

Contribution of the Skills-Based Approach to Teaching Students in Lower Secondary Schools and on Poverty Reduction After COVID-19 Disruptions in Communities in Jinja North Division, Uganda

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the contribution of the skills-based approach to teaching students in lower secondary schools after COVID-19 disruptions and poverty reduction. The study was purely qualitative in nature and data were obtained using interview guide and focus discussion. Findings revealed that skills-based education is given to students through class talks, but other living skills such as self-worth, decision-making, and successful communication are not given priority. HIV/AIDS prevention and health education initiatives are implemented to raise awareness, change attitudes, and promote healthy sexual behaviour. Skills-based education is an important tool for reducing poverty in communities by providing students with communication, debate, and tailoring skills, as well as computer skills, gymnastics, sports and games. These gains bring about employment and money to fight poverty. Parents are failing to provide instructional materials, leading to an increase in drinking alcohol and smoking, a lack of interest in reading, and an increase in the student-to-teacher ratio. This leads to late coming, dodging of school, and abolishment of punishment and promotion. The study concluded that skills-based education is an important tool for reducing poverty in communities by providing students with communication, debate, and tailoring skills, as well as computer skills, gymnastics, sports, and games. Also, other life skills such as self-worth, decision-making, and successful communication are not given priority. Based on the conclusion the study recommends that all teachers should be involved in the implementation of a skills-based curriculum for effectiveness, the government should supply schools with materials such as computer sets and sewing machines among others to enhance practical training of students and academics should be balanced with extracurricular activities such as debating and games for the cognitive and mental development of the learners.

Keywords: skills-based approach, poverty reduction, practical training, cognitive and mental development

1. Introduction

Education is the process of creating a space where people may learn and develop their knowledge, skills, beliefs, and habits through storytelling, group discussions, teaching, training, and guided research (May & Aikman, 2013). In their study, the origins of “education” may be traced back to prehistoric times, when adults would congregate with children around fires or in agricultural activities to teach them information and skills. This information aided children in understanding their social obligations and in maturing while upholding the ideals of the cultures in which they lived (May & Aikman, 2013). In Uganda, skills-based education helps in the reduction of adolescent pregnancies, the avoidance of sexual assault, HIV/AIDS, and drug misuse, as well as the promotion of peace and the maintenance of livelihoods (Mallizgani, et al., 2022) (Altinyelken, H. K., 2010). Here, the utilization of skills-based education refers to the teachers’ and students’ actual application of life skills, usage by the teachers in the classrooms, in extracurricular activities both within and outside the school, and by the students both inside and outside of the classroom (Makunja, G., 2016). Debating clubs, pen pal clubs, straight talk clubs, the existence of such structures as senior female teachers and senior male teachers, the mode of leadership used by the administration, and the relationships between the school staff and students can all serve as examples of how these are implemented (Amy, 2020). The teachers’ and students’ application of skills-based education in a variety of contexts demonstrates their understanding of these abilities.

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) revised and rolled out a New Competency-based Curriculum for learners of Senior one in January 2020 (NCDC, 2020). According to the guidance given to schools, they are supposed to assess learners based on their competencies through activities of integration and projects. It should be highlighted that the ministry failed to pilot the curriculum before implementing it, even as it strives to guarantee that the instructors are reoriented on the usage of the curricula and assist the parents in understanding the assessment. While the ministry intended to pilot the updated lower secondary curriculum, the project did not get off to the expected start.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the education system in Jinja City, Uganda, leaving many students in lower secondary schools facing difficulties in learning. As the pandemic has caused job losses and poverty in local communities, the resources available to schools decreased significantly (Oleksiyenko, A., 2022). Furthermore, school closures have disrupted the learning process and left many students without access to learning materials. Consequently, education institutions must develop new approaches to teaching students in secondary schools, one which is tailored to the needs of the community and can contribute to poverty reduction (Altinyelken, H. K., 2010). A skills-based approach to teaching offers an effective solution to this problem as it helps students to acquire skills. According to a report by UNICEF, 2012, a skills-based approach emphasizes the development of the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that are relevant to the local context. This focuses on developing problem-solving skills, critical thinking and innovation as well as global citizenship, which is seen as essential to addressing challenges faced by communities in Jinja city and beyond.

1.1 Purpose

To examine the contribution of the skills-based approach to teaching students in lower secondary school and on poverty reduction in communities after COVID-19 disruptions in Jinja North Division, Uganda.

