment**

This study was carried out to establish the baselines of literacy in order to empower parents and teachers for sustainable literacy development and schooling.

**Summary of the Results**

Although interpretive, these results partly arose from the survey baseline and therefore are easily applicable in East Africa. In the study area parents were youthful (56.3 per cent) were in the 26-40 age bracket while 7.9% were between 20-25 years and 35% were aged 41 and above. Although young, parents had very little awareness of the potential potency of their involvement in children’s literacy development and as a result their engagement with their children’s schools remained low at 16% engaging in school committee activities while 8.0% in other committees. In the context of Uganda, we could ask whether the parents are involved in their children’s education in any more proportion than the study parents. Because of the similarity of contexts, we can assume we know the answer. Factors recognized to have dominant overarching influence on literacy development as percentages of respondents were: the national economy 90.5, education system 87.4, and school curriculum 77.5. (Are these percentages?) The language policy pitting English against Kiswahili was deemed to be the fourth most influential factor at 69.1. The economy was subsistent based on crop farming and fishing but unable to make communities break away from the poverty cycle. Communities generated income primarily from farming (88%) with the majority (79.8%) earning less than Tsh50,000 per month (less than $2.00) a day. Parents’ level of education was generally low with 80.8% holding primary education.

**Conclusion**

Details of the findings illustrated that the schools and home communities had historical, economic and socio-cultural conditions that did not reinforce literacy practices. Fragile links existed between the practice of reading and writing and the social and community structures as school-type literacy practices were not imbedded therein. Parents and communities remained pre-occupied with different levels of challenges, including lack of development and intergenerational poverty. They required empowerment. Sadly, schools were equally grappling with a range of systemic challenges such as the lack of resources and general capacity among stakeholders. This study concluded with holding parents, teacher pedagogical and materials development capacity building workshop that culminated in the development of 10 Early Years Literacy Classes booklets in Kiswahili (seven) and English (three).
Community participation and literacy:
A CASE STUDY DISCUSSION OF HOW LABE SUPPORTED GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO EFA AND MDG FRAMEWORKS.

Introduction
Access to and participation in literacy practices useful for communities in remote areas of Uganda continues to be elusive. This is despite twenty-five years of efforts associated with UNESCO’s Education for All frameworks and campaigns initially encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals and now extended into the new Sustainable Development Goals. Government of Uganda has undertaken education reforms in line with the 1990 and 2000 Education for All Conferences. And these include curriculum reform and commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, which encompass universal primary school enrolment, gender parity in education and adult literacy. A key feature of government’s education policy has been limited success in delivery of adequate education to marginalized communities physically distanced from central structures of authority. Communities in remote, border-districts, often associated with social conflict, severe environmental disturbances and dislocation, are those who are most at risk.

This paper describes how Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) has built up expertise in working with literacy, particularly women’s literacy, in remote communities in post-conflict areas of northern Uganda. LABE has learnt how to engage with marginalized communities in ways that encourage community ownership and participation, and simultaneously how to work alongside national and local level government structures.

Dismal implementation of local language education policies in sub-Saharan Africa
There are several country examples across sub-Saharan Africa where local language-in-education policies have either failed to take off, or been implemented very slowly or been completely abandoned (e.g. Kenya, Uganda, Cameroon and Ghana). Several factors account for this but key among these is the lack of clear implementation plans that recognize and give space to micro-level actions to support macro-level policy. So the policies have become merely pronouncements clearly stated on paper, but without concrete measures of implementation at local level. It is also assumed by central government authorities that communities in outlying regions do not have the capacity to make informed decisions or to take responsibility for education. Yet parental involvement is a key element...
to ensuring that children remain in school or return to school because of a given government education policy.

Thus when Uganda re-introduced local language medium of education in early primary through a top-down approach, it was fiercely resisted by parents, teachers and other stakeholders, all concerned that this will compromise the quality of children’s education.

