

Apprenticeship Model in Reading: Impeccable Strategy, Excellent Practice

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Abstract Human survival depends on the ability to acquire and use knowledge to one's advantage. One avenue of acquiring knowledge is reading. But what is reading? Definitions are numerous and complex. Reading and understanding a text involves a nexus of perceiving the words, evoking memories, ideas and plenty of knowledge. This complexity seems responsible for variations among learners' reading abilities and their differential academic performances. Basing on data from a quasi-experimental design using pre- and post-tests done by secondary school learners, lesson observations, interviews and focus group discussions, and guided by Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development and The Apprenticeship Model, this study analyses the interplay between the personal, the social, the cognitive and the knowledge building dimensions, scrutinizes the roles played by the internal and external meta-cognition processes to explore possibilities of providing pleasant and gainful reading experiences among Ugandan learners. It establishes that scaffolding is fundamental in teaching reading and suggests strategies for enlivening the reading experience, enhancing the reading culture, and highlights the pedagogical implications on learners' academic achievements.

Keywords: *reading, apprenticeship model, Metacognition, classroom dimensions, cognitive development*

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1. Introduction

One aspect that underlies human existence and survival is acumen to acquire and use knowledge and information to one's advantage. It is imperative that in every situation human nature seeks access to knowledge and information. This can be done in various ways. But, since immense volumes of information and knowledge are packaged in the written word, one major way of acquiring that knowledge is by reading. Hence the question: what is reading? Simply put, and indeed to many people, reading is the activity of looking at and understanding the written words. However, defining reading is not that simple. What makes defining reading composite is the fact that it is a complex process in itself, thus, defining it involves dealing with a process that needs intricate details from different perspectives. Innumerable scholars have defined reading in different ways. To [1] reading is 'getting meaning of something written by using the eyes to interpret the characters... using the brain'. That sounds easy to decipher. But what makes defining reading complex is that a lot goes on between the time one looks at the written words and the time one puts meaning to those words. Reference [2] posit thus:

Reading is not a straight forward process of lifting words off the page. It is a complex process of problem

solving in which the reader works to make sense of a text not just the words and the sentences on the page but also the ideas, memories and the knowledge evoked by those words and sentences.

What complicates the reading process is what takes place in people's minds. Hence, analysing what goes on in different minds during that process makes us talk of good, avid, reluctant, slow, fluent, involved, disengaged, struggling, frustrated, and all other types of readers one can think of. This decodes that we usually have many different types of readers in a single classroom. Consequently, this implies the importance of teachers being aware of that fact since their *main task* is ensuring that all readers benefit optimally from their reading experiences, variations in their reading capability notwithstanding. This awareness becomes fundamental for teachers because it is their paramount duty to facilitate meaningful learning in all content areas and yet, as earlier noted, the information and knowledge to be learnt in every content area that must be read and understood is packaged in the written word. That makes the ability to read well and to accurately interpret what is read critical.

This paper acknowledges variation among students' ability to read and draws from the reading Apprenticeship Model that is accredited to [2] in a bid to see how best meaningful reading and consequently learning can be enhanced among students in a class of varying types of readers [2,3].

Describing readers entails identifying some characteristics that can be appended to the way people read. For example, good readers are motivated, have acumen to read texts fast, correctly, fluently and, with ease, as well as to clearly understand what they read [2]. Avid readers are passionate readers. They understand and enjoy what they read. They read both intensively and extensively on a wide range of topics which makes them very knowledgeable in many fields. Involved readers get immersed in the text they are reading. They are very interested in what they are reading to the extent that they might not notice anything around them. While reluctant readers 'read under duress'. They only read if they must. They are slow readers and, in most cases, not interested in what there is to be read. They regress a lot; most of them follow the lines they are reading with their fingers or pointers. They, often, move their heads from left to right as the eyes follow the lines they are reading. The disengaged readers lack attention and are easily disrupted. They tend to pay attention to what is happening around them. They tend to reread sentences as they try to make meaning of the text. Scrutiny shows that usually teachers have all these and more types of readers in a single class.

2. Statement of the Problem

Being a means of accessing information, acquiring knowledge, and an avenue for sharing other people's ideas, makes reading an invaluable asset because it shapes our lives. In Uganda, one's future is highly dependent on one's success in education. Uganda is a country where one's level of education positions an individual in society. Excelling in academics usually enables one to get a good job that comes with a huge salary which facilitates living in comfort. But, success in education entails passing national examinations which demands ability to read. Excellent reading ability enables full understanding of textbooks, assignments and examination questions. Possession of excellent reading ability empowers learners to perform to the satisfaction of the examiners and get good grades and the lack of it spells failure in examinations and/or dropping out of school at the worst. Yet, many of our Ugandan learners cannot read satisfactorily by the time they join secondary school.