1.2 Objectives

To determine the structure of the skills-based approach introduced to teach students in lower secondary schools after COVID-19 disruptions in Jinja North Division, Jinja City.

To establish the implications of the skills-based approach of teaching students about poverty reduction in communities in Jinja North Division, Jinja City.

To identify challenges faced in using the skills-based approach introduced to teach students in lower secondary schools after COVID-19 disruptions in Jinja North Division, Jinja City.

1.3 Theory of the Study

Lev Vygotsky’s constructivist theory of learning which he created in 1978, was employed in this study. The theory states that learning is a process whereby knowledge is actively constructed by the learner and that social interaction plays an integral role in cognitive development (Vygotsky, L. S., 1978). It emphasises the importance of learning in a meaningful context and the need for learners to actively engage with the material to make it meaningful. This theory applies to this topic because it emphasises the importance of a skills-based approach to teaching which is essential for students in lower secondary school, after COVID-19 destruction and poverty reduction in Jinja City Uganda. This theory helps learners to understand new information and content by working with the teacher who has better knowledge of the material, it takes into account the interaction between individuals and society. It also provides a more holistic view of personality and development, furthermore, it explains how behaviour is affected by the social context. This theory is used to inspire focus on interactive and collaborative organisations of teaching and learning that encourage students to learn from social interactions with peers and with the teacher. It enables learners to gain skills such as problem-solving, inquiry,

self-determination and critical thinking. It also focuses on learning by discovery and exploration.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Structure of Skills-Based Approach Introduced to Teach Students

During the skill acquisition phase, the teacher plans a micro-lesson for practising the demonstrated skills whereby colleagues and peers act as constructive evaluators which also enables them to modify their teaching-learning practices (Seonkyung, Kusakabe, & Yosiyuki, 2022). Expounding on this, a teacher can reinforce behaviours and skills necessary and extinguish the ones that are not needed to integrate and transfer learned skills from simulated teaching situations to real classroom teaching (Mrigank, 2019). Introduction and facilitation of schools to use computers is another government educational resource that can aid the attainment of education for life skills (Adhikari, 2022). The introduction of practical computer work in this era of modernization helps learners acquire skills that can help in using the internet for employment and connecting with friends within and outside Uganda (Wang & Tianxing, 2022). However, the results of the acquisition of essential skills by pupils in primary schools are still disappointing (Asimawi, 2021) and the curricula are not properly implemented as most of the energy is targeted at examinable theoretical subjects (Asimawi, 2021). This study, therefore, sought to establish why the development of education for life skills is still a myth in schools. A study by Jessica and Beatrice (2021) states that education for life teaching approaches has a variety of underlying approaches including student-centred interactions, student investigations and hands-on activities, and the use of models and applications. This type of teaching allows pupils to engage in critical thinking using processes such as questioning, exploring, interacting, observing, reasoning, and reflecting (Michael & Ma, 2019). Consequently, they become ripe to handle arguments and prepare speeches, which are the real requirements of day-to-day skills.

Theory construction is one of the aspects of practical teaching under knowledge acquisition. Mirian (2021) states that, in theory, construction, pre-service students are required to explicitly name the theories being used in lessons to ensure that they ably reflect critically on the use of appropriate theories of teaching and learning. An application of theoretical knowledge, reveals that theory construction enables learners [pre-service teachers] to establish a well-rationalized teaching framework by including the theoretical foundation to unveil the purpose and significance of the theories in the learning process (Robinaugh & Jonhas, 2021).

Reflective thinking, a process in which learnt theories are linked with prior experiences to promote new learning is another practice of promoting education for life skills, which needs not to be ignored in this presentation (Kumar & Yogeshi, 2020). Educational researchers have discovered that the practice of reflection is crucial in the development and enhancement of effective and reflective teachers because it inculcates the practice of reflection so that pupils are helped to critically analyze what hinders effectiveness in teaching-learning (Samad, 2020). Using Generic Methods; A generic skill is a skill that; can be applied across a variety of subject domains and takes longer to acquire than domain-dependent or subject-area skills (Timothy, Haans, & Hovig, 2019). Generic skills are one of the important skills for future teachers who will enter the working world. The pupils need to be equipped with the skills required by the job market. These future teachers must acquire the generic skills to be competitive in the job market when they graduate (Stine, Michel, & Audrey, 2021).

