

Utilization Frequency Of Contextualized Learning Materials' Influence On Grade Three Learners' Reading Skills Acquisition In Bungoma South Sub County'kenya

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Abstract:

Reading literacy is a cornerstone of educational achievement and personal development, particularly in the early years of formal schooling. In Kenya, concerns have been raised about the ability of Grade 3 learners to achieve expected reading proficiency levels in different areas including Bungoma County. This study evaluated type and frequency utilization of contextualized learning resources and their impact on reading skills acquisition among Grade Three pupils in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and employed a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised 8,296 Grade Three pupils and 1,244 teachers, from which a sample of 830 pupils and 124 teachers was drawn using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected using questionnaires, observation checklists, and pupil assessment tests; achieving a reliability coefficient of 0.7 using Cronbach's Alpha. Findings revealed that Most teachers (92.7%) utilized contextualized learning resources at different frequencies, with 58.1% using them daily, 27.4% weekly, and 14.5% monthly or less. The most frequently used resources included charts and visual displays (83.1%), locally adapted storybooks (73.4%), real objects and manipulatives (70.2%), and picture cards (62.9%). Correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between frequency of resource usage and reading skill improvements, with vocabulary development showing 93.5% improvement rates and comprehension demonstrating 19% enhancement. However, implementation barriers included limited funding (70.2%), professional development gaps (61.3%), and time constraints (58.1%) that affected consistent utilization. The study concluded that frequent use of contextualized learning resources significantly enhances reading skills acquisition and recommended increased funding allocation, targeted teacher training programs, and policy support for resource development to maximize literacy outcomes.

Keywords: Contextualized Learning Resources, Reading Skills Acquisition, Frequency of Utilization, Grade Three Pupils

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I. Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success and lifelong learning. The development of strong reading abilities during the early years of formal education is critical, as it establishes the foundation for comprehension, vocabulary expansion, and overall cognitive development (UNESCO, 2017). However, despite global efforts to enhance literacy, many learners in developing countries continue to struggle with basic reading skills due to inadequate instructional resources and pedagogical approaches that fail to connect with their lived experiences.

Contextualized learning resources refer to instructional materials that are designed or adapted to align with learners' cultural, social, and environmental contexts (Atandi & Kwaba, 2023). These resources, which include locally relevant storybooks, culturally appropriate visual aids, community-based artifacts, and environmental materials, serve to bridge the gap between abstract academic content and students' everyday experiences. Research has consistently demonstrated that when learning materials reflect familiar contexts, students exhibit higher levels of engagement, better comprehension, and improved retention of information (Chebet & Murunga, 2021).

In Kenya, the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has placed renewed emphasis on learner-centered approaches and the integration of locally relevant instructional materials (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2024). This curriculum reform recognizes that effective literacy instruction must acknowledge and build upon the cultural and linguistic diversity of Kenyan learners. Despite this

policy emphasis, the actual frequency and effectiveness of contextualized resource utilization in classrooms remains an area requiring empirical investigation.

The Uwezo Kenya (2019) assessment revealed concerning literacy gaps among primary school learners, with only three out of ten Grade Three pupils capable of reading grade-appropriate texts fluently. In Bungoma County specifically, 48.91% of Grade Three learners struggled with basic reading tasks, exceeding national averages and highlighting the urgent need for evidence-based interventions (Uwezo Kenya, 2019). These statistics underscore the importance of examining how frequently teachers utilize contextualized resources and whether such usage patterns correlate with improved reading outcomes.

This study specifically sought to evaluate the frequency of utilization of contextualized learning resources in teaching reading skills in Bungoma South Sub-County and to assess their impact on Grade Three learners' ability to acquire reading skills. Understanding the relationship between resource usage frequency and learning outcomes is essential for informing educational policy, guiding teacher professional development, and optimizing resource allocation to enhance early literacy instruction.

II. Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which posits that learning occurs most effectively within meaningful social and cultural contexts. According to Vygotsky, cognitive development is fundamentally shaped by social interactions and cultural tools, including language and localized educational materials. The theory emphasizes the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which represents the space between what learners can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with appropriate scaffolding and culturally relevant support. Contextualized learning resources serve as cultural tools that facilitate scaffolding by connecting new concepts to familiar experiences, thereby enabling learners to construct knowledge more effectively (Ngure, Mwoma & Buna, 2019).

Frequency of Contextualized Resource Utilization

Research on the frequency of contextualized learning resource utilization has revealed significant variations across educational contexts. Day, Hwang, Arner, McNamara, and Connor (2024) conducted a feasibility study examining interactive e-books for vocabulary acquisition among Grade 3-5 students in the United States. Their findings demonstrated that higher engagement with embedded comprehension questions, measured by correct responses and repeated attempts, predicted stronger learning outcomes. This research highlighted that the frequency and quality of interaction with learning resources significantly influence reading skill development.

