



Research Article

# Exploring the Role of Coordinating Centre Tutors in Implementing Early Grade Reading Initiatives in Wakiso District, Uganda

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**Abstract:** The adoption of Early Grade Reading (EGR) Methodology in 2013 in Uganda brought on board different stakeholders to effectively implement it in the education eco-system. With reference to this particular study, we examined the crucial role of Coordinating Center Tutors (CCTs) in Wakiso District, Central Uganda in the effective implementation of EGR methodology. Wakiso District's socio-economic and cultural diversity necessitates an adaptive approach to EGR, making CCTs indispensable in tailoring instructional methods. Specifically, we set out to scrutinize how CCTs assess EGR instructional practices, and effectiveness of their training programs on effective implementation of EGR in primary schools in Wakiso district. Data was collected from six purposively selected CCTs through face-to-face interviews. Key findings reveal the multidimensional role of CCTs as trainers, mentors, and community engagers. Their instructional practices, range from center-based training to partnered reading, showcasing a holistic strategy. Positive impacts on literacy development, including enhanced comprehension and confidence among learners, under-score the effectiveness of these practices. Continuous professional development initiatives and targeted training contribute significantly to CCT competency, bridging gaps in their earlier college training. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the dynamic role of CCTs in carrying out ongoing support and targeted training programs. The recommendations encompass mentorship programs, collaborative learning environments, diverse instructional methods, continuous professional development, strengthened partnerships, increased community involvement, a structured referral system, and a dynamic learning environment. This study contributes to the understanding of the intricate dynamics surrounding EGR implementation, providing insights for educational policy-makers, practitioners, and researchers aiming to optimize literacy outcomes in diverse contexts.

**Keywords:** Early Grady Reading (EGR); Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs); instructional practices; educational practices

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## 1. Introduction

Early literacy, mostly associated with significant people in history, appeared around 3500-3000 BCE, influencing education outcomes (Gunderson, 2021). This evolution influenced heretical groups as well as official education (Ranum, 2020). In the 19th century, Europe formalized education with a focus on graduation, literacy, and numeracy, a trend observed in Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland (Elstad, 2023). British colonialism introduced education to East Africa, shaping Uganda's assessment methods during colonial rule (Becker, 2022). In the 1930s, whole-language strategies enhanced EGR, fostering comprehension and enjoyment (Sweeney, 2013). Marie Clay's Reading Recovery, founded in 1976 in New Zealand, gained traction globally, including adoption in the US in 1979 (D'Agostino & Harmey, 2016). The 1982 Harare Declaration aimed to combat illiteracy in Africa, emphasizing universal primary education and mother-tongue language literacy (Asiimwe & Ssentanda, 2020). Tanzania and Ethiopia sustained anti-illiteracy efforts post colonially, while Botswana, Kenya, and Zimbabwe faced challenges (Phiri et al., 2020).

In East Africa, efforts to enhance EGR have been characterized by a recognition of the

foundational importance of literacy with Kenya and Tanzania taking lead starting in the early 2000s (Piper et al., 2019). In many developing regions, including East and Southern Africa, the initial focus was often on basic infrastructure and access to education but as access improved, the attention shifted towards quality, prompting the need for effective pedagogical methods (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019). In this evolution, the role of teachers became increasingly central, leading to the emergence of the CCTs. While CCTs are integral to the historical trajectory of EGR implementation as they represent a response to the complex dynamics within classrooms. Over time, it became evident that effective curriculum implementation required a bridge between education policies and the diverse classroom contexts (Pretorius et al., 2020). This realization led to the designation of specialized roles for CCTs, emphasizing their responsibility in translating broader educational objectives into actionable strategies within the local context.

Since 2013, EGR Methodology came into existence in programs including the Uganda School Health and Reading Program, the Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA), and Global Partnership in Education in Ugandan government schools, supporting various languages for improved mother-tongue literacy (Weatherholt et al., 2019). EGR is a critical phase in a child's education, forming the foundation for future academic success. Despite global efforts to improve literacy rates, challenges persist, necessitating a closer examination of effective strategies (Westbrook et al., 2022). CCTs emerge as key players in addressing these challenges due to their unique position at the intersection of curriculum implementation and classroom dynamics. The implementation of EGR programs in education systems globally has been a subject of paramount importance, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping a child's educational journey (Asimwe & Ssentanda, 2020). As educational landscapes continually evolve, so do the challenges associated with nurturing literacy skills in early learners. The overarching roles of CCTs in implementing the EGR on the African continent sheds light on the evolution of strategies to overcome these challenges (Kotze et al., 2019).

