



Implementing the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Uganda During the Covid-19 Crisis

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had implications on education globally and with it came the closure of institutions of learning as one of the measures to curb the spread of the Corona virus. The closure of schools in Uganda coincided with the implementation of the Lower Secondary Curriculum (LSC), starting with Senior One (S.1) students. The LSC replaces the existing curriculum designed in the 1970s; problematized for teaching methodologies perceived as ineffective in promoting the acquisition of 21st century skills. As teachers of S.1 grappled with shifting from traditional teacher centered methods to the learner-centered ones stipulated in the LSC, they were thrown into a conundrum. This is because the closure of schools meant that they had to also take up the use of unfamiliar remote learning methods to teach a new curriculum. This qualitative study made use of a convenience sample of 15 respondents who were interviewed to investigate how they had coped in implementing the LSC during the COVID-19 crisis. The study focused on how these teachers planned for lessons, taught and assessed learners. This study further established the challenges teachers encountered and their recommendations towards effective LSC implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings reveal that teachers engaged in preparation of activities and selection of teaching materials in the planning process. The main resources for planning and instruction were the computer, smart phones, the internet and the LSC course books. Teachers mostly used virtual classrooms for lesson delivery and assessment and employed small class and whole class discussions, role play and presentation teaching methods. Teachers faced resource related, pedagogical and assessment challenges while implementing the LSC. The main forms of support teachers highlighted were resource/instructional materials support, and professional development.

Keywords: Curriculum implementation, Lower Secondary Curriculum, COVID-19, Remote Teaching, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far reaching implications on the economic, political, health, social, religious and education aspects of life. The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in Wuhan, China in December, 2019 and spread worldwide (World Health Organization [WHO, 2020]), has caused disruption of education systems globally by affecting 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries (UNESCO, 2020). The closure of schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic meant to mitigate the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 have interrupted conventional schooling (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). As a result, remote teaching and learning modes have been adopted by both developed and developing countries across the world to ensure continuity of learning during lockdowns and school closures, Uganda inclusive.

Uganda, was first hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in March, 2020. The president of the Republic of Uganda ordered that institutions of learning including day care centers, schools

and institutions of higher learning be closed by mid-day March, 18th 2020 ("Daily monitor", 2020). The closure of schools was initially for one month but was extended to over one year. As a result, the education of 15 million school going children was affected (UNESCO, 2020). This notwithstanding, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) prepared a response plan to ensure continuity of learning through remote teaching and learning including the use of self-study home packages, television and radio lessons as well as online lessons by model teachers selected from various districts in the country (MoES, 2020). While these initiatives promised to ensure continuity of learning, they also posed a threat to the implementation of a new curriculum- the Lower Secondary Curriculum (LSC), which had just been rolled out to schools in February, 2020 beginning with senior one student. This is because teachers had to grapple with both the shift from traditional teacher centered methods of teaching to learner centered methods as required by the new curriculum, coupled with the shift to remote teaching methods as shaped by the COVID-19 school closures.

The Lower Secondary Curriculum in Uganda (LSC)

The LSC is a result of a review based on the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP, 2009-2018) by the MoES through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) meant to improve the quality and relevance of secondary education (NCDC, 2018). The focus of this review was to produce a secondary school graduate who has competencies required in the 21st century and skills that reduce unemployment among school graduates (NCDC, 2018). The LSC is a Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) that emphasizes active participation of learners in the learning process, rather than a passive teacher-centered approach that was predominant in the old curriculum. The LSC menu comprises 20 subjects and a school is allowed to offer 12 at senior one; 11 of which are compulsory and 1 elective. At senior 3 and 4 a learner will be expected to sit a minimum and maximum of 8 and 9 subjects respectively, 7 of which are compulsory and 1 or 2 elective(s) (NCDC, 2018).

At the heart of every subject lie the generic skills, which were not explicitly emphasized in the old curriculum, that are believed to develop students into life-long learners who can adapt to change and cope with the 21st century challenges. These include communication, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, cooperation and self-directed learning, mathematical computation and Information Communication Technology (ICT) proficiency. In addition, learners are expected to acquire knowledge on cross cutting issues such as the environment, health awareness, and values (NCDC, 2018).