The 2015 Uwezo report stated that only 56% of the children attending school in urban area and 39% children attending school in rural areas between Primary 3 to Primary 7 could read and understand a story written in English: the language of examination [4]. The 2019 report gave a worse scenario where the percentage of P3-P7 who could read and comprehend a basic story at P2 level dropped from 39% in 2015 to 33% in 2018 and the proportions of complete non-readers ... children slightly reduced from 6.8% in 2015 to 6.2% in 2018 [5]. According to Uganda's Language in Education Policy [6], English is the Medium of Instruction (MOI) from Primary 4 and is the language in which all national examinations are administered. This becomes critical cognizant of the fact that the majority of Ugandans (83.56%) live in rural areas. In essence, the majority of learners complete primary school when they cannot read well, hence, the

necessity of finding means to improve the reading skill among Ugandan learners.

3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Cognizant that learning any skill, and in this case the reading skill, is a continuous process that progresses along a continuum, from rudimentary to the perfect stages, and that sometimes it is vigorously dynamic, but it can also be slow and laborious, this study is grounded in Vygotsky's learning theories: 'the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the Socio-cultural Theory of Cognitive Development [7,8,9,10]. In the ZPD theory, Vygotsky enunciates that in every learning experience learners have tasks they can accomplish on their own known as the Zone of Actual Development (ZAD), what they can accomplish with the assistance of another person: the ZPD and what they cannot do. Diagrammatically this can be illustrated thus:

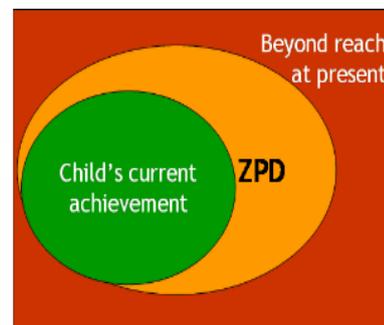


Figure 1. A representation of a child's achievement, the ZPD and the point beyond present reach (Source [11])

He explains the Zone of Proximal Development as the maximum level of development a learner can reach with assistance. Reference [12] delineates ZPD as the difference between learner's actual and potential levels of development. Thus, in any learning situation teachers should be able to establish the level at which the learners are in their reading experience, pick them from there, take them as far as they can go through the ZPD phase, and ensure that their reading experiences are meaningful and fruitful for their level.

The study also acknowledges Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory of Cognitive Development where the main assertion is that children are entrenched in different socio-cultural contexts, hence, their cognitive development advances through social interaction with more skilled individuals [7,9,13,14].

This theory is concerned with the complex cognitive activities of children that are governed and influenced by several principles, the most important of which is that children construct knowledge actively depending on the socio-cultural environment in which they exist. He strongly believed that the community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning" [7]. Thus, cognitive development is seen to be socially mediated by learning in the company of, and, with the help of a more competent other [2,7,15,16,17] This is where the more competent other encourages, facilitates, and guides the learner to take

on tasks that, hitherto, were too difficult for that learner to handle on his/her own. (These are tasks that are marked as ZPD in Figure 1 above.

This exposition has also been articulated by the proponents of the New Literacy Studies (NLS) who contend that literacies and literacy practices are consequences that can be specified according to the context in which they occur [18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29]. This stipulates that the environment in which learners exist must be rich enough to initiate, facilitate, and support learning. It also designates the more knowledgeable members of the community the role of helping the learners enlarge their ZPD phase by transcending into the hitherto, beyond reach part of the task at hand.

In a more specific reference to reading, the gist of this paper, this study is also informed by the Apprenticeship Model (AM) which highlights four key dimensions of classroom life that facilitate the development of meaningful and fruitful reading, viz, the personal, the social, the cognitive, and the knowledge building dimensions of the classroom life. According to the proponents of the Apprenticeship Model, meaningful reading takes place when there is interplay between these four dimensions, [2].

Furthermore, at the centre of this interplay, and tying these dimensions together, is an on-going cognitive conversation either within the participant known as internal metacognition or between the participants and the colleagues and/or the more knowledgeable other people such as the teacher known as external metacognition. Metacognition refers to one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive process. Simply put, metacognition is thinking about thinking. It is a process in which participants become consciously aware of their mental activity and are able to describe and discuss it within themselves or with other people [2,30,31]. These processes can be represented as seen in Figure 2 below.

