

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: A CASE OF RAKAI DISTRICT IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The study set out to analyse the effect of the learning environment on the effectiveness of non-formal education in rural Uganda with particular focus on Rakai district. This topic was premised on the fact that Rakai after the emergency of HIV/AIDS attracted unprecedented numbers of NGOs and GAs. The purpose of these NGOs and GAs was to fight HIV/AIDS and its related problems by bringing about community development. One of the ways of achieving this purpose was the use of the non-formal education model. This was offered from the 1980s to date. However, since then community development in Rakai has not been adequately attained, thereby raising a question about the contribution of non-formal education.

The major theory that was applied in the study was Karl Popper's three worlds of knowledge theory which promotes the three parts of knowledge that is: the physical world, world of consciousness and world of facts encouraging the three dimensional thinking.

The results revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between non-formal education and learning environment [$r(347) = .469$, $p < 0.01$] giving an indicator that the more favourable the learning environment is the more effective non-formal education while with less compliance from the learning environment there is no productive outcome from non-formal education.

Key words: Non-formal education, learning environment

The study objectives: Assessed to components of non-formal education, Evaluated the status of the learning environment, Determined the impact of non-formal education on the learning environment in Rakai district.

The research methodology were cross-sectional and correlation research designs with a study population of 518,008 and a sample size of 347. Data was collected using a questionnaire, semi structured interview guides, focus group discussions and observation. Qualitative data was analysed aided by thematic, content, narrative, taxonomical analysis and quantitative descriptive and inferential data was analysed using Pearson's correlation, regression and ANOVA statistical data analysis.

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Introduction

The study was to analyse the relationship between non-formal education and learning environment.

Since the identification of HIV/AIDS in Kasensero landing site in Rakai district, scores of national and international agencies have been heavily involved in non-formal education. It is well known that learning environment provides room for non-formal education to take place. It is the setting in the learning environment that fosters activity and progress for the activities of non-formal education.

Due to the great variation that exists in the learning environments, the outcome of non-formal education will continue to vary. Aspects considered included the concept of Non-formal education; the content of non-formal education; the methods used; Karl popper's theory, perspectives of Rakaians of the Non-formal education they received, the status of the learning environment and analysis of the relationship between Non-formal education and learning environment.

Problem statement

The problem being explored in this study is that despite the repetitive non-formal education given to communities of Rakai in relation to the aid to be offered, there have not been significant results of community development realised from the education given. Several development partners have given non-formal education to various groups including farmers, fishermen, youth groups, the HIV/Aids patients and families. Non-formal education has been perceived differently by different individual and groups who constitute given learning environments. The perception together with the status of the learning environment has continued to affect the results of non-formal education. Communities have continued to live in a miserable state.

Purpose of the study

The study evaluated the contribution of the learning environment on the effectiveness of non-formal education to communities.

Specific objectives

To investigate the nature of the learning environment in Rakai district

To assess values of non-formal education in Rakai district

To determine the relationship between non-formal education and the learning environment

Literature Review

The Concept of non-formal education

In conceptualization of Non-formal education there have been various points of emphasis.

Non-formal education has a view that learning which takes place outside the formal setting is a form of transfer of knowledge and skills outside the classroom setting with no structured curriculum. This nature of learning is transmitted through conversation and association with the environment, (Sennette 2012). Non-formal education as a spontaneous process of helping people to learn, working through conversation, exploration and enlargement of experience with a purpose of cultivating communities, associations and relationships that make for human flourishing, (Jeffs and Smith, 2005). Blyth (2008), asserted that conversation is ‘the spontaneous business of making connections’ and involves connecting with both ideas and other people then when we join in conversation it is often difficult to predict where learning will end. As such it can be a very powerful experience – ‘conversation changes the way you see the world, and even changes the world’ (Zeldin, 1999).

As well as talking and listening to others, learners also have conversations with themselves. They can watch themselves as they go about their lives, as we talk and think. People ‘have, as it were, two internal voices, so they can both create new ideas and look at them, criticize and admire’ (Zeldin 1999).

This study therefore considered non-formal education to be an extensive unstructured exploration and enlargement of experience, knowledge and skills that an individual or group of people attain from others and the environment.

Methodology

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The quantitative methods were used to support the post-positivism paradigm that holds; the social world existing externally and its properties can be measured objectively. (O’leary,2001 citing Perry et al (1999). The study applied a cross-section survey design.

A cross –sectional research design was used in the study. The cross –sectional research design adopted in this study involved the collection of data at one point in time from a random sample representing some given population at that time.

The composition of Rakai district and her population

Table: 1 Counties of Rakai district and their populations

	<i>County</i>	<i>Populations</i>
1	Kakuuto	124,201
2	Kooki	226,489
3	Kyotera	167,318
	Total	518,008

Source: *Results of national census of 2014*

Table 2 The number of respondents from each county

	County	Population	Number of respondents
1	Kakuuto	124,201	83
2	Kooki	226,489	152
3	Kyotera	167,318	112
Total		518,008	347

The philosophy of non-formal education

Non-formal education has had a long history and has continuously got improved to date. The continued changes to non-formal education have continuously given variation in the learning environment.

The Phases of non-formal education

Dates	Milestone	Philosophies influencing non-formal education
330 B.C	Individual teaching	Socrates and Plato were key philosophers
320 B.C	Child led to be taught by pedagogues	Plato developed the idea of a school because children had become many
1 st century A.D	Faith teaching	Jesus taught through informal ways: along the road, around the lake at the well at meals, using parables, and miracles, with no timelines nor references. etc
17 th -18 th century A.D	Adult Education	Interest in science, secular and rational improvement of societies and religious adult education was promoted.
Before 1877	Teaching, trades ,social values, language teaching and art	Family, community and clan or tribal leaders ensured non-formal education was passed on.