While implementation of any school curricula within a classroom context entails three major activities of planning, teaching and assessment of learners (Brown & Berger, 2014; Solon, 2013), these activities under the LSC take on a different approach from what was done in the old curriculum. For instance, teachers are now required to select and design participatory teaching methods and activities respectively, select authentic instructional resources and an ICT component to include in their lessons during the planning process. In addition, teachers have to pay attention to the competencies, generic skills, values they want to develop in the learners as well as the cross-cutting issues their learners should be aware of as they design schemes of work and lesson plans. Concerning assessment, the LSC requires teachers to carry out both formative and summative assessment. In formative assessment, teachers are expected to conduct classroom observations, engage in conversations with learners about their knowledge and understanding as well as appraise learners' work. In summative assessment, learners are required to do end of unit assessment activities which are criterion assessed. The results from the different end of unit assessments will then contribute 20% to the final grade of the school leaving certificate and the 80% will be derived from the final examination at the end of senior four. In the teaching process, the role of the teacher is to build on learners' existing knowledge and experience through posing problems (NCDC, 2018). The teacher is therefore expected to take on teaching approaches as shown below:

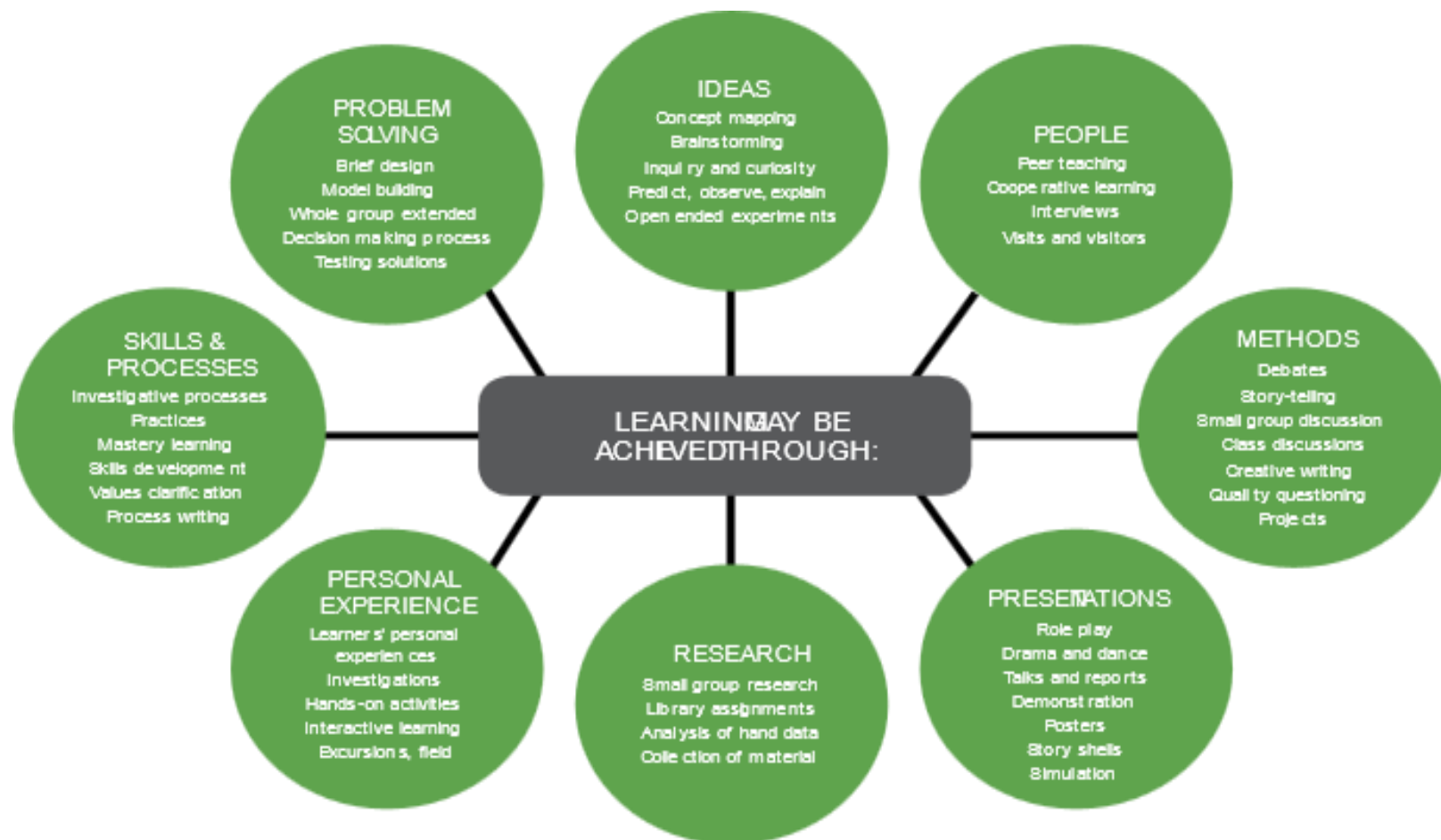


Figure 1: Adopted from the Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework

The teachers using the LSC had begun implementing the LSC following the stipulated requirements when the implementation process was suddenly brought to a halt by the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This threw the teachers into a conundrum because they were still grappling with a shift from the traditional teacher-centered teaching approaches to the learner-centered ones and now school closures predetermined the uptake of unfamiliar remote learning methods to teach a new curriculum. This state of affairs was largely experienced by teachers whose schools continued implementing the LSC during the COVID-19 crisis despite the school closures. The purpose of this study was to investigate how the teachers who carried on with implementation of the LSC during the COVID-19 crisis planned lessons, taught and assessed learners.

Research questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways did teachers implement the new lower secondary curriculum demands during the COVID-19 crisis?
2. What challenges did they encounter during this implementation?
3. How would they want to be supported to optimize curriculum implementation during the COVID-19 crisis?

METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a qualitative research approach. A convenience sample of 15 respondents were interviewed using a researcher constructed interview guide to investigate how they had coped in implementing the LSC during the COVID-19 crisis. There were 5 teachers from affluent public schools, 2 from public middle class institutions, and 8 from private schools (5 from affluent and 3 from middle class). These teachers taught one of the following subjects in senior one: Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, English, Physics, English, Geography and History. The schools where the study participants teach are well resourced in terms of having well stocked libraries and functional computer laboratories. However, before the pandemic the teachers in this study rarely used digital tools in teaching.

Table 1: Characteristics of the teachers in the study

S/N	Pseudonym of participant	School Category	Type of School	Teaching Subject (s)
1	Tr. Ndorwa	Public-Government	Affluent	Mathematics/physics
2	Tr. Zangu	Public-Government	Affluent	English
3	Tr. Zawadi	Public-Government aided	Affluent	Mathematics
4.	Tr. Muwani	Public-Government aided	Affluent	English
5.	Tr. Murefu	Public- Government aided	Middle class	Chemistry
6.	Tr. Mujungu	Public- Government aided	Middle class	Mathematics
7.	Tr. Mundu	Private	Affluent	Geography
8.	Tr. Abani	Private	Affluent	History
9.	Tr. Bamu	Private	Affluent	English
10.	Tr. Kezia	Private	Middle class	Physics
11.	Tr. Kuzora	Private	Middle class	English
12.	Tr. Mugonga	Private	Affluent	English
13.	Tr. Nayanga	Private	Middle class	Biology
14.	Tr. Muonga	Public-Government	Affluent	Mathematics
15.	Tr. Kabamundu	Private	Affluent	Geography

Methods of Data Collection

In-depth interviews, which lasted 45 minutes each, were used to elicit the participants' own accounts in detail. In particular, telephone interviews were conducted to minimize people contact as a way of preventing the spread of COVID-19. The interviews focused on how teachers planned lessons, taught, and assessed learners using the LSC, the challenges they faced, and their perspectives about support needed towards effective implementation of the LSC during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data saturation was attained on the 13th interview.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis was done concurrently with data collection following data analysis procedures as suggested by Creswell (2014). First, each interview was recorded and later transcribed. This was done manually by writing out each participant's verbatim responses following the order of questions as stated in the interview guide. Data was then reviewed by reading through it several times to develop a general sense of the information, taking note of the emerging ideas with reference to the research questions. The next step involved coding the data by categorizing it (open coding) and looking for connections among the categories (axial coding) (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). This was followed by identifying and describing emerging themes for data interpretation and analysis. For ethical considerations, teachers' consent was sought before carrying out the interviews, while anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through use of pseudonyms of the participants.

