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TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS AND CLASSROOM EFFICIENCY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KIBUKU TOWN COUNCIL, UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of teachers' pedagogical skills on classroom efficiency in primary schools in Kibuku Town Council, Uganda. A cross sectional research design was employed with 126 respondents comprising 88 teachers, 13 head teachers, 13 deputy head teachers, and 12 directors of studies from 13 primary schools. Data were collected using structured questionnaires (Content Validity Index > .92, Cronbach's α = .82) and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and simple linear regression. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's six phase framework. Teachers demonstrated high levels of pedagogical skills with an aggregate mean score of 3.80 out of 5.00. Strengths were identified in lesson planning (M = 4.12), provision of clear learning objectives (M = 4.08), and regular assessment of learner understanding (M = 4.05). Weaknesses were identified in use of varied teaching methods (M = 3.45) and effective use of teaching aids (M = 3.12). Pedagogical skills showed a strong positive correlation with classroom efficiency ($r = .68$, $p < .001$) and explained 46 percent of its variance ($R^2 = .46$). Qualitative findings revealed that thorough lesson planning, clear learning objectives, active learner engagement, and regular assessment enhance classroom efficiency, while resource constraints limit the use of varied methods and teaching aids. Teachers' pedagogical skills significantly influence classroom efficiency in rural Ugandan primary schools. Strengthening differentiated instruction and resource utilization should be priorities for improving classroom efficiency in resource limited settings.

Keywords: Pedagogical Skills, Classroom Efficiency, Primary Schools, and Teacher Abilities

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education and student learning outcomes globally have increasingly been linked to teachers' professional competencies and the efficiency of classroom practices (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Hattie, 2023). In sub–Saharan Africa, educational reforms in the late twentieth century emphasized strengthening teacher capacity, pedagogical skills, and instructional preparation as countries sought to expand access while maintaining quality (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Akyeampong, Pryor, & Ampiah, 2008). In Uganda, Universal Primary Education, introduced in 1997, significantly increased enrollment but also contributed to challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and pressure on limited teaching resources, which accentuated the need for stronger teacher preparation and effective classroom practices (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018; Nabunya, 2022).

Classroom efficiency, reflected in effective lesson delivery, learner engagement, time management, and attainment of learning outcomes, is largely influenced by teachers' pedagogical abilities. However, current evidence suggests that classroom efficiency remains relatively low in many Ugandan

primary schools, as reflected in persistent poor learning outcomes. According to UNICEF (2023), many primary school learners in Uganda lack basic proficiency in reading comprehension and numeracy skills. Similarly, the Uganda National Examinations Board (2022) reported that a considerable number of learners complete primary education without attaining required foundational competencies, suggesting inefficiencies in classroom instruction.

Despite government interventions such as teacher training, curriculum reforms, and continuous professional development programs (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2024), the problem persists, particularly in rural and semiurban areas where challenges such as limited pedagogical skills, inadequate teaching resources, and large class sizes constrain effective teaching. While previous studies have focused on teacher competence and student performance broadly, there is limited context specific evidence on how teachers' pedagogical skills directly influence classroom efficiency in rural Ugandan settings such as Kibuku Town Council.

This study was guided by social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and is mediated by more knowledgeable others, such as teachers, who facilitate the learner's cognitive development. The theory posits that effective teaching depends on the teacher's ability to scaffold learning, organize meaningful interactions, and use appropriate instructional strategies to support learners. This aligns closely with the concept of teachers' pedagogical skills in this study, which include lesson planning, instructional delivery, use of teaching aids, learner engagement, and assessment practices. Classroom efficiency can therefore be understood as the outcome of how well teachers apply these abilities to facilitate learning.

Literature Review

Several scholars have attempted to define pedagogical skills from different perspectives. According to Okonkwo and Nweke (2022), pedagogical skills encompass the teacher's ability to plan lessons effectively, select appropriate instructional methods, use varied teaching aids, and assess learner progress in ways that promote meaningful learning. These scholars argue that pedagogical skills are not merely about delivering content but about creating conditions that enable learners to construct knowledge actively. Similarly, Muwonge, Ssenyonga, and Nabatanzi (2023) define pedagogical skills as the art and science of teaching that involves creating engaging learning experiences, adapting instruction to learner needs, and using formative assessment to guide teaching decisions.

Previous research has shown that pedagogical skills positively influence classroom efficiency through several mechanisms. Okonkwo and Nweke (2022) found that teachers who used varied instructional methods, including group work, discussion, and hands on activities, had higher rates of learner engagement and better coverage of curriculum content compared to teachers who relied predominantly on lecture and chorus repetition. Several studies have found that pedagogical skills related to lesson pacing and transition management significantly affect time on task, which is a key indicator of classroom efficiency (Muwonge et al., 2023; Adedoyin & Okemakinde, 2021). Teachers who plan lessons with clear objectives, logical sequences, and appropriate pacing are able to complete more of the intended curriculum within the available instructional time.