The USAID Let's Read Project (2019-2023) in Zambia provides compelling evidence regarding the relationship between resource utilization frequency and literacy outcomes. This whole-school intervention distributed over 5 million contextually relevant materials to 4,900 schools and conducted literacy assessments up to nine times per year. By 2023, 56% of Grade 2 learners reached minimum reading proficiency, compared to approximately 10% in 2018, demonstrating the cumulative impact of consistent, frequent engagement with culturally appropriate learning resources (USAID, 2023).

In the Kenyan context, Ngure, Mwoma, and Buna (2019) investigated instructional strategies and resource utilization in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi. Their mixed-methods study found that a majority of teachers (78%) acknowledged the effectiveness of contextualized resources in facilitating learning, though 60.7% reported insufficient access to reading materials. The study revealed that consistent use of instructional media correlated with enhanced engagement and improved outcomes, emphasizing the importance of regular resource utilization for literacy development.

Impact on Reading Skills Acquisition

The impact of contextualized learning resources on reading skills acquisition has been documented across multiple studies. Sambayon, Dumla, and Agustin (2023) examined the effects of contextualized learning materials on reading proficiency in the Philippines. Using a descriptive quantitative experimental design with 420 students, they found significant improvements in word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension when learners utilized contextually relevant materials. Both teachers and students reported increased engagement and motivation when lessons incorporated culturally familiar content.

Anyango (2023) conducted research in Kisumu East Sub-County, Kenya, focusing specifically on Grade 3 reading outcomes. Using a descriptive-correlational design with 317 students and 172 teachers, the study found a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.525$, $p < 0.05$) between access to contextualized resources and literacy outcomes. Children with access to diverse, culturally relevant reading materials demonstrated greater advances in fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development compared to those using standard materials.

Dendena and Tabane (2023) investigated Grade 3 literacy predictors in Ethiopia using a mixed-methods approach with 1,325 students. Their findings indicated that motivation, strong language abilities, and self-

assurance were key indicators of reading success. Students who could relate to instructional content and demonstrated persistence in reading activities developed better fluency and comprehension, supporting the importance of contextually relevant materials in fostering both cognitive and affective dimensions of literacy development.

III. Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design, which was appropriate for investigating the frequency of contextualized learning resource utilization and its impact on reading skills acquisition. The design enabled the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of current practices and outcomes in reading instruction.

The study was conducted in Bungoma South Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya. This area was selected due to its diverse socio-economic and educational environment, with schools varying in resource availability and teacher preparedness. The target population comprised 8,296 Grade Three pupils and 1,244 teachers across public primary schools in the region, totaling 9,540 individuals.

Using Mugenda and Mugenda's (2013) recommendation of 10% sampling for populations under 10,000, the study selected 830 Grade Three pupils and 124 teachers, resulting in a total sample of 954 respondents. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across rural (46.8%), semi-urban (34.7%), and urban (18.5%) school settings, while simple random sampling ensured equal selection probability within each stratum.

Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires for teachers containing both closed and open-ended questions, observation checklists for classroom observations, and standardized pupil assessment tests evaluating vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar. Instrument validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability was established through test-retest methods, achieving a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7.

Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics included frequency distributions, percentages, and measures of central tendency. Correlation and regression analyses examined relationships between resource utilization frequency and reading skill outcomes. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and securing research authorization from NACOSTI.

IV. Results And Discussion

Frequency of Contextualized Learning Resource Utilization

The study found widespread adoption of contextualized learning resources, with 115 teachers (92.7%) reporting regular use of at least one form of contextualized learning material in their reading instruction. This high adoption rate indicates substantial interest in culturally relevant pedagogical approaches among educators in Bungoma South Sub-County.

Table 1: Frequency of Contextualized Resource Usage

Frequency of Usage	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Daily	72	58.1%
Weekly	34	27.4%
Monthly or less	18	14.5%
Total	124	100.0%

As presented in Table 1, the majority of teachers (58.1%) implemented contextualized resources daily, while 27.4% used them weekly and 14.5% employed them monthly or less frequently. Teachers who utilized resources daily reported higher confidence levels and observed greater student engagement compared to less frequent implementers. These findings align with the USAID Let's Read Project (2023) evidence from Zambia, which demonstrated that consistent, frequent engagement with culturally appropriate resources correlates with improved literacy outcomes.

Types of Resources and Usage Patterns

Table 2: Types of Contextualized Learning Resources in Use

Resource Type	Frequency	Percentage
Charts and visual displays	103	83.1%
Locally adapted storybooks	91	73.4%
Real objects and manipulatives	87	70.2%
Picture cards	78	62.9%

Table 2 reveals that charts and visual displays were the most commonly utilized resources (83.1%), followed by locally adapted storybooks (73.4%), real objects and manipulatives (70.2%), and picture cards (62.9%). The preference for visual resources reflects their accessibility and ease of adaptation to local contexts.