Theoretically drawing on educational theories such as constructivism and socio-cultural learning, these CCTs play a crucial role in mediating between the prescribed curriculum and the individual learning needs of students. Theoretical frameworks acknowledge that learning is a dynamic process influenced by cultural, social, and contextual factors. CCTs, positioned at the nexus of curriculum and classroom, are well-placed to apply these theories in practice.

The Constructivism theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge by building upon their experiences and understanding (Fatimah et al., 2022). Applied to EGR, this approach emphasizes interactive learning experiences tailored to a child's developmental stage. Instructors encourage exploration, inquiry, and critical thinking, fostering a deeper understanding of language and literacy (Suhendi et al., 2021). By engaging students in meaningful, contextually relevant activities, constructivism in EGR aims to build a strong foundation for lifelong literacy skills, recognizing the importance of the learner's active role in the learning process.

Socio-cultural learning theory posits that learning is a social and cultural process, emphasizing the role of social interactions, language, and cultural context in knowledge acquisition (Tzuriel, 2021). Applied to EGR, this theory underscores the importance of collaborative and culturally relevant learning experiences. Children benefit from interactions with more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers and peers, and cultural context shapes their understanding of literacy (Robles et al., 2021). Socio-cultural learning in EGR recognizes the significance of language, social engagement, and culturally resonant materials, fostering a holistic approach to literacy development within the socio-cultural context of the learners as a precondition for effective instructional practices employed by CCTs.

#### *Study Objective:*

In light of the limited evidence of the critical role played by CCTs in effective implementation of EGR initiatives, this study was undertaken in order to:

Evaluate the instructional practices employed by CCTs in Wakiso district and assess their role in enhancing EGR initiatives in lower primary education in Wakiso district.

#### *Justification:*

Despite CCTs being designated at the centre of curriculum implementation and classroom dynamics, their actual impact on EGR implementation was uncertain. This ambiguity was compounded by the diverse socio-economic and cultural landscape of Wakiso, demanding a tailored educational approach. Additionally, the lack of evidence regarding the

seamless execution of CCT responsibilities further underscored the urgency for scrutiny. With disparities persisting and a notable graduation rate challenge reported, understanding the specific contributions of CCTs was crucial for optimizing EGR initiatives and ensuring a robust foundation for academic success among young learners. Hence, in the study we addressed these gaps, providing valuable insights for refining EGR strategies in Wakiso District. Understanding the multifaceted roles of CCTs is crucial for refining educational policies and practices. By elucidating the impact of these tutors on EGR, this study provides insights that can inform targeted interventions, professional development programs, and resource allocation.

Wakiso District is part of the Kampala Metropolitan Area in Central Uganda. The district has 1,692 Primary schools of which 273 embrace Universal Primary Education (Okwera, 2019). Joining USAID's School Health and Reading Project in 2012, Wakiso district embraced EGR to enhance lower primary education, requiring pupils to use Luganda until primary three, transitioning to English in primary four calling for support from CCTs (Nyanzi-Kabanda et al., 2022). The USAID/Uganda LARA Quarterly Report (2020) highlights the essential role of CCTs as a prerequisite for improving EGR. While government-aided schools have been equipped with tools, it is imperative to provide continuous support through monitoring, on-site visits, and EGR efficacy advice. The contribution of CCTs in bridging these gaps, ensuring that the resources are effectively utilized in classrooms (Ngaka, 2021). Their involvement in on-site visits and providing guidance on EGRM efficacy contributes significantly to demonstrating the commitment of government-aided schools to the success of the EGRM initiative.