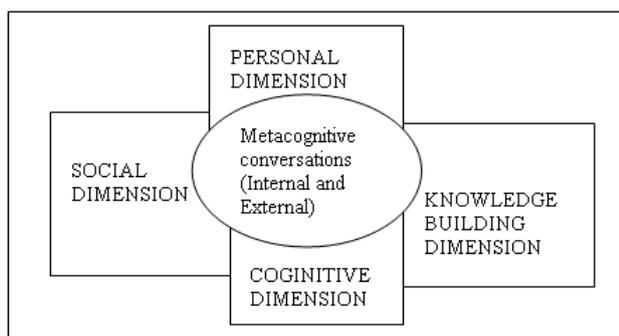


Figure 2. Dimensions of Classroom Life: Supporting Reading Apprenticeship Framework (Source: [2])

What goes on during a metacognitive process is referred to as metacognitive conversation. In the internal metacognitive process each reader, individually, cogitates about their own mental processes. In each case, the participants think of and 'talk' about their reading processes to themselves. They consider any useful strategies, knowledge resources, personal memories, and any motivations as they interact with the text. Whatever goes on in their mind during this process is very important because it facilitates effective responses to the text being read. In the external metacognitive process the teacher or the more knowledgeable other (MKO) and the learners

make use of the social environment to think about and discuss their personal relationship with what they are reading. They think and talk about the knowledge required to make sense of the reading task [2,7,12,15,16,17].

Furthermore, we note that metacognition is neither solely developmental nor purely hereditary; it can be enhanced through training [32]. Given the importance metacognition in reading, Mill's assertion is comforting. This was the impetus for this study: to find out how the Apprentice Model could be used in the Ugandan classroom so that the learners can benefit from this form of instruction. I was a teacher in the Ugandan secondary school for more than a decade and I have been a teacher trainer almost two decades but my observation attests to the fact what this model posits is grossly lacking in the Ugandan classroom.

3.1. The Personal Dimension

As we live through different situations, we tend to think about what we are going through and what is happening around us. This happens in almost all activities we engage ourselves in. In so doing, we debate within ourselves. For example, when one is leaving office, one will start thinking about home, what they are going to have for dinner, what will happen if they ate a particular kind of food. They can recall what happened when, where, with who they were the last time they ate such a meal. They recall what the conversations that went on, on that occasion. One can hold a 'dialogue' with oneself such as:

How could X say that about M? Was he just joking? I hope he was joking. *Oh, but no, he was serious because....that is why M asked that question.* I think you are right, I saw that M was furious though she did not show it openly or say so. Did you sense that? *Sure I did.* So did I. I sincerely believe M had reason to be hurt. *That was really unfortunate. Next time I meet X, I will tell him off.* Aha now, that might cause real trouble...

In that text we see as if two people (the italics representing the 'second person') are talking yet all that is going on in one individual's mind! That is referred to as internal metacognitive conversation. The person carrying it out is alone but he/she is thinking about his/her thinking. It is the metacognition explained above. As this goes on, the person establishes his/her identity in that experience and synthesizes the scenario to her or himself.

In the same way, internal metacognition is active as learners read. While reading, they think about the text, internally comment on the issues within that text, ask questions and give themselves tentative answers, sometimes they can even argue about what they are reading. Thus, learners carry out internal metacognitive conversations within their minds as they read. They do this to gain clarifications and to work towards sensible comprehension of the text: to make meaning of what they are reading. At this level they are working on developing their personal reader identity and self-awareness as readers. In addition, they develop their purposes and goals for reading. At the beginning, their metacognition is rudimentary: still developing and their fluency is wanting. With practice they learn fixing their metacognition on the given task. This improves their reading abilities. Eventually, they become better readers, as they draw from

world knowledge, personal experiences, memories and their goals as a result they develop enabling reading strategies, confidence and perfection.

The internal conversation involves students asking themselves and answering questions about the text, activating any background knowledge they possess, recalling past experiences related to the topic and comparing all that with the new knowledge in the current text so as to understand it. They do all this with the help of appropriate strategies such as visualizing past situations, unleashing imagination or building up mind pictures of what they are reading *inter alia*. To clarify this, [33] explicitly explains that there is a voice in the mind of the reader which has a conversation with the text. She goes on to say that that voice represents the readers' thinking as they talk back to the text. She calls it the interacting voice and expounds thus:

The voice inside the reader's head ...makes connections, asks questions, identifies confusions, agrees and disagrees with ideas. This voice deepens the reader's understanding of the text [33].