**LABE’s model for community-level participation**

LABE had taken cognizance of the flaws of the top-down language planning approach government had adopted, including the failure to adequately sensitize communities about the benefits of the policy. The model LABE uses to support national level implementation of the local language policy is anchored on what language scholars refer to as language planning from below or micro-level language planning. During adult literacy sessions, parents and community members analyze the importance of having their children educated in their local languages to ensure informed community participation. They explore how local languages: ease children transition from home to school; increase parental understanding of content children learn in school thus strengthening home-school links. Parents have been encouraged to attend joint sessions with their children at school while teachers have been shown how to recognize and incorporate culturally relevant topics into the curriculum, in recognition of the funds of knowledge principle.

**Results**

The LABE methodology is one of collaborative and mutual respect and it focuses on capacity development of both local government and community interventions simultaneously. The model has shown how parents, grandparents and younger siblings have started to attend literacy classes alongside primary school children in classrooms and how they carry literacy practices between school and the village, with after-hours literacy provision for children. It continues to show how communities have initiated early child-care centres in the villages to free mothers to work in fields or other micro-economic enterprises.

Similarly, capacity development, orthographic development, and materials development training has occurred with five language boards, for Acholi, Aringa, Kakwa, Lugbara and Madi languages. The development and printing of sets of story books in each of the five languages have been successful though distribution is limited owing to meagre financial resources available to LABE.

In sum, LABE’s model is instructive in showing how community participation and agency have a role in local implementation of macro-level policy, especially with non-dominant languages and when central authorities are still struggling to implement the local language policy.
Name: Mbekeka Margaret
Class: P.6 B
School: Buganda Road Primary School
Sex: Female
Years: 11 yrs

SANITATION
Sanitation is the general cleanliness of an area. It can be maintained when people clean their places of work, homes, and many others. Most people who live in places like Katanga do not care about the sanitation in their areas.

In Buganda Road Primary School, we maintain our sanitation by sweeping the compound in the morning before lessons and after break. The government is also putting in effort to make sure the city is clean.

In my home we keep sanitation by having a toilet, a rubbish bin, sweep the compound and many others. People who don’t keep sanitation are likely to get cholera, typhoid, diarrhoea and many others.

KEEP OUR CITY CLEAN FOR A BETTER UGANDA AND CONTROL DISEASES IN OUR MOTHERLAND
Mutyoni Akira
P.E.A
11 years
Female
Buganda Road Primary School

SANITATION
Sanitation is the general cleanliness of our environment. Many people in Uganda maintain proper sanitation in very many ways for example disposing of human wastes properly; draining away stagnant water; sweeping the compounds; washing our beddings; boiling drinking water.

We should maintain proper sanitation to avoid contamination of the environment. We can also dispose human wastes in their right places like toilets and pit latrines to avoid disease vectors like mosquitoes, houseflies and tsetseflies that breed from bushy areas. We can slash all the tall bushes that are breeding places for tsetseflies and mosquitoes and we should drain away stagnant water to prevent the spread of vectors like the female anopheline mosquitoes which cause malaria, the tiger mosquitoes which cause yellow fever and the culex mosquitoes which cause elephantiasis.

In conclusion, I encourage all Ugandans out there to maintain sanitation in their environment because this will give good example to your genes and protect the future generation.
On our sanitation

The water we make to improve on you,
Sanitation,
It helps you live longer.
We would try to improve on-

You are our friend,
Those who destroy you are bad.

Let’s work hard and fight these people
To protect our sanitation.

We should plant trees,
The trees that will give us rain.
The rain that will quench our thirst on cleanliness.
Yes, we should protect our sanitation.

By Nuyeemu Joshua
Buikwe Road Primary School
PSA 2016 Y

Tourism

Tourism is the travel for leisure.
In Uganda we have many tourist attractions.
A variety of types of foods.
Iconic cultural sites.
Mountains like, Rwenzori, which are called mountains of the moon.
Waterfalls, Owen Falls, Ssezibwa and the source of the Nile.

The importance of tourism:
It is a source of foreign exchange.
It helps to preserve cultural sites.
It promotes international co-operation.
It promotes development of infrastructure.

Is tourism an industry? Yes.
It is a source of income.
It creates employment opportunities to people.

Why tourism is referred to as invisible hand?
It demands much physical exchange of goods, but income is earned.