2.2 Implications of Skills-Based Approach of Teaching Students on Poverty Reduction in Communities

The main goal of life skills education is to increase people's ability to handle challenges and opportunities that come up in daily life. Many Countries urgently need to integrate life skills education since the curriculum there tends to improve academic theoretical abilities (Falloon, 2019). Life skills are not always interpreted as working skills, but they are regarded as prominent skills in facing increasingly complex life challenges. The same thing was confirmed by the WHO (World Health Organization) which confirmed that: Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Mashange S, 2017).

Programs for entrepreneurship education improve living status and produce highly satisfied workers (Andrews, 2019). Greater levels of accomplishment in entrepreneurial education result in higher wages and a decrease in unemployment. To produce more young entrepreneurs in the future, numerous colleges throughout the globe are now upgrading their entrepreneurship education programs (Kenneth, 2022). The framework of this type of educational program is always being examined to make sure it can meet the demands of the outside world (Badariah et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial education elements (including entrepreneurial skill, entrepreneurial learning, and entrepreneurial intention) positively affect technology-based enterprise development, considering motivation as a mediator variable.

Additionally, entrepreneurial education is crucial for solving the unemployment problems among youth and adults (Bragg, Emma, Jessica, & Carolyn, 2017). Students might tend to initiate new business models, based on

this approach (Teräs & Kartoğlu, 2017). Hence, one of the most vital aims of entrepreneurial education is to facilitate the path and motivate the target population to make them confident to start a business (Teräs & Kartoğlu, 2017).

Just like many developing countries including Uganda, countries like Iran are one of several nations aiming to create and grow entrepreneurial institutes that aid in identifying and training entrepreneurs in many industries (Rezaei et al., 2017). As a result, this study examines the effects of entrepreneurial education on technology-based businesses in Esfahan's Scientific and Industrial Village while taking motivation into account as a mediator variable. The underlying assumption of this issue is that entrepreneurial education has an impact on the growth of technology-based businesses and, as a result, on our tendency to launch our own companies.

A successful technology-based business can expand on its own, which means that it has more prospects than traditional businesses and can do so even with limited human resources or in the wrong circumstances (Tajpour et al., 2019). Hence, having a company model, employing innovation as a concept for growing the organization, scanning the business strategy analytics of serious rivals, adhering to an active marketing approach, and taking risks are key components for the prosperity of an enterprise (Brem, 2011).

Challenges Faced in Using Skills-Based Approach Introduced to Teach Students

Girls have fewer expectations to achieve than males do when it comes to academics. Girls feel they lack the capacity to do well in school, therefore when they do, they attribute it to their perceived lack of ability (Sulayman, 2016). Teachers must thus encourage females to have higher expectations for them starting in elementary school and provide alternate, uplifting justifications for girls' academic success. Girls' self-worth, confidence in their talents, aspirations for their future, interest in demanding academic programs and fulfilling occupations, as well as their activities and knowledge of science, all change as they get older (Carroll, 2011).

Regarding the problem of physical infrastructure, research by Brindley (2015) showed that many primary schools in Uganda lack suitable classrooms, which has impacted the requirement for a fair teacher-to-pupil ratio, which is typically fixed at one teacher managing a maximum of thirty kids. According to this study, elementary schools need to have 482 instructors for every 1000 students. This means that each teacher can handle a maximum of five students. However, it is observed that in most of the schools, no regard is given to such claims, and no research endeavours have been made to find out whether, during increasing population numbers of pupils, the resources available can enhance the attainment of education for life skills and the extent to which this is so.

Additional tools offered by the central government focus on raising awareness and motivating parents to carry out their obligation to facilitate their children's development. The educational resources and facilities available at various schools vary substantially depending on the parent's financial situation (Falloon, 2019). This has a significant impact on student engagement and performance, particularly in math and science classes, which is shown in both how well students learn the topics in question and how well they score on exams. The ability of students to view and handle the machinery, chemicals, and specimens that are referenced in test questions is completely necessary for excellence in areas like mathematics and science (UNESCO, 2020).

Conversely, schools with relatively small classroom sizes sometimes have to educate students in shifts (Greagors, 2010). Because there aren't many teachers that specialize in practical topics like mathematics, it might be difficult for some students to go for a week without getting enough practice in them (Measiourte & Herbok, 2013). Because of this, learning is said to be fun in a good learning environment, and teachers find it simple to track their student's progress in acquiring life skills education.

