

*UCU CREATIVE WRITING,
READING, TRANSLATING AND
PUBLISHING FOR CHILDREN IN
LOCAL LANGUAGES*

Action Research Project
By
Department of Languages and Literature
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UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
NICHE

To support communities
as part of professionalism
and character formation
of students and staff
adapting to servant-hood
as a basic principle of life.

FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND ARTS

Training excellent
teachers and artistic
practitioners with a
difference.

*DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURE*

Providing students with
hand-on skills in content
creation through reading,
writing and translation.

PURPOSE

To engage the UCU community
in creating, publishing,
distributing local language
quality assured children's
storybooks in Ugandan (African)
languages.

PROJECT AIM

Broadening the quality of book creation and promoting Church of Uganda and Government of Uganda interest in open licensing as an alternative local content creation strategy.

OBJECTIVE 1

The action research will establish whether this is a viable option for sustainable book development and whether the students, support staff and Faculty might benefit from being trained on local content creation.

RESULT 1

Has documented the process of using students to write early-literacy books and the quality control measures that must be used to ensure that the books are relevant, age-appropriate, and interesting.

RESULT 1 CONT.

Contributing to writing a step-by-step guide cookbook on using students to create early childhood literacy resources to help other universities that are interested in activities of this nature.

OBJECTIVES 2

To promote book distribution and access through in-country printing, and Church of Uganda institutions by providing a controlled opportunity to explore in-country print, and distribution of students and staff works on African Storybook (ASb) and Story Weaver (SW) CC platforms.

RESULT 2

Explored advocacy, costs of production, and sustainability, and documents the best practices in creating long-term and sustainable content creation agencies in Uganda.

RESULT 2 CONT.

In particular, how to use of open licensing to facilitate the growth of literacy, love of reading, and production of local language content.

OBJECTIVES 3

To assess the possibility for a small content creation agency at UCU to enter into partnerships with content sharing platforms like SW & ASb to function as the equivalent of an Application Service Provider, to offer a cheap alternative to establishing original content, translation, and dissemination platforms.

RESULT 3

Creative Writing class CW assignment with 11 students in June 2017 and produced c. 350 s-books in 15 L1; Community service project in January 2018 with 300 students produced c. 700 s-books in 26 L1.

PROBLEM

Research into local content creation and production of literacy materials neglected yet the need for the story books is ever growing.

The churches as stakeholders in local language use need to actively contribute to language growth and development

CONTEXT OF PROJECT

The Creative Writing, Reading, Translating and Publishing for children project at UCU is based on the needs assessment conducted by Neil and Butcher Associates of South Africa, and other reports in Uganda that call for university interventions to the uplifting the appalling state of literacy and development of indigenous or local languages in Uganda.

CONTEXT OF PROJECT

As centre of excellence,
UCU community started
by producing translations
online that could be used
by readers locally and
abroad.

RESULTS

- Since June 2017, 10 Staff & 300 students have created sbooks in 27 languages.
- 300+www.storyweaver.org.in(SW)
700+www.africanstorybook.org(ASb)
- Read and downloaded over 3,000 times from SW alone.

TARGETED ACTIVITIES

- Creating 750 QA children's sbooks in 25 Ugandan local languages.
- Distributing through the Church of Uganda outlets, and UCU sister colleges.
- Writing a research report for adoption of best practices.

TARGET OUTPUTS

- Print 3,000 storybooks.
- Distribute to community and public libraries, schools, diocesan centers.
- Ham Mukasa University library, and the Peggy Neil Children's Library.
- Mount stories on DVD media and smartphones.

MAIN PARTICIPANTS

Promoting reading in local languages as a hobby and fun game for every child and parent is key. That is why we involve the students, clergy, Faculty, and support staff (cooks, desk officers, cleaners and security).