This particular voice is very useful to the readers. If used well, the interacting voice greatly aids the development of the readers' metacognitive aspect leading to maturation of the personal dimension. The development of the personal dimension is essential to the readers because it highly assists them as they engage in critical analysis of the texts and enhances their comprehension, making the reading experience worthwhile. Cognizant of the important role metacognition plays in improving students' comprehension, teachers need to initiate, encourage, and train our students to develop this kind of conversation within themselves [32].

However, we also need to warn our students that alongside that very useful voice there exists, according to Tovani, the distracting voice which she describes thus:

... the voice inside the reader's head that pulls her away from the meaning of the text. It begins a conversation within the reading but gets distracted by a connection, a question, [a thought, a memory, *my addition*] or an idea. Soon the reader begins to think of something unrelated to the text [33].

That is a kind of voice that could go on and develop a conversation such as the one below in the reader's mind.

The hare is cunning and confusing but not very clever... (as part of the story then, the student thinks as he tries to concentrate on the story...) *but surely this story is so boring. It has so many difficult words you even don't understand and you just cannot follow what it is all about.* The teacher should have given us a more interesting book like you used to read last year but... *Now, you are even hungry: when will the bell ring for lunch? Can you imagine you are supposed to answer the questions at the end of the story...anyway, I guess you don't have to do that at all...*

We realize that before the metacognition (in italics) starts, the reader thinks of something related to the book being read, but goes on that '*the book is so boring and it has many difficult words*' (discouraging) for this reader and it brings in a piece of memory from last year's reading, thus, doing nothing to encourage the reader. It goes on to inform the reader that *he is even hungry...* and the reader gets completely derailed from the task at hand.

Teachers need to alert the learners that this can happen so that they are not completely derailed when it happens. To reduce derailment, or even eliminate it with time, teachers need to teach the students and model for them how to get back to the text being read by using strategies such as rereading the text or reading it aloud so as to be able to refocus on the task. This is important because if the readers' mind be left to 'wander away from the current text' comprehension breaks down and the teacher ends up with distracted, uninterested and/or disengaged readers. If this goes on frequently, the teacher ends up with struggling readers who will find it too difficult to develop fluency, concentration, confidence, and the expertise required to develop the interest and motivation needed to make reading a pleasant experience. This is crucial since, without engagement in reading, learning becomes difficult. Engagement has been defined as the level of cognitive involvement that a person invests in a process [34,35,36]. This includes the involvement learners invest in the reading process bearing in mind that they have a lot going on in their minds and they can easily be derailed by the distracting voice if it is left to thrive.

3.2. The Social Dimension

The social dimension in the classroom posits the classroom as a community in which learning is supposed to take place. It is about building a community in the classroom which recognizes the resources brought in the reading experience by each member that facilitates development of a safe environment for the students to be open about their reading difficulties and successes [2]. It is about creating an enabling environment in which the teacher freely interacts with the learners and vice versa, and the learners freely interact with each other. Such an environment greatly facilitates both external and internal metacognition.



Picture 1. A teacher, as the more knowledgeable other (MKO), helping learners to think and talk about the knowledge required as they try to make sense of the reading task (lacking in our schools) (Source: [37])

Using their external metacognitive conversations, students freely discuss what goes on in their minds as they read with each other and with the more knowledgeable people (MKOs). In class they discuss with their classmates and their teachers. This can transcend the classroom. At home, the MKOs could be siblings, parents or other more knowledgeable adults around them. External metacognition can be very beneficial in the classroom, especially if a group of students is reading the same text at

the same time. In that case, the students discuss the questions formulated in their minds as they read, they talk about the connections each makes to the text and they discuss the various background information each brings into this reading activity. They share the reading processes either by reading aloud to each other or by identifying the problems involved in the reading of that particular text and working out solutions together. About this process [38] explicates:

The time for peer discussion can permit to clarify and enlarge their understanding by sharing diverse perspectives. They can learn to value one another's contribution instead of assuming that the teacher processes the single right answer [38].

Actually, Calkins posits it as 'accountable discourse' and says:

In accountable discourse, students take one another's remarks seriously and respond directly to them: using a statement as evidence supporting a proposition; refuting a statement by offering evidence to the contrary; concurring with a statement by offering supporting evidence.... If students are to learn from each other they cannot simply make bald statements. They must be able to back up their statements with evidence [15].

External metacognition goes a long way in developing reasoning and analytical skills which are invaluable in meaningful and worthwhile reading. In view of this Calkins, further, postulates that reading is social and that children learn to read best within a richly and rigorously interactive community [15] in line with the New Literacy Studies [19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,39].