A report by UNICEF (2012) on the nature of scores in education for pupils in most parts of Kenya shows that poor hygiene in some country schools, characterized by a lack of adequate spaces for convenience and poor water systems, results in poor concentration and dodging of classes. In this case, even though a teacher is competent enough to deliver services satisfactorily, a lack of psychological stability by the learner is enough to explain the failure to attain education for life skills.

Another issue points towards hygienic school environments. This specifically includes good compounds that are well swept every day and grass or flowers that are trimmed day after day following the speed of germination (Nicole, Hodis, Hongjiang, & Uzicanin, 2020). However, a lack of sanitary school environments, particularly where space for convenience is organized in such a way that ladies do not have separate spaces from male students, discourages students, particularly young girls, to attend their classes and obtain an education that will benefit their families and communities (Amy, 2020). Clean water, basic sanitation, and hygiene education are also essential to fostering healthy development and educational achievement in children.

3. Methodology

The study utilized a qualitative data collection approach by conducting semi-structured interviews and focus

group discussions and it was conducted in three secondary schools (Mpumudde SS, St. Stephen S.S. Budondo, and St. John SS Wakitaka) operating under the policy of universal secondary education in Jinja North Division. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data, which was then presented verbatim. Both male and female teachers participated in the study. Only expressions in terms of explanations were used.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are in line with the structure of the skills-based approach introduced to teach students in lower secondary schools after the COVID-19 disruptions, the implications of the skills-based approach of teaching students about poverty reduction in communities, and the challenges faced in using skills-based approach introduced to teach students in lower secondary schools after COVID-19 disruptions in Jinja North Division, Jinja City. Table 1 below shows findings for the personal data of respondents. The results were analyzed thematically and presented verbatim.

Table 1. The demographic characteristics of Respondents

Participants Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Gender	Female	9	38
	Male	15	62
	Total	24	100
Age	20-25	6	25
	26-30	10	42
	31 and above	8	33
	Total	24	100
Work experience	Less than 5 years	8	33
	6 years and above	16	67
	Total	24	100
Schools	School A	7	29
	School B	9	38
	School C	8	33
	Total	24	100

Source: Primary data.

According to Table 1, there were more male than female participants in the study. In addition, most of the participants were aged between 26 and 30 years, indicating a vibrant middle-aged structure in the study population. The majority of the participants had also worked in their respective schools for six years and above, which helped obtain data from experienced participants. The uneven distribution of respondents by school was dictated by the timing of the study, whereby those who were available and ready to participate were considered.

4.1 Structuring the Skills-Based Approach for Students in Lower Secondary Schools

Findings indicate that skills-based education is practised through class talks. Skills-based education is given to students through class talks, and according to the results obtained, class teachers organize class talks in schools to discuss different matters, including discipline, where they talk about how to behave alone and in groups with friends. They also receive skills concerning how to handle academics with little regard for other non-academic issues and the value of education.

Problem-solving, negotiating skills, empathy, and emotional regulation were the four life skills that teachers in most schools placed the greatest emphasis on. Other living skills were not given significant priority, which contributes to the learners' lack of development in these areas. This may be an intentional action by the schools to instil in the students the necessary abilities for them to live in peace with others while also fending off peer pressure to engage in risky behaviours like smoking, using drugs, having early sexual relations, and marriage. Other equally important abilities, such as self-worth, decision-making, and successful communication, weren't as heavily stressed.

Teachers encouraged straight talk programs and head teacher participation in life skills promotion, which demonstrated the existence of career and guidance programs in their schools, according to the findings.

HIV/AIDS prevention and health education initiatives have been implemented in schools to raise awareness, change attitudes, and promote healthy sexual behaviour among secondary school students. Comparing a group of students who received thorough sexual health education to the controls of those who did not enable researchers to draw some interesting conclusions. Compared to the control group, students in the intervention group showed more knowledge and tolerance towards HIV-positive individuals. According to school principals, skills-based education includes career counselling for students.

Head teachers' responses concerning structuring the skills-based approach for students in lower secondary schools.