1877 and after	Formal education was introduced along non-formal education	Western education by various missionaries was introduced through religious groups and schools alongside non-formal education.
1920s	Teaching of symbols in Africa was developed from art, language, pottery and crafts	Philosophers generated symbols that would portray meanings eg in Egypt and Mesopotamia.
20 th -21 st century	Teaching for all sorts of things taught informally	As society becomes sophisticated educators also increase and more mechanisms or methods are used.

Content of Non-formal education in Rakai

There are several areas that have continuously been addressed by non-formal education in Rakai and these areas include the following.

	Content	Never %	A few times %	Many times %
1	Health and health care	00	10	90
2.	Hygiene	00	40	60
3.	Nutrition	00	7	93
4.	Communication	23	34	43
5.	Income generation	7	48	45
6.	Sex	20	23	57
7.	Farming and farming systems	00	30	70
8.	Marriage and family	38	42	20
9.	Income generation and management	00	10	90

The Learning Environment

The description of the learning environment covered a few structures of a rural setting basing thus climatic factors, Socio-cultural factors, geographical factors, health and economic activities in the area as well as the life style.

Rakai District is located in the South Western region of Uganda and has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the country, UNFPA *Uganda (2007)*. Neema, Ssekiwanuka , Ssedyabule (2000): argued that between 35,000 and 50,000 out of a total number of 267 000 children in Rakai District are orphaned due to AIDS. Sibling-headed households were noted in Rakai District already in the late 1980s, *Rakai Councillors' Association (2006)*. According to the *Rakai District Local Government (2004)* there were 969 sibling-headed households in the district in 2003, each having an average of 3.3 orphans, and the number is increasing, Atwine (2004). Rakai is made up of three counties of Kakuuto, Kyotera and Kooki. Rakai has a total population of 518,008 people of which 253,054 people are males and 265,954 people are females, census (2014)

The rural communities of Uganda are described using the learning environment of Rakai that is based on the factors influencing social status including Diseases, the power of money, risk denial, predisposing environment and lifestyle, peer pressure, poor housing and the search for social/material support income, assets, labour, crop and activity diversification, agricultural yields and market orientation. Bashir et al (2013), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). (2004). All the above being grouped into five as: Health and health care, Agriculture and production, Infrastructure and society; and resources.

Methods of non-formal education used in Rakai

Methods are a collection of artifices or mechanical devices used to guide

the teaching and learning of skills and knowledge. Non-formal education was driven by several methods through which information reached the intended destination. There were several methods used in non-formal education of Rakai district summarized as below:

The methods used included

Several methods were used to extend non-formal education to communities and these include the following, together with their tools and areas addressed.

	Methods	Tools	Issue being taught
1.	Music, dance and drama	Drama club members	-Health care -HIV/Aids prevention -Self esteem
2.	Conversations	Members of NGOs, CBOs, GAs and community leaders	HIV /AIDS prevention, income generation, sex etc
3.	Demonstration	-Cooking tools -Videos, etc	-Nutrition -Hygiene -Health care
4.	Socratic (question and answer)	Members of NGOs. CBOs,GAs, and some leaders in the society. -Films	-Nutrition -IGAs -Self esteem
5.	Literature distribution	-Staff of NGOs, CBOs,GAs and leaders in the community -Printed matter	-Healthcare -medical tips -Drug use -General care

6.	Counseling	-Staff of NGOs -Religious leaders -Some community members	- Healthcare - Medical tips - Social cohesion - Self esteem
7	Focused group method	Members of NGOs,CBOs,GAs, and some leaders in the society. -Some community members	- Healthcare - income generation, - Hygiene
8	Project based learning method	-Staff of NGOs, leaders in the society. -Some community members	- Methods of farming - Social cohesion
9	Apprenticeship	NGOs,CBOs, GAs, and some leaders in the society.	- Methods of farming - income generation,
10	Animation	leaders in the society, Some community members, members of NGOs, CBOs, GAs,	new interests, out door pursuits - income generation new skills (formation)

The relationship between non-formal education and Learning Environment

The analysis of results generated the following results:

There was a positive significant relationship between non-formal education and learning environment represented by [$r(347) = .469, p < 0.01$]. The implication was that non-formal education which was offered takes into account the learning environment of Rakai. The more non-formal education given the better the learning environment becomes.

The simple linear regression yielded a model summary of R^2 of .220

which translated into 22%. This means that Non-formal education accounted for 22% of the learning environment. In this perspective, non-formal education affects 22% of the status of the learning environment.

There was a linear relationship between Non-formal education and learning environment

[F (1,345) =97.084, $p < 0.01$]. This meant that a unit change in one variable lead to a corresponding change in the other variable. Therefore, any change in non-formal education leads to change in the learning environment. Thus the more non-formal education given the more learning environment changes and vice versa.

In view of that it can be said that the null hypothesis “there is no significant relationship between non-formal education and learning environment” was not supported. It was the alternate hypothesis “there is a significant relationship between non-formal education and learning environment” which emerged with significant support.

Conclusion

For a productive education program, the educators are expected to plan and manage all the proceedings of non-formal education about the programs they introduce in the communities, acquire all necessary facts to avoid conflict of interest, carry on a clear and supportive orientation of facilitators who will give a good information and mentoring to communities.

However, in consideration of the results attained, there is evidence that the entire procedure of the non-formal education given at the beginning of any education program in the area so as to be based on the status of the learning environment to avoid wastage of resources connected to community development. The resources available in the environment demand for proper planning and management to be able to support the

progressing ideas.

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