An interactive environment enriches the reading process by enabling the learners to gain a bigger body of knowledge related to the text being read than they would if they were just reading by themselves because '... learning generates further learning [15,17]. If well-managed by the teacher, this process develops a safe environment for the students in which they deal with their reading issues. In the process, learners gain a lot of knowledge unconsciously developing their power relations with literacy, developing their reader identity, gaining reading stamina, improving their fluency, enriching their lexical and syntactical levels, minimizing negative internal metacognition, recognizing and adopting other ways of reading used by their colleagues, gaining expertise from the MKOs, thus, becoming expert readers. They learn to look at what they are reading from diverse perspectives and acquire immense knowledge about the topics they are reading.

The social dimension to learning is embedded in and subscribes to Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory of Cognitive Development in which learning is said to be socially mediated. The more knowledgeable others and the teachers provide support for the parts of the task that learners, hitherto, could not do by themselves, by so doing, enlarging the area of the current achievement and widening the ZPD (see Figure 1). The teachers, colleagues, parents, guardians, or anyone more proficient in reading constitute the MKOs [15]. This operational framework has been enunciated by different scholars including [7,15,16,17,40,41,42,43,44]. In essence, interacting with others helps each individual reader to reflect more deeply

and understand the task better than they would on their own.

3.3. The Cognitive Dimension

The cognitive dimension entails developing the readers' mental processes. Working together with the social and personal dimensions, enhanced by the internal and external metacognition, the cognitive dimension takes the reader to a higher level by focusing on increasing the students' repertoire of cognitive strategies for making sense of the texts they read [2]. This interplay with the personal and social activities enables the readers to acquire different reading strategies leading to mental maturation. These strategies include breaking up a text into small comprehensible chunks, getting the bigger picture by skimming the text before scanning it, comparing the new knowledge with the background knowledge gained *inter alia*. All these empower the readers to gain control of their reading processes. By this, time readers are also able to notice and get rid of the discouraging internal metacognition by monitoring and restoring their concentration. With this maturation, readers can set purposes for reading. This gives them the impetus to read on in spite of any impending challenges. This greatly enhances the students' ability and willingness to take responsibility of their reading and confidence to take on more challenging tasks. The students develop keen interest to read different varieties of texts with enjoyment and understanding. This way, they will be able to use the same strategies in other content areas. This leads to improved academic performance in general. However, this does not always come easily. But, the teachers should use their professionalism and acumen to ensure that they create a safe, secure and enabling environment in which learners can individually reach this stage in their reading experiences.

3.4. The Knowledge Building Dimension

The development of the cognitive dimension advances into the knowledge building dimension. This dimension involves identifying detail and expanding the learners' stock of knowledge as they interact with the new texts.

Handling the reading activity is not based on a single dimension herein mentioned. All these dimensions are interwoven, operating at the same time: each supporting the other as they are aided by the two types of metacognitive conversations. As the learners engage in the personal dimension, and interact with the teachers and the colleagues within the social dimension, their cognitive dimension keeps on developing; their comprehension levels, their reasoning, linguistic, analytical skills and stock of background knowledge escalate.

Through reading extensively and intensively, the learners accumulate knowledge from the texts, their teachers and any other MKOs they interact, thus, their knowledge building dimension advances enabling them to become more proficient readers because they accumulate more background knowledge which gives them ideas about the new texts they encounter. At this level, they are operating in the knowledge building dimension.

Learners need to be helped to accumulate knowledge. This can be done by teachers in several ways like telling them the highlights of the text, exposing them to some of the vocabulary that appears in the new text, creating role plays and simulations of situations similar to the ones about to be read, giving them research projects about similar situations, or telling them stories related to the upcoming ones, letting them sing songs related to the new texts and guiding them in discussions. This exposes them to some of the vocabulary and structures that are likely to feature in the upcoming readings. All these help them to build useful schema of knowledge, language structures on the various topics or get discipline specific knowledge that will help them understand what they are about to read [2,45].

The Apprentice Model is both intriguing and very useful because it greatly facilitates teaching reading. Learners interact with their colleagues, their parents, guardians and their teachers, who guide them. Through these interactions, as well as direct and indirect instruction, learners acquire a lot of knowledge building on what they already have. Through the apprenticeship, learners also learn from direct instruction and by watching, copying, imitating and listening to the MKOs, in addition to seeking more information by reading on their own. They are directly guided on what to do and how to do it best by the MKOs. This improves their comprehension level due to the enriched schemata making it better than it would be if they stopped at the personal dimension. It is worth noting that the knowledge building dimension goes on all along right from the beginning of the learning process and continually improves resulting in better readers. All these make reading easy and enjoyable.