However, some scholars have questioned whether pedagogical skills are as important as other factors in determining classroom efficiency. Nambi and Ssekamwa (2024) argue that in poorly resourced environments common in many Ugandan primary schools, classroom efficiency may be determined more by resource availability and class size than by teacher pedagogical skills. Their research in rural Ugandan primary schools found that pedagogical skill differences explained only a small proportion of variance in classroom efficiency once class size and textbook availability were controlled. On the other hand, Muwonge and colleagues (2023) found

contrary evidence, reporting that pedagogical skills explained significant variance in classroom efficiency even after controlling for resources.

3. Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a cross sectional research design guided by mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design enabled systematic description and analysis of teachers' pedagogical skills and class coroom efficiency as they existed at the time of the study without manipulating any variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Study Population and Sample

The study population comprised 162 respondents from 13 primary schools, including 4 government aided schools and 9 private schools. The population included 13 head teachers, 13 deputy head teachers, 13 directors of studies, and 123 classroom teachers. A sample of 131 respondents was selected using purposive sampling for administrators (13 head teachers, 13 deputy head teachers, 13 directors of studies) and simple random sampling for teachers (n = 92 based on Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The response rate was 96.2 percent, yielding 126 respondents comprising 88 teachers, 13 head teachers, 13 deputy head teachers, and 12 directors of studies.

Data Collection Instruments

Structured questionnaires measured teachers' pedagogical skills using six Likert scale items ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The items covered lesson planning, use of varied teaching methods, provision of learning objectives, use of teaching aids, learner engagement, and assessment practices. Classroom efficiency was measured using five indicators including learner engagement, achievement of lesson objectives, organization of learning activities, minimal classroom disruptions, and learners' ability to apply learning. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha of .82, indicating high internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Semistructured interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from head teachers, deputy head teachers, and directors of studies. Content validity was established with a Scale Level Content Validity Index of .92, exceeding the acceptable threshold of .70 (Polit & Beck, 2006).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between pedagogical skills and classroom efficiency. Simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive influence of pedagogical skills on classroom efficiency. All quantitative analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2022) six phase framework: familiarization, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up. Direct quotations from participants were used to illustrate emerging themes.

Results

Descriptive Statistics on Teachers' Pedagogical Skills

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for teachers' pedagogical skills. The aggregate mean score of 3.80 (SD = 0.82) indicates high levels of pedagogical skills among teachers in Kibuku Town Council.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Teachers' Pedagogical Skills (N = 126)

Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
I plan my lessons thoroughly before teaching	4.12	0.76	High
I use a variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles	3.45	0.89	Moderate
I provide clear learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson	4.08	0.71	High
I use teaching aids and learning resources effectively	3.12	0.94	Moderate

I engage learners in active participation during lessons	3.98	0.82	High
I regularly assess learners' understanding during lessons	4.05	0.78	High
Aggregate Mean Score	**3.80**	**0.82**	**High**

Note. Scale: 1.00–1.79 = Very Low; 1.80–2.59 = Low; 2.60–3.39 = Moderate; 3.40–4.19 = High; 4.20–5.00 = Very High.

The highest rated items were lesson planning (M = 4.12, SD = 0.76), provision of clear learning objectives (M = 4.08, SD = 0.71), and regular assessment of learner understanding (M = 4.05, SD = 0.78). The lowest rated items were use of varied teaching methods (M = 3.45, SD = 0.89) and effective use of teaching aids (M = 3.12, SD = 0.94), both falling in the moderate range.

Correlation between Pedagogical Skills and Classroom Efficiency

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation analysis between teachers' pedagogical skills and classroom efficiency. The results reveal a strong positive correlation between teachers' pedagogical skills and classroom efficiency, $r(124) = .68$, $p < .001$. This indicates that as pedagogical skills increase, classroom efficiency increases significantly.

Table 2

Correlation Between Teachers' Pedagogical Skills and Classroom Efficiency (N = 126)

Variable	M	SD	r	p
Pedagogical Skills	3.80	0.82	.68	< .001
Classroom Efficiency	3.72	0.79		

Regression Analysis

Table 3 presents the simple linear regression analysis examining the predictive influence of pedagogical skills on classroom efficiency. The regression results show that teachers' pedagogical skills significantly predict classroom efficiency, $\beta = .68$, $t(124) = 9.29$, $p < .001$. The R^2 value of .46 indicates that pedagogical skills explain 46 percent of the variance in classroom efficiency.

Table 3

Regression Analysis of Pedagogical Skills on Classroom Efficiency (N = 126)

Model	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	1.24	0.28		4.43	< .001
Pedagogical Skills	0.65	0.07	.68	9.29	< .001

Note. $R = .68$, $R^2 = .46$, Adjusted $R^2 = .46$, SE = 0.58.

Qualitative Findings

Four main themes emerged from thematic analysis of interview data.