Moreover, the socio-economic and cultural diversity within Wakiso District necessitates an adaptable approach to EGR. CCTs, drawing from pedagogical theories are crucial in tailoring instructional methods to address the unique needs of students (Westbrook et al., 2022). This adaptability fosters a more inclusive and effective learning environment, acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of learners in the district. Despite the recognized importance of CCTs in EGR initiatives, there has been limited concrete evidence affirming the seamless implementation of their roles. In navigating the complex educational terrain of Wakiso District, CCTs emerge as essential channels for bridging the gap between educational objectives and the intricacies of local classrooms (Okwera, 2019). Their role becomes even more critical as they navigate the challenges posed by the diverse socio-economic backgrounds and cultural nuances present in the district. Although the evidence supporting the impact of CCTs in EGR initiatives is currently minimal, their strategic positioning ensures that these programs not only meet global educational standards but also resonate authentically with the specific needs of Wakiso District. In doing so, they contribute significantly to establishing a robust foundation for the academic success of young learners in the region

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. *The Concept of Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs)*

CCTs in educational settings, serve as intermediaries between educational policies and classroom dynamics. In the context of EGR initiatives, CCTs are responsible for implementing and coordinating strategies to enhance literacy skills among early learners (Bartlett et al., 2015). Positioned at the intersection of curriculum design and on-the-ground classroom realities, CCTs ensure the effective translation of educational objectives into practical teaching methodologies. CCTs are equipped with pedagogical knowledge, drawing from educational theories to tailor instructional methods that suit the diverse needs of students (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016). They adapt to the socio-economic and cultural diversity within their assigned districts, fostering inclusive and effective learning environments (Ardhian et al., 2020). Their role extends beyond traditional teaching; CCTs are instrumental in providing on-site support, conducting classroom observations, and offering guidance on the efficacy of EGR programs.

In the broader educational landscape, CCTs act as linchpins, bridging the gap between global educational standards and the specific challenges presented by local contexts (Kraft & Falken, 2020). Their strategic position allows them to navigate complex educational terrains, ensuring that EGR programs align with overarching educational goals while remaining responsive to the unique needs of the communities they serve. In essence, CCTs contribute significantly to laying a solid foundation for the academic success of young learners by facilitating the implementation of effective early-grade reading strategies (Elstad, 2023). Literature by Ranum (2020) highlights the importance of qualified and trained educators in

fostering EGR skills. Becker (2022) and Gunderson (2021) emphasize the significance of teacher support programs, with a specific focus on the role of CCTs in enhancing instructional quality, providing targeted interventions, and promoting a positive learning environment.

## 2.2. *Early Grade Reading*

EGR is a critical phase in a child's educational journey, typically spanning the initial years of formal schooling, typically from Primary 1 to Primary 3 (Weatherholt et al., 2019). This phase is crucial as it lays the foundation for overall literacy and academic success. During these early years, children transition from learning to read to reading to learn, making proficiency in reading essential for their continued educational development. Effective EGR programs focus on developing foundational literacy skills such as phonics, alphabetic principle, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (Pretorius et al., 2020). These programs often incorporate evidence-based instructional strategies, engaging materials, and supportive learning environments. The goal is not only to ensure that children can decode and understand written text but also to cultivate a love for reading and learning.

In many educational systems globally, Kotze et al. (2019) stated that successful implementation can significantly impact a child's educational trajectory, setting the stage for continued academic achievement throughout their schooling years.

EGR in Uganda is a critical focus in primary education, marked by initiatives like the EGR Model. Introduced to enhance literacy, EGR emphasizes the use of the mother tongue until primary 3, transitioning to English in primary 4 (USAID/Uganda LARA, 2020). Despite challenges, including low transition rates in some regions, efforts persist to align instructional resources with the model. The role of CCTs is pivotal, adapting pedagogical strategies to diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts (Ngaka, 2021). Ongoing monitoring and support are essential for the success of EGR, emphasizing its foundational importance in shaping educational trajectories (Ssenkande et al., 2022).

## 2.3. *Effectiveness of Instructional Practices Employed by CCTs of the Implementation of the EGR*

Research by Elstad (2023) consistently underscores the pivotal role CCTs play at the intersection of curriculum implementation and classroom dynamics. Studies such as those by Phiri et al. (2020) and Robles et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of instructional practices that are adaptive to the socio-economic and cultural diversity within educational settings, particularly in regions in the developing world. Graham and Kelly (2019) stated that CCTs, armed with pedagogical theories, have been found to tailor instructional methods to suit the unique needs of students, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

However, challenges persist which require a comprehensive review as Pretorius et al. (2020) points out the need for continuous monitoring and support for effective instructional practices. The literature suggests that the success of CCTs is contingent upon their ability to adapt to local contexts and address disparities in educational outcomes. The study by Ngaka (2021) highlights that while the use of the mother tongue in instructional methods is recognized, there is a gap in understanding how CCTs navigate this linguistic transition effectively, especially in regions where pupils switch from a local language to English, as seen in Wakiso District.