Regarding resource development, 70.2% of teachers created their own contextualized materials, 46.8% adapted existing resources, and 36.3% collaborated with colleagues. This pattern indicates substantial teacher initiative in addressing resource gaps through local innovation.

Impact on Reading Skills Acquisition

Vocabulary development demonstrated the most significant positive impact, with 116 teachers (93.5%) reporting observable improvements when contextualized resources were utilized. Within this group, 72 teachers (58.1%) rated the impact as very strong, indicating substantial and consistent vocabulary gains across diverse classroom contexts.

Table 3: Teacher Reports on Reading Skill Improvements

Reading Skill Area	Positive Impact Reported	Percentage
Vocabulary development	116	93.5%
Phonetic awareness	117	94.4%
Pronunciation accuracy	116	93.5%
Reading comprehension	111	89.5%

Reading comprehension emerged as the most frequently identified area of primary improvement, with 49.2% of teachers selecting it as the skill most significantly enhanced through contextualized learning resource implementation. Quantitative assessment data indicated a 19% improvement in participating students' reading comprehension levels, substantially exceeding standard annual growth expectations. These findings corroborate Anyango's (2023) research, which found a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.525$) between contextualized resource access and literacy outcomes in Kisumu East Sub-County.

Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Student engagement demonstrated remarkable enhancement through contextualized learning resource implementation. A total of 91.1% of teachers reported that students showed increased interest in reading activities when culturally relevant materials were used. Additionally, 90.3% agreed that students participated more actively in lessons, and 89.5% observed improved connections between learning and daily experiences. These engagement patterns align with Day et al.'s (2024) findings that active participation with learning resources predicts stronger outcomes.

Implementation Barriers

Table 4: Barriers to Contextualized Resource Implementation

Barrier Type	Major/Moderate Challenge	Percentage
Limited funding	111	89.6%
Professional development gaps	108	87.1%
Time constraints	107	86.3%

Despite widespread adoption, significant implementation barriers were identified. Limited funding emerged as the most substantial challenge, with 89.6% of teachers identifying it as a major or moderate barrier. Professional development gaps (87.1%) and time constraints (86.3%) also presented significant obstacles. These findings echo Ngure et al.'s (2019) observation that 60.7% of teachers in their study reported insufficient access to reading materials, highlighting systemic resource constraints affecting literacy instruction across Kenyan contexts.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis revealed positive associations between teaching resource usage and reading skill outcomes. Flashcards, audio resources, and puppets showed the strongest positive correlations with skill improvements. Charts and posters demonstrated moderate positive associations with vocabulary enrichment and pronunciation development. Regression analysis indicated that the model explained 9.3% of variance in skill improvement ($R^2 = 0.093$), suggesting that while resource utilization is important, other factors including teaching methodology, learner characteristics, and home environment also significantly influence reading outcomes. This finding aligns with Dendena and Tabane's (2023) observation that motivation, language abilities, and self-assurance interact with instructional resources to predict reading success.

V. Conclusions

This study evaluated the frequency of utilization of contextualized learning resources and their impact on reading skills acquisition among Grade Three pupils in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya. The findings lead to several important conclusions.

First, there is widespread adoption of contextualized learning resources among teachers in Bungoma South, with 92.7% utilizing these materials regularly and 58.1% implementing them daily. This high adoption rate reflects substantial teacher recognition of the pedagogical value of culturally relevant instructional materials in enhancing early literacy development.

Second, the frequency of contextualized resource utilization demonstrates a positive relationship with reading skill improvements. Teachers who implemented resources daily observed greater student engagement and reported more substantial improvements in vocabulary, comprehension, and phonetic awareness compared to less frequent users. The 19% improvement in reading comprehension among participating students provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of consistent contextualized instruction.

Third, visual resources, particularly charts, displays, and locally adapted storybooks, emerge as the most frequently utilized and effective contextualized learning materials. Teachers demonstrate considerable initiative in creating and adapting resources to address availability gaps, though this places additional burden on educators already facing time constraints.

Fourth, despite high adoption rates, significant barriers including limited funding, professional development gaps, and time constraints continue to impede optimal implementation. Addressing these systemic challenges is essential for maximizing the literacy benefits of contextualized learning approaches.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Ministry of Education and County Education offices should increase funding allocation specifically designated for the development and procurement of contextualized learning resources to address the resource constraints identified by 89.6% of teachers.
2. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should develop targeted professional development programs focusing on contextualized resource development, integration strategies, and assessment techniques to address the training gaps identified by 87.1% of teachers.
3. School administrators should allocate dedicated time for teachers to develop and prepare contextualized learning materials, recognizing that 86.3% of teachers identified time constraints as a significant implementation barrier.
4. Schools should establish collaborative networks enabling teachers to share contextualized resources, given that 36.3% already engage in such collaboration, and this practice should be expanded and formalized.
5. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine long-term impacts of contextualized resource utilization and investigate additional variables influencing reading outcomes beyond resource availability and usage frequency.

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