Theme 1: Lesson Planning and Preparation. Respondents consistently emphasized that thorough lesson planning is foundational to classroom efficiency. One head teacher explained: "Lesson planning is the backbone of effective teaching. When a teacher comes to class with a well-prepared lesson plan, they know exactly what they want to achieve, what activities learners will do, and what questions to ask. This eliminates confusion and wasted time" (Head Teacher 4, Government Aided School).

Theme 2: Instructional Delivery and Learner Engagement. Respondents noted that teachers who use varied and interactive teaching methods are more successful in maintaining learner attention. A director of studies elaborated: "Effective teachers don't just stand in front of the class talking all the time. They use questions, group work, demonstrations, and other methods to involve learners. When learners are actively involved, they don't get bored or distracted. This means fewer discipline problems and more learning" (Director of Studies 7, Private School).

Theme 3: Use of Teaching and Learning Resources. Resource constraints were frequently mentioned as barriers to effective use of teaching aids. One director of studies stated: "The biggest challenge we face is lack of materials. The government provides

some textbooks, but they are never enough. Teachers have to improvise, but improvisation takes time and creativity that not all teachers have" (Director of Studies 4, Government Aided School).

Theme 4: Assessment Practices and Feedback. Respondents highlighted the role of ongoing assessment and feedback in enhancing classroom efficiency. A head teacher explained: "When teachers give feedback promptly, learners know what they are doing right and what they need to improve. This helps learners learn from their mistakes and make progress. Without feedback, learners may continue making the same errors, which wastes time and reduces efficiency" (Head Teacher 8, Government Aided School).

Discussion

The finding that teachers demonstrated high levels of pedagogical skills with an aggregate mean of 3.80 aligns with Shulman's (2021) emphasis that pedagogical knowledge is essential for transforming content into teachable forms that learners can understand. The high scores on lesson planning (M = 4.12) and clear learning objectives (M = 4.08) are consistent with Hattie's (2023) synthesis, which identified teacher clarity and lesson planning as having significant effect sizes on student achievement.

However, the moderate ratings on use of varied teaching methods (M = 3.45) and effective use of teaching aids (M = 3.12) suggest a divergence between teachers' recognition of pedagogical principles and their actual classroom practice. This finding contrasts with studies from more resourced educational contexts (Tomlinson, 2021) but aligns with observations that differentiated instruction requires significant teacher skill and resources that may not be readily available in under resourced contexts (Okello & Kagoire, 2020). This finding represents a new contribution to the literature because it quantifies the gap between pedagogical knowledge and its application in a rural East African setting, a context that remains underrepresented in international educational research.

The lowest rated item, effective use of teaching aids (M = 3.12), reflects the resource constraints that characterize many rural Ugandan schools. This finding supports the observations of the Ministry of Education and Sports (2023), which noted that inadequate instructional materials remain a significant barrier to quality education in Uganda. During interviews, teachers and head teachers confirmed that limited resources, particularly in government aided schools, hinder the effective use of teaching aids. This challenge is not unique to Uganda. Research in other sub-Saharan African countries has similarly identified resource limitations as a key constraint on pedagogical effectiveness (Tsegaye & Christensen, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

The strong correlation (r = .68) and regression results (R^2 = .46) provide robust evidence that pedagogical skills significantly influence classroom efficiency. This finding is consistent with Darling-Hammond's (2021) research, which demonstrated that teacher preparation and instructional quality are among the most important school based factors affecting student learning. The magnitude of the correlation in the present study (r = .68) is slightly higher than that reported by Adarkwah and colleagues (2022) in Ghana (r = .59), suggesting that pedagogical skills may have an even stronger influence on classroom efficiency in highly resource constrained environments where other supports are limited.

Conclusion

The study concludes that teachers' pedagogical skills have a significant positive influence on classroom efficiency in primary schools in Kibuku Town Council. Teachers demonstrate strong pedagogical practices in lesson planning, provision of clear learning objectives, and regular assessment of learner understanding. However, the use of varied teaching methods and effective use of teaching aids are areas requiring improvement, largely due to resource constraints. The strong correlation (r = .68) and substantial variance explained (46%) confirm that pedagogical skills are a critical determinant of classroom efficiency. Strengthening teachers'

pedagogical competencies, particularly in differentiated instruction and resource utilization, should be a priority for improving classroom efficiency in the study area.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Sports should establish a mandatory national in service training program focused on learner centered methodologies, with particular emphasis on diversifying teaching methods to accommodate varied learning styles. Head teachers should establish school based instructional resource centers where teachers can access and share teaching aids, while organizing regular workshops for teachers to demonstrate and exchange ideas on effectively using locally available materials. Teachers should consciously move beyond the predominant lecture method by incorporating group work, demonstrations, questioning techniques, and practical activities into every lesson, thereby enhancing learner engagement and ensuring that instruction responds to diverse learning needs.

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