The CCTs in Uganda play a fundamental role beyond ensuring adherence to the curriculum. They conduct on-site visits, providing hands-on guidance on the efficacy of EGR initiatives. Ardhian et al. (2020) highlight CCTs' significance in bridging gaps and ensuring optimal utilization of educational resources in classrooms. Additionally, research by Graham and Kelly (2019) underscores the pivotal role of CCTs in implementing effective instructional practices. Their work emphasizes the necessity for adaptive, culturally sensitive, and closely monitored approaches to teaching. By offering tailored support, facilitating professional development, and engaging with communities, CCTs contribute to fostering a conducive learning environment and improving educational outcomes for primary school students in Uganda.

## 2.4 *The Role of CCT Training Programs in the Implementation of EGR Educational Practices*

CCTs, often found in educational systems around the world, are crucial contributors in translating policy objectives into effective instructional strategies especially under the EGR. Null et al. (2017) underscores the importance of targeted training programs for CCTs to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge. In a study by Tahir and Ertek (2018) it was found that structured training programs significantly improved CCTs' ability to navigate the complexities of EGR implementation, resulting in more effective educational practices. The



training covered areas such as pedagogical approaches, classroom management, and adapting teaching methods to diverse learning needs. Moreover, findings from the work of Hogg et al. (2023) highlight the positive impact of continuous professional development for CCTs. Long term training programs not only enhance their content knowledge but also contribute to the development of leadership skills in implementing the EGR (Graham & Kelly, 2019). CCTs, when well-trained, emerge as educational leaders capable of fostering collaboration among teachers, implementing innovative teaching methodologies in the EGR, and addressing challenges within the educational system (Pretorius et al., 2020).

The literature underscores the importance of context-specific training programs, acknowledging the diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in various educational settings. Kumar's study (2022) showcases the effectiveness of tailoring training initiatives to tackle the specific challenges within a region or district, significantly improving CCTs' ability to implement educational practices. This body of research highlights the instrumental role of CCT training programs in enhancing educational practices, emphasizing the need for customized approaches to meet the unique needs of each community (Hogg et al., 2023). By investing in such tailored professional development opportunities, educational stakeholders can empower CCTs to bridge the gap between policies and on-the-ground implementation, ultimately fostering positive changes and improving learning outcomes for students.

Kraft and Falken (2020) emphasized that the effectiveness of CCTs depends on well designed and contextually relevant approaches that empower them to bridge the gap between educational policies and on-the-ground implementation of EGR. Therefore, investing in the professional development of CCTs becomes paramount. Through targeted training initiatives tailored to address the specific challenges within each region or district, CCTs can better navigate the complexities of their roles and effectively implement educational practices (Ardhian et al., 2020). By enhancing the capacity of CCTs to translate policies into action, EGR programs hold the potential to foster positive changes in teaching methodologies and learning environments. Ultimately, this investment in CCTs' professional growth can contribute to improved learning outcomes and academic success for students across diverse educational settings.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Research Approach

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach to explore the roles of CCTs in implementing EGR in Wakiso District. The qualitative approach values context and subjectivity. This approach emphasize exploration to understand the meanings of concepts and capturing rich narratives through using methods such as interviews as applied in this particular study.

#### 3.2. Research Design

The researchers adopted the phenomenological research design which involved interacting with participants to understand the participants' perspectives on the roles of CCTs in implementing EGR in Wakiso district (Bell et al., 2022). This design sought to uncover the intricacies of beliefs, and practices to provide in-depth insights into the context and facilitating a holistic understanding of the studied community or group, in this case the CCTs (Eyler, 2020).

#### 3.3. Study Population, Sample and Sample Selection

The study engaged Coordinating Center Tutors (CCTs) from Wakiso District. Wakiso District consists of eight coordinating centres. Namely; Naddangira, Nkumba, Sseguku, Masuulita, Nsangi, Lake Victoria Entebbe, and Wampewo CCs. Through purposive sampling based on the CCTs lived experiences in facilitating in-service teacher professional development in the different primary schools in the centres they coordinate, we set out to interview all the eight CCTs from the district. However, by the time we finished interacting on the phenomenological histories of their effects of their instructional practices on teaching of EGR by primary school teachers as well as learners' achievements over the years with the sixth participant, we had reached a point of data saturation. Hence, we cut off the other two CCTs from the data collection process.