RESULTS

The findings, show how the teachers were expected to carry out planning, teaching and assessment of learners using the LSC and how they engaged in these practices amidst the constraints of remote learning. The challenges encountered are then presented and the views of the respondents on how they should be addressed for successful implementation of the LSC during the COVID-19 Crisis.

In what ways did teachers implement the new lower secondary curriculum demands during the COVID-19 crisis?

The first research question sought to identify the ways in which teachers who implemented the LSC during the COVID-19 pandemic planned lessons, taught and assessed learners. The LSC requires that teachers engage in designing schemes of work and lesson plans among other preparatory activities for instruction. While doing this, teachers are expected to specify the class demographics (for example class, gender, number of students), time, topic/content, competencies, learning outcomes, as well as select teacher and learner activities. This study revealed that while planning for instruction using the LSC during the COVID-19 crisis, few teachers designed schemes of work and lesson plans like they used to do when preparing for the physical classrooms. One teacher for example mentioned that "we made schemes of work and lesson plans like we did before the pandemic because the administration demanded them."

Most of the teachers, however, did not draw out schemes of work or lesson plans during the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic had made it difficult for teachers to meet physically and engage in collaborative planning-an avenue they used to assist one another in planning for teaching the new curriculum. This notwithstanding, teachers made an effort to remain aligned to the curriculum demands. For instance, they prepared participatory activities for learners when using remote learning modes that had arisen as a result of the pandemic. One teacher indicated that "This

curriculum is student centered so I organize activities that would engage learners”, and another stated that “I plan activities to give students before the classroom...participatory or research activities.” Some of these participatory activities included: making students research about relevant topics on the internet before teaching commenced, involving students in selection of learning materials as well as making students carry out observations before teaching certain concepts.

With regard to selection of teaching and learning materials as a preparatory activity, the LSC encourages the use of authentic materials in addition to the LSC course books and other relevant text books. The main resources for both planning and teaching the LSC in Uganda during the COVID-19 crisis included the computer, smart phones, the internet, and the NCDC course books. The digital resources helped teachers to prepare illustrations, pictures, videos, photos and power point presentations for use as the main teaching materials in the teaching process. Teachers as well used physical objects, which were selected depending on the topic or subject. For example, some teachers said that when they were teaching topics related to measuring, they made learners experiment with materials such as weighing scales, sand, water, measuring cylinders or tapes and thread.

Furthermore, the LSC stipulates the use of face-to-face learning as a major mode of lesson delivery as well as incorporation of ICT in the teaching and learning process. During the COVID-19 crisis, however, the teachers majorly used a virtual mode of lesson delivery and assessment through Zoom and Google classrooms respectively. All the 15 participants mentioned that before the pandemic, they had not used a virtual mode of delivery to teach the LSC. In addition, the LSC teaching approaches include problem solving, research, presentations, adoption of learner-centered teaching methodologies, building on learners’ personal experiences and ideas, skills and talent development. During instruction, teachers using the LSC, are expected to employ learner-centered techniques among which include: debates, small group and whole class discussions, quality questioning, projects and debates. Despite being the first time to use virtual means to teach the LSC, teachers in this study used interactive methods of teaching as required by the LSC. They engaged learners in small and whole class discussions, role play and presentations. In using role play, teachers would present a scenario and assign roles to the learners during the online classroom. The learners with assigned roles would then turn on their videos in turns so that their class members would be able to see them act out. This session would be followed up with a whole class discussion in relation to the scenario.

Small group discussions were mainly carried out in two ways. The first involved breaking the class into smaller groups during the virtual classrooms (break out rooms). In the break out rooms, which were given a time frame, during which they selected a secretary to record their answers and a chairperson to control the discussion activity. As learners discussed in their break out rooms, teachers joined the different rooms to monitor the discussions. Later the teacher would close the break out rooms and get back the students to the general class, from which different groups presented their work. Secondly, teachers assigned group activities to students during the virtual classroom or put them on their school e-learning platforms where students would access them. The students would then find a way of communicating to one another either through Whats App, virtual meetings or telephone calls and prepare their group activities. In the sub-subsequent virtual classes, the students would then present their work before the whole class to allow for critique. Such participatory teaching methods contributed to the development of critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills that the LSC aims to produce.