This paper confidently advocates for learning through apprenticeship, (hence the Apprenticeship Model), convinced that this way of guiding students is very informative. The roles therein involved can be played by teachers not only in teaching reading but also in the other content areas. On the other hand, the students need to take responsibility of their learning process through personal initiative, interaction with colleagues as well as watching, listening to and taking instruction from the more significant people who are better than them.

Observation of what goes on during the reading lessons in secondary schools in Uganda shows something very different from the precepts of this model. Most of the teachers hand the learners a reading task and just tell them to start reading and instruct them to answer the questions at the end of the text and collect the books for marking. Obviously, the exercises are poorly done and that goes on and on up to the final examination which also ends up being done poorly and the vicious cycle continues. Further scrutiny reveals that students do not perform excellently in items that demand comprehension of reading tasks in examinations. Thus, the impetus to find out what impact the Apprenticeship Model would have in the Ugandan classroom.

4. Research Design

This study used a quasi-experimental design because I needed to compare what goes on in a class where apprenticeship takes place and in one where the model is not applied and assess the impact of the Apprenticeship

model to the learners' reading achievements. This study used a qualitative approach.

4.1. Data Collection

Several methods were used to collect data in an effort to authenticate the findings through triangulation. These were pre- and post-tests, lesson observations, interviews with the teachers, and focus group discussions with learners from selected secondary schools. Through compiling field notes and audio recordings of interviews and focus group discussions, the study was carried out in two schools in one month. Permission was sought from and granted by the governing authorities for the schools and from the respondent to participate in this research. All participants were told to willingly participate and were free to withdraw from the study at any moment they wanted to. Codes A and B have been used to protect the identities of the participants schools.

4.2. Population

Two secondary schools were involved in this study. Four streams of Senior One classes, two from each school participated. One stream in each school was a control while the other was the experimental class. The total number of students in each category was 120, 60 learners per class, which made the total number of students 240. Senior one was chosen because they had just joined high school and their linguistic ability was still low.

Four teachers of English (2 from each school) of the participating classes were purposefully chosen to teach. They were all inducted in teaching following the model by the researcher and were also interviewed after one month. In each case both teachers taught each class together (team teaching), but the approach used in the experimental classes was different from that used in the control classes. The four teachers were interviewed in pairs as they taught. Two focus groups, of five learners each, were randomly selected from the experimental classes.

4.3. Procedure

A pre-test was administered to all the classes at the inception of the study and the post- test was conducted after the one month of teaching in which the experimental classes were taken through a rigorous instruction following the Apprenticeship Model while the control classes were taught in the usual way. Three lessons were taught weekly for four weeks. Two were 40 minutes each and one which was 80-minutes was observed in each class every week. Thereafter, two focus group discussions, of five randomly selected learners from the experimental classes were held and two interviews were held with four teachers. The two teachers from each school were interviewed together.

5. Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

5.1. Results from the Pre-Test Post-Test

The average scores from the pre-test in all classes and

those of the post-test for the control classes were in close range (34.7% - 36.2%). But the results for the experimental in which the Apprenticeship Model was applied for a month showed tangible improvement in performance, from 36% to 61% and 37.3% to 63.3% for schools A and B respectively, indicating that the Model's positive impact on the learners performance in reading as shown in [Table 1](#) below.

5.2. Results from Observation

Each class was taught three lessons per week (two of 40 minutes each and one of 80 minutes). The lesson of 80 minutes was observed in each class every week for four weeks. The teachers had been earlier inducted in using the Model by the researcher. The results have been presented in tabular form to ease comparison.

During the first week all the four classes were behaving in the same way. Learners were dull. Their attention span during the reading activities was very short. Learners were seen doing work from other subjects, indicating lack of interest in the reading tasks. This can be interpreted in two ways. Either the reading tasks were hard: beyond their ZAD and they were not well prepared for them, or they felt the work was boring because they lacked guidance and strategies to help them understand what they were reading. This remained the same for the control classes through all the four weeks. But the situation started to

change in the experimental classes as early as the second week. The learners became progressively active and by the fourth week the experimental classes were very different from the control classes. Confidence, enjoyment, willingness to share experiences, discussing with classmates and with the more competent other and better responses were abundant in the experimental classes in both schools. Cognitive involvement and development and knowledge building were evident [[2,7,15,34,35,36,45,46](#)].