TARGETED CENTRES

UCU campuses and colleges, Church of Uganda Education Coordination Offices in all dioceses, faith based outlets esp. Mukono, Namirembe, Mbale, Kigezi and Masindi-Kitara, where UCU campuses and colleges are found. (Kabalega College located in Masindi-Kitara Diocese.

REVIEW OF NBA AR

Neil Butcher and Associates (NBA) - William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for Support of Open Licensing in Early Childhood Literacy efforts in the Developing World seeks to stimulate the love of reading and writing in African local languages.

NBA'S KEY QUESTIONS 1

- Are there new ways of establishing and managing teams of content creators (possibly including stakeholders such as teachers, teacher educators, community librarians, etc.) by harnessing some of the new **collaborative** possibilities created by digital disruption?

KEY QUESTION 2

- Additionally, as new content creation possibilities emerge, who is responsible for quality assurance and how can this be managed effectively?

KEY QUESTION 3

- Are the full costs of these new approaches actually more cost-effective than traditional methods of content creation? Most of the innovation in content creation is donor-funded and real costs are not always systematically tracked.

KEY QUESTION 4

- Should costing models 'cost' volunteer and discounted services when determining costs?

KEY QUESTION 5

- Can online platforms available in early literacy reduce barriers to entry to the market for local publishers and, if so, how?

KEY QUESTION 6

- In what ways can open sharing of content on online platforms enable more widespread sharing and cost-effective translation / adaptation of content across different countries and regions of the world?

KEY QUESTION 7

- What impact will open licensing have on Ministry approval processes and timelines, for initial print runs and reprinting?

PROJECT SCOPE

- The project set to produce online and in print 750 children's storybooks on African Storybook and Story Weaver Creative Commons platforms for distribution to Church of Uganda founded primary schools in 25 linguistic communities all over Uganda.

PROJECT SCOPE

- 11 BA Education and BA Languages III students who were trained to use the two platforms 400 storybooks.
- They passed on their skills to other students and staff in the UCU community through quality assurance sessions that lasted nearly one month in July/August 2017.

METHODOLOGY-SELECTION

- The students and staff made their own selection of books to translate. However, they were advised to select the books of the PI and representative samples in each of the levels. This was done to help then ride on the back of known authors and to have the experience of translating books at the different learner or reader levels. The books were first peer reviewed by native language speakers in UCU community and then opportunity was given to consult others in the outside community.

METHODOLOGY – PEER REVIEW

- When those within UCU community proved to be quite busy for the time bound job we opted for readers from outside the campus.
- The process was replicated with the Bachelors of Education 3, Literature in Mass Media 1, Creative writing in Mass Media 2, and Masters in Children's Literature 1 (May – August 2018).

METHODOLOGY – ACTION R

AR is “an approach in which the action researcher and a client collaborate in the diagnosis of the problem and in the development of a solution based on the diagnosis” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.414).

The 5 stages of AR: (1) Identifying the problem (2) Devising a plan to act on the problem (3) Acting to implement the plan (4) Observing to collect and analyse data (5) Reflecting and sharing the findings and lessons learnt.

TARGET LANGUAGES

- Acholi, Ateso, Dhopadhola, Kumam, Lango, Luganda, Lumasaaba, Lusoga, Rufumbira, Rukhonzu, Rukiga, Runyankore, Runyoro, Samya, Agakaramojong, Lunyole, Lugwere, and Rutooro. In reality, the project went beyond Uganda and had storybooks in Latin, French, Yoruba, and Afrikaans.

WHY COLLABORATION?

The collaboration is between the researchers and the organisation (UCU) that seek to solve the identified problem. There is also collaboration between the faculties, departments, individuals and sub-organisations within CoU and UCU.

PROCESS

- The Pls engaged the students, Faculty and staff in the running of the activities. The list of translators and reviewers has been included in the appendix. Each book had a mention of which reviewers were involved and the role they played in the work.

PROCESS

- In general, the students preferred SW to ASb because it was faster, gave quicker feedback and was easier to work with. ASb had good illustrations appealing to the African stories but it was slower and harder to navigate. However, the solution of working offline proved to be a better opportunity over SW.