In the area of assessment, the LSC stipulates that teachers carry out both formative and summative assessment. The stipulated formative assessment practice entails teachers conducting classroom observations, engaging in conversations with learners about their knowledge and understanding as well as appraising learners' work. In summative assessment, learners are required to do end of unit assessment activities which are criterion assessed. The results from the different end of unit assessments will then contribute 20% to the final grade of the school leaving certificate and the 80% will be derived from the final examination at the end of senior four. The teachers who participated in this study carried out both summative and continuous forms of assessment while implementing the LSC during the COVID-19 crisis. Task-based and end of unit assessment activities stipulated in the NCDC course books, exercises, tests, quizzes and assignments were the mostly used methods of assessment by the teachers. Teachers used Google classroom to assign learners the assessment tasks, which they downloaded, answered in their books, scanned and uploaded on Google classroom for the teacher to mark. The teacher would still use Google classroom to mark, grade and make comments on the learners' work.

What challenges did teacher encounter in the implementation of the LSC during the COVID-19 Crisis?

The abrupt school opening and closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic made it challenging for the teachers to determine content coverage during the process of designing schemes of work. When asked about challenges the teachers had encountered in planning, one teacher commented that 'you are not sure what to teach or scheme for because you are not sure when schools will open.' This was because there wasn't a proper school calendar for teachers to follow as had been the practice before the pandemic.

In addition, teachers faced difficulties in accessing teaching and learning resources as a result of school closures during the planning process. A teacher for instance explained that "Getting newspapers was not easy, we were in a lockdown...you couldn't access." The difficulties in accessing resources consequently became a setback in lesson delivery of some topics. This was illustrated when a Geography teacher asked students to identify physical features in their surroundings before the lesson. Learners identified cars, perimeter walls, and garages as physical features. If teaching occurred in the physical classroom, this teacher would have taken students to a place where they could observe physical features in their natural setting as stipulated by the LSC. Such an incident implies that conceptualization of some subject concepts as regards the LSC was hindered as a result of the pandemic.

All the 15 teachers mentioned that before the pandemic, they had not used a virtual mode of delivery to teach the LSC, hence, faced challenges in its up take to teach a new curriculum. The teachers for instance observed that the virtual classrooms limited the application of the stipulated learner-centered teaching methodologies, compelling some teachers to take on teacher-centered ones. One teacher shared that "some content is best taught when students are physically in class," and another explained that he struggled to "organize groups" through remote learning modes and ended up resorting to "using lecture method." Another challenge teachers noted with virtual lesson delivery modes was time constraints which limited all learners' participation and did not allow for close monitoring of learners during the teaching process. Despite these constraints, teachers commented that the virtual mode of

delivery was an appropriate alternative to the face-to-face one in implementing the LSC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The teachers felt that carrying out formative assessment as stipulated by the LSC through observation and conversation was not done effectively. The reason for this was that the online classroom would be scheduled a shorter time than the physical classroom and this could not allow for ample observation of learners as they engaged in the classroom activities. More so only a handful of teachers used break out rooms that allowed for observation in cases where students turned on their videos. In most of the virtual classes, students' videos were turned off so teachers taught without looking at the students. In such scenarios, teachers did not carry out observation. Teachers as well felt that summative assessment was not effectively done because they could not tell whether a learner's grade was theirs or their siblings' as they did not monitor or administer exams or tests themselves. Moreover, even before the pandemic, teachers were still struggling with how to carry out assessment under the LSC and now with school closures, teachers' learning avenues to improve assessment competencies were limited. One teacher for instance commented that "assessing learning outcomes using formative assessment through online learning is not easy," and another added that "we have inadequate knowledge about the new curriculum assessment forms.

How would teachers want to be supported to optimize curriculum implementation during the COVID-19 crisis?