Table 2. Transcript analysis of structuring the skills-based approach for students

Headteacher	Response
A	<p><i>The skills-based curriculum involves the teaching of gymnastics, which is intended to maintain the physical and mental health and development of students.</i></p> <p><i>When it comes to tailoring, there are practical lessons offered to enable students to acquire skills in sewing.</i></p> <p><i>Computer skills are also practically encouraged. By the time of completing secondary school, students are ready to use computers on the internet and typing information.</i></p>
B	<p><i>The new lower secondary school Curriculum seeks to introduce real business activities in schools. The government specifically intends to ensure that as students graduate from secondary school, they do not suffer jobs. They can instead start crafts shops or tailoring businesses or even start-up shops.</i></p> <p><i>The structure of skills-based education handles issues related to how to use the knowledge given in the classroom to dodge any acts that may lead students to destruction. Students are taught by their teachers how to avoid the spread of HIV-AIDS through the prevention of girl-boy relationships or by discussing matters of importance, which include developmental conversations...</i></p>
C	<p><i>It includes the teaching of physical education through gymnastics.</i></p> <p><i>It encourages the learning of vocational skills such as tailoring where students acquire skills of sewing clothes.</i></p> <p><i>The new curriculum promotes the acquisition of practical skills such as computers and tailoring.</i></p> <p><i>It also prepares students with the skills of starting a business.</i></p> <p><i>Here at school, skills-based education demands that students go through debating and drama clubs. These kinds of practices make skills-based education a favourable approach to communication in public. When students engage in such practices, they become vocal and later campaign for leadership positions in schools. Prefects who campaign for positions are in a position to do this as a result of gaining communication skills.</i></p>

Source: Primary data.

From Table 2 above, the head teachers were asked about the approach they are using to teach the skill-based curriculum in lower secondary schools. The responses from the head teachers were varying for example some indicated that to foster understanding of vocational and computer skills, practicals are emphasized as declared by head teacher A. The structure encompasses teaching students, real business activities which prepare them to become self-employed as noted by head teacher B. The structure emphasizes compulsory physical education to maintain the mental and physical health of learners. Also, the curriculum demands students to participate in debate and drama to develop their communication skills as stipulated by head teacher C.

4.2 Implications of Skills-Based Approach on Poverty Reduction in Communities

The findings revealed that with mastery of communication skills, students become proficient in communication and after school, these are the people who are appointed as speakers of districts, town councils, and at community levels. Through being good speakers, or inspirational speakers, they are hired to speak at functions and paid money ranging from Ush.100,000/= to Ush.300,000/=. They thus can use this money to buy basic needs for the family at home. Also, the entrepreneurship skills that students obtain, such as tailoring skills, are a source

of employment for individuals who, after school, start sewing clothes and become commercial tailors. This type of education will have wiped out unemployment and encourage job creation. At higher levels, some individuals establish tailoring institutions where they begin training others in tailoring and contributing to community income generation.

From the findings of the study, it was also indicated that the students are taught computer skills. These are also helpful in reducing poverty. Skills-based education, as per the findings, promotes the acquisition of skills that enable students to start businesses, which include recording songs using computers, playing music on public functions using computers, playing the piano, and typesetting as sources of income, among other benefits. With all these, a person is already earning money for survival.

Through skills-based education, students have also learned gymnastics as well as other forms of sports and games. These not only make the body healthy but also help the students get jobs as trainers of teams and, on many occasions, become international players. Through these gains, they earn money and support their families. Sports and games skills bring about employment, which in turn brings in money at individual and community levels to fight poverty.

Table 3. Transcript analysis of the implications of a skills-based approach to poverty reduction in communities

Headteacher	Response
A	<p><i>The students, while in school, are tasked with practising debate to train them to be public speakers. It is through learning such skills that you see many students later become members of parliament, and on many occasions, you will see your OBs or OGs as speakers of institutions. Consider our speaker of parliament: if you ask her, I am sure she has never participated in debating. All these are sources of income for the families where these individuals come from.</i></p> <p><i>It creates a society where students start sewing or tutoring as a commercial business.</i></p> <p><i>Through the new curriculum, students do not need to be jobseekers. Those who are innovative enough develop the spirit of business enterprise.</i></p>
B	<p><i>We grew up knowing that for someone to become a tailor, they needed to go and attend technical colleges. However, at this time, the government has changed this by making education skills-based. We, therefore, expect a student to graduate from secondary school with skills in tailoring, go out there and get capital, employ other students, and enjoy life. Isn't this fighting poverty in communities?</i></p> <p><i>The new curriculum for lower secondary does more of producing job creators or makers rather than job seekers.</i></p> <p><i>The new curriculum makes students helpful to the community as they came out with skills that can be used to advise on how to start a business.</i></p>
C	<p><i>We have computer lessons with our students. Out of these lessons, we expect students to have acquired skills such as typing, playing media, web designing, recording media or voice recordings, how to record an audio podcast, the way to connect a computer to a projector, or how to use a projector, among other functions. In this, we intend to make sure that after school, this student can go and design websites for companies at agreed-upon costs. With these skills, poverty is gone. Web design, for example, begins at \$30,000 and varies depending on the purpose of the institution requiring the website.</i></p> <p><i>Promoting the new curriculum in turn enhances the spirit of entrepreneurship and reduces the number of unemployed youths in the community.</i></p> <p><i>Before the start of the new curriculum, there has been a tendency of completing secondary school and being employed.</i></p> <p><i>Generally, the new curriculum seeks to equip students with innovative minds.</i></p>