Table 1. Shows results from the Pre-test and post-test

	School A Class Average Mark		School B Class Average Mark	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Control class	35%	34.7%	35.1%	36.2%
Experimental Class	36%	61%	37.3%	63.3%

5.3. Results from Interviews

There were four sessions of interviews with teachers: two in each school. The first two interviews were conducted before the pre-test and the last two after the post-test. In between these tests the participating teachers taught the control classes in their usual way, but taught the experimental classes using the steps developed in accordance with the Apprenticeship Model for one month. The results have been summarised and given in [Table 6](#) below.

Table 2. Results from the Observation of the Control Class in School A

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Control Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dull class • Concentration was highest at the beginning. • 5 minutes into reading activity some learners were playing, looking around: not focused on the text. • Estimated teacher- talk was 90% learner-talk was 10%. • Several learners yawned in during the reading: many learners appeared bored and a few were sleepy! • No discussions, learners were asked to do exercises. • Most of the written responses to the text were wrong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The class was not active. Concentration was only high at the beginning of the lesson. • By 7 minutes into reading activity some learners were playing, looking around, talking to others and giggling: not focused on the text • Teachers did most of the talking as learners listened. • Teacher asked few questions and students answered but reluctantly. • Learners were asked to do exercises. • Most of the written responses to the text were one word answers and most of them were wrong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lessons were not very different from the previous weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lessons were not very different from the previous weeks.

Table 3. Results from the Observation of the Experimental Class in School A

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Experimental Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boring class • Concentration was highest at the beginning • 5 minutes into reading activity some learners were playing, looking around: not focused on the text • Learners were reluctant to participate in discussions • Most of the written responses to the text were wrong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was some slight improvement. • Learners were beginning to open up- there was some sharing with the neighbors with the teachers' encouragement. • More learners appeared focused on the text. • Responses to teachers' questions improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of concentration was seen during the reading. • Noticeable improvement in discussions. • Willingness to share experiences in pairs, groups and in plenary was now evident • The classes were now livelier during discussions. • Interaction with the teacher was much more natural, relaxed and friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lessons were now very lively during discussions. • Many of the students were keen to share their experiences. • They also consulted the teachers freely and frequently. • There was a remarkable improvement in the class environment – more participatory. • The learners were in control of their own reading process and oral and written responses to reading tasks were very good. • Teacher talk had reduced tremendously.

Table 4. Results from the Observation Control Class in School B

Control Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Docile class • Students looked at teachers expecting them to read or tell them what was in the story. • Concentration was high only at the beginning of the reading activity. • Some learners were playing, talking to each other with their books closed • They kept looking around: only to return to the text on realizing someone was watching or moving towards their desks. • Reluctant to participate in discussions • Responded with one word answers, most of which were wrong to questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The same issues as observed during the previous week • Evidence of boredom was high • Participation in discussions was negligible. • Most of the learners appeared inattentive • The teachers labored but hardly got any responses from the learner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The situation was almost as observed in the first and second weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The same issues as observed in the previous weeks.
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Table 5. Results from the Observation Experimental Class in School B

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Experimental Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The class was boring. -Concentration was only noticeable at the beginning of lessons. - By 5 minutes into reading activity some learners were playing, looking around: not focused on the text. - The learners were reluctant to participate in discussions. - Most of the written and oral responses to the texts were wrong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was some improvement. - Students were opening up; there was some sharing with the neighbors with the teacher's encouragement. - Responses to teachers' oral questions started improving and the written answers were a bit better than before. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Noticeable concentration during reading time. Silent reading time was being taken seriously. - There was a lot of noticeable improvement in discussions. - They were now ready to share experiences in pairs, within groups and they were volunteering to share in plenary sessions. - The classes were now very lively during discussions. -Interactions with the teachers were natural and friendly and showed clear understanding of the texts that were read. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lessons were very lively during both reading and discussions. - Most of the students were keen to share and discuss experiences. - They also consulted the teachers at will and very frequently. - The learners were now in control of their own reading process and oral and written responses to reading tasks were very good. - Learners exhibited a lot of confidence and enthusiasm.