The main forms of support teachers highlighted were required for implementation of the LSC during the COVID-19 pandemic were resource/instructional materials support, parental involvement in monitoring learning and professional development. Teachers generally believed that the government or MoES should improve on the availability and provision of instructional materials and ICT tools in form of soft or hard copies, reduction of data charges, improving internet connectivity in the country and teacher incentives. According to the teachers, the government needs to plan for all kinds of schools to encourage equity in learning with regard to the implementation of the LSC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The participants in this study further noted that there was a need to train teachers in the use of ICT and how to teach and assess using the new curriculum. This could be done online during school closures and physically when schools open. One teacher was of the view that "the government needs to retool teachers about the lower secondary curriculum", and another said that "This was a new mode of teaching ...there is need to empower the teacher to plan online classes."

More so teachers noted that it was important for parents to be sensitized about online learning through radios, newspapers or other forms of mass media. Teachers believed that remote forms of teaching would only yield results if parents took an active role in ensuring their children learn. Parents needed to monitor how children are working on their assessment tasks, administer tests and monitor learning as well.

DISCUSSION

In What Ways Did Teachers Implement the New Lower Secondary Curriculum Demands During the COVID-19 crisis?

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers using the LSC carried on with implementation during the COVID-19 crisis with a focus on how they planned

lessons, taught, and assessed learners. The study findings reveal that the main mode of teaching and assessment was remote learning through virtual classrooms (Google classroom, Zoom), in which teachers endeavored to use learner-centered methods of teaching as required by the LSC. Some teachers engaged in lesson planning and scheming as expected when planning for physical classrooms. These teacher practices are an indication that there is a possibility of implementing the LSC in times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, the virtual classroom served as an alternative to the physical classroom and second, teachers endeavored to engage in learner-centered pedagogy that the LSC advocates during the virtual classroom sessions. The findings of this study build on existing evidence that online platforms including Google classroom, Zoom, Learning Management Systems, Microsoft Teams as well as social media forums like What's App, Telegram, Messenger have been used for teaching and learning to further education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Majanja, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Shivangi, 2020). Chakraborty, Mittal, Gupta, Yadav, & Arora (2020) study further shows that video-conferencing tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Zoom have helped educators in organizing online lectures and discussion sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Uganda context, however, the adoption of remote learning through virtual classrooms to implement the LSC during the COVID-19 pandemic probably still leaves much to be desired because of the numerous challenges teachers reported which hindered implementation of the LSC with fidelity. It is crucial that the opportunities and challenges that remote learning modes have offered or posed respectively be examined by the MoES and other stakeholders to facilitate effective implementation of this new curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the findings of this study demonstrate that the main resources for planning, teaching and assessment of learners included the computer, smart phone, the internet and the NCDC course books. These findings are consistent with the findings reported by Reimers *et al.* (2020) survey to assess needs, priorities, implementation challenges and emerging responses in 99 countries. Reimers *et al.* (2020) found that a variety of resources were helpful in supporting continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic categorized as curriculum resources, professional development resources and tools. Curriculum resources included interactive learning modules, videos and any resource that directly supported students in acquiring skills and knowledge. The professional development resources were the kind that supported teachers or parents in helping learners to learn independently at home while the tools included communication tools, learning management systems (LMS) or any other tool teachers, parents or students could use to access educational content.

Research, however, demonstrates that online tools (for example Zoom, Google classroom, LMS, Microsoft Teams) were the most commonly used resources in remote learning during the COVID-19 crisis (Petrie *et al.*, 2020; Subedi, Nayaju, Subedi, Shah, & Shah, 2020). The teachers in this study could have used digital resources and materials (the internet, smart phones, and digital pictures) in preparation for and lesson delivery in the physical classroom because the LSC stipulates the use of ICT. However, the pandemic is majorly responsible for compelling teachers to use digital teaching resources and materials (the internet, smart phone, videos). The COVID -19 pandemic has therefore offered an opportunity to the teachers to engage in digital forms of teaching, which could be an avenue to improve their ICT competencies in implementing the LSC.

What Challenges Did Teacher Encounter in The Implementation of the LSC during the COVID-19 Crisis?