Source: Primary data.

From Table 3 above, the head teachers were asked about the implications of the skills-based approach to poverty reduction. The responses were varying for example; some argued that the learners acquire communication skills that train them to become public speakers. It is through such skills that students later become greater politicians

such as members of parliament which is a source of income as declared by head teacher A. By making education skills-based, students graduate from secondary skills with vocation skills that they use to employ themselves and others hence poverty reduction in communities as established by head teacher B. The skills acquired from computer lessons enable students to type, play media, and design websites among others for companies at agreed-upon costs as stated by head teacher C.

4.3 Challenges of Using Skills-Based Approach in Lower Secondary Schools

On many occasions, girls are disadvantaged. Some parents view a girl child as a source of bride wealth; as a result, young girls are forced into marriage at a tender age. This practice has made the school miss very bright girls as boys benefit from the skills-based approach.

Another failure is related to parents' failure to provide instructional materials. The role of parents in the education of their children ranges from the provision of food to textbooks, uniforms, shoes, and money for meals at school. These instructional materials not only make academics practical but stabilize the psychological being of a pupil while in class and thus aid the acquisition of functional skills. Without writing materials, for instance, pupils study but cannot memorize because they have nowhere to write for reference.

Furthermore, the introduction of universal secondary education (USE) has provided a stumbling block to the implementation of skills-based education. USE is surrounded by late coming, dodging of school, and abolishment of punishment and the policy of automatic promotion which among other factors allows half-baked learners to cross over from one class to another. The inadequate number of teachers also contributes to the failure of the implementation of skills-based education in secondary schools. The lack of enough teachers brings about an increase in the student-to-teacher ratio, whereby normally, every teacher is expected to handle a maximum of 50 pupils. A high teacher-to-student ratio means that the teacher does not have enough space to monitor each student's performance, but this is the only way to achieve functional skills.

Other failures include the dodging of lessons by some teachers, which in turn leads to failure to complete the syllabus and thus a lack of continuous assessment in schools, which is also key to the implementation of skills-based education.

The head teachers' responses concerning the challenges of using a skills-based approach.

Table 4. Headteacher's responses on Challenges of using a skills-based approach

Headteacher	Response
A	<p><i>Related to peer pressure is the increasing number of young people involved in drinking alcohol and smoking. In a society where drinking the local brew is considered a social activity, and with a lack of regulatory laws, many people, including school-age children, have turned to drinking and even smoking. One head teacher observed this when asked whether there were schoolchildren involved in drinking alcohol and smoking.</i></p> <p><i>We face a lack of money to buy resources such as computers, musical instruments and sports requirements.</i></p>
B	<p><i>The role of parents is key to note here. Many parents have ignored their roles in providing students with materials. When it comes to learning computer skills, parents are expected to contribute a computer fee simply because the government may not be in a position to raise enough money to buy sufficient computer sets for the school considering the number of students.</i></p> <p><i>The curriculum itself was introduced without consulting and preparing teachers in ways of implementing it. So the morale to implement the curriculum is low.</i></p>
C	<p><i>There is also a lack of interest in reading which is causing negative implications for the implementation of skills-based education. This means that even when instructional materials are availed whether in adequate or inadequate amounts, lack of interest in reading renders all these materials useless even when there is close supervision and monitoring.</i></p> <p><i>There is a lack of measures that will be used to see whether students use the skills in communities.</i></p>

Source: Primary data.