CREATION PROCESS

- The main challenge of slow internet connectivity was perhaps more local than the platforms themselves. The opportunities offered by SW and ASb staff to come to the University to train the students.

CREATION PROCESS

- Online support from SW & ASb on skype, email, and hangout were highly commended, and a source of encouragement to the creators.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The storybooks created on these two platforms are under the Creative Commons license meaning that they are free to be used by anyone for any purpose.

The creators of the work including any project support is fully acknowledged as shown in the story attribution statement.

COLLABORATION RESULT

- The Creative Writing, Literature and Media, Creating Writing for Children, Poetry and Drama courses taught by the Pls introduced the component of online digital publishing as part of the learning outcomes.

OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES

- **Post graduate course in Translation Studies**

This project has also stimulated the need for introducing the MA in Translation studies which is already running at Kabale Campus. According to Professor Muranga, “it has produced some major works in translation; once we have it running at UCU main campus, the community service programme will even get stronger.”

OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES

- Students not used to this kind of rigorous course work assignments mistook the exercises for commercial enterprises of the PI - course instructor. Some even resisted the inclusion of the statement of attribution in their storybooks.

OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES

- Some lecturers also said that, “this kind of work was not right for coursework. It should be done as club work.”

OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES

- Although the one PI stated this as his greatest achievements, he was advised to “drop the ASB and SW” because it was disruptive and instead concentrate on the ‘traditional curriculum’.

OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES

- The letter announcing that our community service project had won the coveted community service grant for 2017 came with mixed feelings. We hesitated for 4 months to accept the award and then later we took it up.

OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES

- Modalities to involve the Mass Com and Children's Department came as an opportunity. However, the spirit of disruption was not handled and it still affected the project.

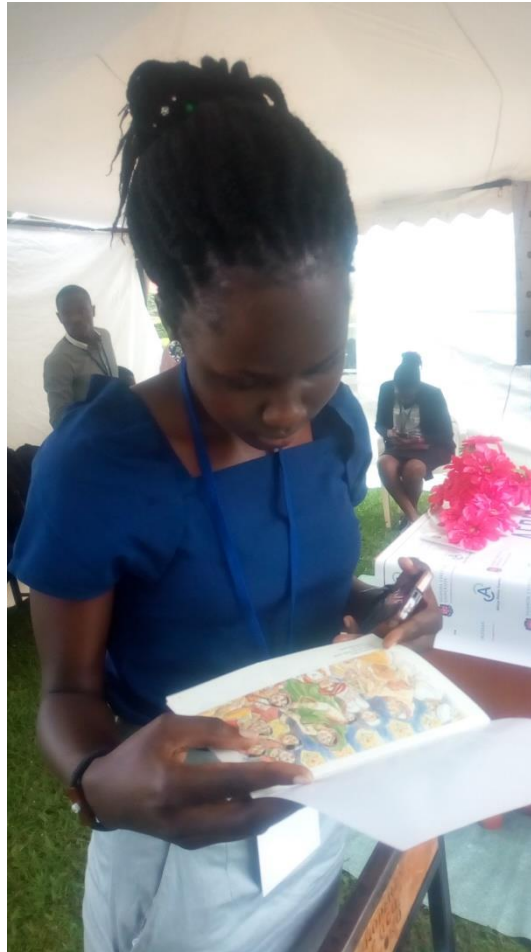
OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES

- Some students complained that some reviewers did not return their books or comments in time. Such students ended up submitting incomplete work. Such work on SW does not go into the UCU publishing folder and on ASb it does not carry the approved tagline. Only until it has gone through the full approval of the language community does it qualify.

JULIUS & KEN ON QA & MENTORSHIP



MARTHA AJWANG READING FROM HER STORYBOOK



BOOK DISPLAY IN FAMILY CONFERENCE