The findings of this research are consistent with previous findings which demonstrate that remote learning through virtual classrooms has posed challenges to both teachers and students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh & Arthunibat, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). According to the teachers in this study, remote teaching is problematic with regard to the application of some LSC teaching methodologies, resource accessibility and use. This finding is supported by Almaiah *et al.*, (2020) study which demonstrated that technology factors, e-learning technical issues and e-learning quality system factors were among the main challenges educators faced while using digital forms of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Murgatroid (2020) as well reported affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy and accessibility as some of the broadly identified challenges associated with remote teaching during the COVID-19 crisis. Scholarship on online teaching shows that the flipped classroom (an instructional strategy in which learners engage in learning independently and then the online classroom is used for interactive, hands-on learning experiences) can be used to mitigate some challenges that come along with remote teaching (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Some of the teachers in this study adopted the flipped classroom instructional strategy when they assigned tasks to learners that they worked on outside the virtual classroom and then used the virtual classroom to consolidate their learning. One interpretation of this finding is that the teachers implementing the LSC can take on the flipped classroom instructional strategy to mitigate resource use/accessibility and pedagogical challenges related to remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The deficient assessment practices possessed by teachers as indicated in this study were not only a result of using an unfamiliar mode of teaching, but also teachers' incompetence in carrying out the LSC assessment practices. Although teachers assessed learners using remote learning, formative and summative assessment as stipulated by the LSC was not effectively done due to the limitations in application of some assessment methods using remote learning modes. This implies that the development of some skills and competencies in the learners as well as attainment of learning outcomes might have been hindered. Consequently, the planned LSC teacher training sessions need to focus on addressing implementation requirements and gaps of the teachers with regard to pre-existing issues before the pandemic as well as ICT in education. In Uganda, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a wakeup call that talk and discussion of fully embracing ICT in education must be turned into action (Tumwesige, 2020). In doing this, the issue of equality needs to be considered. The reason why teachers in this study were able to use virtual classrooms is likely because their students come from fairly privileged socio-economic backgrounds, hence, they can access or afford ICT gadgets and related costs. Students from non-affluent schools who may not access such gadgets need to be provided with alternative means to ensure all Ugandan children using the LSC get equal access to education during times of crisis.

How Would Teachers Want to be Supported to Optimize Curriculum Implementation during the COVID-19 crisis?

The findings of this study reveal that teachers need professional development support, provision of instructional materials, ICT equipment and parental involvement to optimize implementation of the LSC during times of Crisis. These findings resonate with earlier findings which demonstrated that education systems need to ensure equipment support (Naffi *et al.*, 2020), parental involvement and capacity building for educators (Leng *et al.*, 2020; Martin, 2020) during the

COVID-19 crisis. Leng study for instance proposed that capacity building should be aimed at allowing educators develop knowledge, skills, innovative assessment and teaching methods that increase student engagement and attention to online learning. Leng *et al.* (2020) study proposal could be critical consideration Uganda education system to borrow a leaf from if desirable outcomes are going to be realized in the implementation of the LSC during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, capacity building, instructional material and ICT equipment support needs to focus on the contextual realities in relation to the diversity of school types to make it appropriate to the teachers implementing the LSC.

Although this study has given some insights about how teachers implemented the LSC during the COVID-19 crisis, it is crucial to recognize certain limitations. First the study participants consisted of teachers from affluent and middle-class schools, leaving out the teachers from the non-affluent schools, whose experiences are also important in understanding implementation of the LSC from a wide spectrum of schools. Second, the study sample involved a small number of participants, which could not allow for generalizability of study findings. Despite these limitations, the present study has thrown some light on how the implementation of the LSC was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope that the current study stimulates further research into investigating this phenomenon on a wider coverage.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ways in which teachers implemented the LSC through their planning, teaching and assessment practices is an indicator that there is a possibility of implementing the LSC during the COVID-19 crisis through remote learning modes. However, the adoption of remote learning posed several challenges to the teachers which were not only as a result of remote learning adoption but also the inadequate knowledge and skills about the implementation of the LSC possessed by the teachers even before the pandemic. Teachers therefore need support forms ranging from professional development, provision of instructional materials and ICT tools as well as parental involvement in learners' education during times of crisis like the COVID-19 one. Accordingly, this study recommends that teachers implementing the LSC and other stakeholders embrace remote learning modes to facilitate the process of planning, teaching and assessment in times of crisis. Continuous capacity building in the LSC teaching methodologies, assessment practices and digital literacies be enhanced, as well as sensitization of parents to take on an active role in monitoring their children's learning during school closures.

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