From Table 4 above, the head teachers were asked about the challenges they face when using the skill-based approach to teach students in lower secondary schools. The responses were varying for example some hinted that

some students are involved in drinking alcohol and smoking because of peer pressure. And also inadequate financial resources to procure requirements as confirmed by head teacher A. Many parents have ignored their roles in providing students with materials and yet the government is not in a position to raise enough money to buy sufficient requirements. The morale to implement curriculum is low since it was introduced without consulting and preparing the implementers as noted by head teacher B. Despite the government's effort to provide learning materials, the learner's interest in reading is low and this affects the implementation of skills-based education as established by head teacher C.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the findings above, it is concluded that Skills-based education is given to students through class talks, and other living skills such as self-worth, decision-making, and successful communication are also given priority (Mashange S, et al., 2017). This may be an intentional action by schools to instil the necessary abilities for students to live in peace with others while also fending off peer pressure to engage in risky behaviours. Skills-based education requires students to engage in debating and drama clubs, which are beneficial for communication in public. HIV/AIDS prevention and health education initiatives have been implemented in schools to raise awareness, change attitudes, and promote healthy sexual behaviour (Mashange S, et al., 2017). School administrators provide career counselling for students in the current education system where students complete O' levels with skills that enable them to get employed.

Skills-based education is an important tool for reducing poverty in communities by providing students with communication, debate, and vocational skills. These skills are a source of employment for individuals who start small businesses such as commercial tailoring, crafts, and carpentry as a source of income which is in line with (Andrews, 2019). Additionally, students are taught computer skills such as typing, playing media, web designing, recording media or voice recordings, how to record an audio podcast, the way to connect a computer to a projector, or how to use a projector as stated by (Wanga & Tiaxing, 2022). Through skills-based education, students have also learned gymnastics and other forms of sports and games, which not only make the body healthy but also help them get jobs as trainers of teams and become international players. These gains bring about employment, which in turn brings in money at individual and community levels to fight poverty.

It was also realized that peer pressure has led to an increase in students' indiscipline for example some of them engage in drinking alcohol and smoking which has hindered the skills-based approach to the learning-teaching process (Mukama, 2010). Also, Parents fail to provide instructional materials like books, pens and crafts that make learning practical and also stabilize the psychological being of students while in class and aid the acquisition of functional skills (Mirian, B. L., 2021). Lack of interest by some learners in studies exhibited in late coming, dodging of lessons, and teachers absenteeism (Mampane, 2013) and the abolition of punishment by the government has affected the implementation of the new lower secondary school curriculum.

5.1 Policy Direction and Recommendations

Arising from the conclusion, it is therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education and Sports through NCDC should organize workshops for retooling the teachers in both Governments aided and private schools with the new skills in handling the skills-based approach to teaching students in the lower secondary schools. This should be properly done through the use of the most appropriate teaching approaches. Also, the Government should increase the funding in the education sector to facilitate the smooth running of the new lower secondary curriculum for example provision of scholarstic materials like computers and textbooks, teachers' salaries, accommodations and the construction of more classrooms to accommodate the growing number of students.

There is also a need to sensitize political leaders like local council members and members of parliament, and school committee members about the advantages of the lower secondary school curriculum because being the great stakeholders has an impact on its implementation. Parents too need to be encouraged to provide the necessary study materials to their children like laptops, books, pens, tracksuits for those who offer physical education and art crafts for making baskets, ropes, mats and shoes.

Technical, material and financial assistance is highly required from developmental partners and non-government organizations like UNICEF, UNESCO, IMF, World Bank, World Vision, Action Aid and Compassion International for the implementation of the New lower school Curriculum. With their financial help, vulnerable students from remote areas can be helped to cope with the new trend and skills of the current curriculum that is so demanding. Therefore, their financial assistance to the implementation will become pivotal in instilling practical skills into the learners, especially hands-on skills.

The Government of the Republic of Uganda through the Ministry of Education and Sports should facilitate the Department of Inspection at local and national levels for example locally the local government through inspectors of schools should carry out a routine inspection of the teaching-learning process of all secondary

schools to ensure that new skills-based curriculum is being implemented and nationally, The Education Standards Agency should also play its role overseeing teachers in the country conduct their expected duties of professionalism like effective teaching, lesson planning and Scheming such that the current curriculum is line with Goal 4 of Sustainable Development Education Goals of providing quality Education with the Ugandan young population.

All the Secondary School Heads, BOG and PTA executives should influence the implementation of the Skills based curriculum by ensuring enough recruitment of enough human resources, construction of enough infrastructure like classrooms, give the necessary learning equipment, motivation of the staff and sensitize the parents and students about the global trends and developments in the education sector coupled with the new teaching-learning pedagogy.

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