LiteracyMatters

Enhancing Literacy through Writing

Sanitation

People, we have to keep sanitation. Please let us keep sanitation because if we keep sanitation we shall live in a healthy environment and if we don’t keep sanitation we shall get diseases. If we don’t keep sanitation we shall get diseases like cholera, if we keep sanitation we shall not get diseases.

We can promote sanitation if we do so:

- Sweeping the compound daily
- Teaching people how to promote sanitation
- Mopping our houses daily
- Keeping rubbish around our homes

Name: Kuteyie Ivan
Class: PSA
SCHOOL: BRAPS

Sanitation

Sanitation is the general cleanliness of our environment. Many people maintain sanitation in different ways. For example, proper disposal of refuse, sweeping the environment, and boiling water before drinking. This is why people keep sanitation to prevent diseases such as typhoid, cholera, diarrhoea because they are deadly diseases. Most diseases are brought about by using dirty water containers. But they can be a solution to this problem.

We can prevent diseases by using clean water and water containers.

One can also construct a water trough which many people call an innovation which helps us wash our hands without contaminating water or our hands again. Sometimes when we go to wash our hands in the toilet, we wash our hands first then touch the tap after washing our hands. Then we go with the germ we wanted to prevent.

Here are the steps of how to make a wash trough:

Materials needed:
A small jerrycan
Three wooden poles
Small pieces of wood

Steps:
1. Get three poles and fix them in the ground
2. Make holes on the jerrycan to support the jerrycan on the pole
3. Take a string and fix the hole you have made in the jerrycan
4. Tie the string on the nails
5. Get a small piece of wood and fix it on the mouth of the jerrycan
6. Pour water into the jerrycan and rotate the step and the wood will be rail released.
Name: Mubiru Shillat
class: PB
school: Buganda Road Primary School
sex: Female
Years: 10 yrs

SANITATION
Sanitation is the general cleanliness of a place with effort of preventing diseases.
Poor sanitation may lead to diseases like cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid.
We can stop these diseases by promoting sanitation. We can promoting
sanitation by 
Cleaning our homes, toilets or latrines
Burning rubbish
Proper disposal of rubbish.
Sanitation works along with personal hygiene because when you want to
promote sanitation you must first practice personal hygiene. You will
get diseases when you drain stagnant water or even burn rubbish
when your personal hygiene is poor.
You should educate others about sanitation and personal hygiene
to prevent diseases.
It's our duty to promote sanitation.

We must promote sanitation and personal hygiene for a better life
in Uganda.
Recognizing the Literacy and Reading Teacher

On 5th October every year, the world celebrates World Teachers’ Day and we believe that a teacher is the one most important life-improving resource God gave humanity. I was touched; close to two years ago on 29/9/2015, when the Vision Group led Uganda to recognize the most hardworking head teachers around the country and; no doubt, their leadership is critical for any successful literary programme.

However, after deeper reflection, I would have done it slightly differently. I would like us to recognize and celebrate more specifically the literacy teacher. Being a teacher, particularly a teacher of literacy and reading, means sharing so much of yourself, your emotions, knowledge, strategies, sounds and even authors.

As teachers of reading, you help breathe life and joy into a book at times when learning is too quick, rote and lifeless. Teachers celebrate learners’ success, embrace their frustrations as they push them to overcome obstacles that feel momentarily insurmountable.

A good literacy teacher will constantly doubt him/herself, wondering if what you are doing is good enough or carrying all your learners along. But it is that doubt and self-reflection that makes you a stronger, better and more professional teacher, able to give it your all.

Being a teacher of literacy and reading doesn’t simply mean giving students access to instructional best practices, it often means and includes giving learners some insights into who you are as a reader, teacher, and person.

All too often, attention is paid to the “rigorous practice” of reading but no discussion on “fun”. Yet all good literacy teachers strive everyday to connect “fun” with rigor as you create new ways of engaging your learners with difficult texts. This kind of instruction does not just happen, nor is it inherent in every curriculum. No, it comes from teachers who give it their all.

Therefore my dear literacy teacher, know that Reading Association of Uganda knows how, hard your job is and how much of yourself you give to your learners.

To those who give it their all on a daily basis to teach literacy effectively, I thank you.
UGANDA

COMMUNITY/CHILDREN READING TENTS
HELD BY RAU TODAY

RAU = Reading Association of Uganda