Table 6. Results from the Interviews in School A and B

<p>School A Teachers' Views Before the Pre-test</p> <p>The teachers said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some students could read but others could not read. - Even those who read had very short attention span. - Many of them were usually restless during reading. - Only a few could answer questions about the stories they read correctly but most of the answers were quite often wrong. - The teachers had not seen any of them read story books on their own. - They confessed never having discussed reading tasks. - They said they would just ask them to do exercises. - Asserted that making learners understand what they read is difficult and that teaching reading was difficult. 	<p>School A Teachers' Views After the Post-test</p> <p>The teachers said the learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could now read and the reading speed had greatly improved. - Had improved attention span. - Answered the oral questions correctly and most of their comprehension exercises were done much better than before. - They had given them some story books and they were reading them. Many could now talk about the books they were reading. - Liked sharing their views about what they read in class. - Could now concentrate while working in groups and willingly presented about their work in plenary sessions. - Enjoyed the reading lessons and their responses were good. - The teachers agreed this way of teaching improved learners' participation in class and their understanding of what they read.
<p>School B Teachers' Views Before the Pre-test</p> <p>The learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They had not seen learners read any story books on their own. Those who tried to read in class were very slow. - The learners' attention span was very low. After a few minutes you would see many restless or absent minded. - With coaxing, a few could answer some questions. - They had not seen any of them read novels. - Sometimes they could try to make them discuss but when you moved around you would sense that most of them are discussing other things. - The teachers complained that teaching reading was difficult because most students did not seem to understand many of the reading texts even when they were very simple. 	<p>School B Teachers' Views After the Post-test</p> <p>The learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Had improved greatly. Their reading speed had also greatly improved. They could now concentrate and read silently. - Answered the oral questions correctly and had also improved in written comprehension exercises. - Were now willing to read and discuss with classmates and present in the whole class plenary after reading. - Had started borrowing story books from the library and reading them and liked talking about what they are reading. - Could now tell the teachers and their colleagues about the books they were reading. Discussions showed understanding. - The reading lessons were livelier now than before. - The teachers acknowledged that the Apprenticeship Model is a useful and very effective way of teaching reading because it engaged the learners and made them understand what they read.

The teachers' views were in line with what was observed in the class. They were in agreement with the tenets propounded by the scholars cited in this study. They can be summarised in what one of them said:

I was amazed to see my class so involved in reading a story during the second week! It was gratifying to mark books and see how well they were performing. Working in pairs and small groups made even the introverts warm up to the reading tasks. By the fourth week most of them

were willing to share their experiences with the whole class... now what remains is instilling discipline so that they can keep their voices a bit low during discussions, but the whole thing is exciting. I liked it. And certainly, the experimental classes like it very much. My teaching is going to change. Oh my God! (*Field notes*).

That shows that the teachers also loved the positive change that took place in their experimental classes. Little wonder that the average scores in the post-tests were much

better than those of pre-tests in those classes as shown in Table 1.

5.4. Results from the Focus Group Discussions

In the last week of teaching focus group discussions were held with students from the experimental classes. Each group had five randomly selected members. They expressed following views and sentiments about the new way of teaching that was based on the Apprenticeship Model thus:

- The classes become very enjoyable.
- We shared and discussed each other's view and experiences.
- We recalled many experiences related to what we were reading. This helped us to visualize the situations and scenarios we were reading about. That enabled us understand our reading tasks.
- We were able to talk about those scenarios and discuss what we were reading.
- The teachers ('the MKOs') guided us well so that we really understood what we were reading.
- Teachers told us stories about experiences related to what we were reading that helped us to have more ideas which we shared during the discussions. We had to give reasons for our views.
- We answered both the oral and written questions well because we had enjoyed the reading and fully understood our reading tasks.
- We liked the new experience and we now prefer this method of handling the reading tasks.
- We request/advise that all teachers use this style of teaching reading.

All these views are in line with the views of all the scholars who have researched and written about the application of the Apprenticeship Model in teaching reading.

6. Conclusion

As a major basis for accessing written knowledge and information, reading is invaluable. This study clearly demonstrates that a relaxed and participatory environment where learners are encouraged to think, talk about their ideas and share their reading experiences with colleagues and MKOs as embedded in the dimensions the Apprenticeship Model can enable Ugandan, and other, learners elsewhere to perform very well in their reading tasks and this can improve their academic performance in general. It also accentuates the importance of role the more competent/knowledgeable other (MKO) plays in moving the learners from their Zone of Actual Development (ZAP), guiding them through and even beyond the assumed Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

7. Recommendations

This study used only two secondary schools. It could be argued that that might not be representative enough but it can act as an indicator giving a clue to the fact that there is

need for teachers to revisit their methods of teaching reading in order to breathe a new life in the classroom. This study has shown that the Apprenticeship Model can improve the learners' reading skill consequently leading to better academic achievements. It highly recommends that the model be used in teaching reading not only in secondary schools but also at other school levels in Uganda. However, more research in methods of teaching reading is recommended.

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