#### 3.4. Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data from study participants was collected through use of phenomenological interviews with practicing CCTs in Wakiso District. The interview schedule sought for information about

the effectiveness of instructional practices employed by CCTs in enhancement of instructional delivery and learners' attainment in numeracy and literacy. In addition, it elicited for information about the role of CCT training programs in enhancing educational practices. As stated earlier, a total of six interviews were held.

### 3.5. *Quality Control*

As recommended by Haven & Van Grootel (2019), the researchers ensured credibility through collaborative engagement with each of the CCTs and by maintaining detailed documentation of their responses for further discussion. To do this, the researchers treated participants as "co-researchers" in an informal setup to empower their voices, and value their contributions throughout the research process to facilitate easy clarification of the responses provided during data collection.

### 3.6. *Data Management Including Results Analysis*

Data management in this context involved organizing, interpreting, and deriving insights from the narrative raw data collected from key informants. The researchers conducted thematic analysis involving constant comparison of the findings to uncover patterns and themes on the roles of CCTs in the implementation of EGR.

### 3.7. *Ethical Considerations*

Formal introduction was made to each participant elucidating the study objectives. Utmost confidentiality was ensured and informed consent from each participant was sought. Anonymity was ensured by concealing the identity of all participants. Voluntary participation was ensured during the selection process to ensure that participants were free from coercion.

### 3.8. *Study Limitations/ Boundaries*

The study was purely qualitative and this limited to solicit the quantitative perspectives regarding the role of CCTs in the implementation of EGR initiatives in Wakiso District. The study sample was limited based on the notion that it was purely qualitative in nature involving only CCTs and saturation was reached with our sixth participant. Various factors beyond the roles of CCTs might have had a stake in the implementation of the EGR.

## 4. Results

This section presents the results on the role of CCTs in implementing EGR initiatives in Wakiso District. The results are laid out in the order of the study objectives. All the data collected from the CCTs was qualitative in nature revealing their insights on the role of CCTs in implementing EGR in Wakiso District.

### 4.1. *Effectiveness of Instructional Practices Employed by CCTs*

In our interaction with participants, we inquired about the instructional practices they use in delivering continuous professional development programs (CPD) to teachers of EGR in primary schools as well as their perceived about the impact of such instructional practices on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

#### 4.1.1. *The Instructional Practices Applied in Delivering of CPDs to Teachers of EGR in Primary Schools in Wakiso District*

From the data offered by study participants, the most prevalent instructional practices that are used by CCTs in delivering CPDs to teachers of EGR in primary schools of Wakiso include off and on the job trainings. At times, teachers of EGR are trained at the CC and in other instances, the CCT moves to the schools they are attached to. The most prevalent strategy either at the centre or school-based training is collaborative learning through peer-to-peer support through clustering of teachers from different schools as well as mentorship and coaching from lead teachers. Collaborative learning is attained through the incorporation of instructional methods like partnered reading and continuous assessment revealed by KI\_04 that "*we emphasize partnered reading, choral reading, and continuous assessment*". Further, the following verbatim affirms these notions:

*"...We use Centre and school-based trainings, Lead teachers' mentor other teachers, clustering schools which enables teachers to learn from each other.*

*CCTs also model methodology during support supervision and monitoring"*  
KI\_01

*"...I use demonstrations and team teaching with some of my colleagues and this improves the results as*

*much as possible. Peer-to-peer support also works well because some teachers are evidently ahead of others in EGR training and practices” KI\_02.*

The verbatim above affirms that among the instructional practices that CCTs applied in delivering CPDs for EGR teachers include Centre and school-based trainings plus demonstrations as foundation for team teaching with intentions of improving the implementation of the programme in Wakiso District.

Participants further highlighted that team teaching and peer-to-peer support is enhanced by use of resource persons and more knowledgeable others who regularly emphasize the effective role of collaborative learning environment in nurturing EGR methodologies among teachers. For example; KI\_05 stated that “*Peer to peer support and use of resource persons knowledgeable in EGR methodology*” and another (KI\_06) revealing that:

*“...Peer-to-peer support; CCTs are resource persons. I refer teachers to other teachers who are implementing EGR to benchmark from” KI\_01*

The verbatim affirms that peer-to-peer support was applied as a strong instructional practice for delivering the EGR in Wakiso District. Its efficacy towards bettering the delivery of the EGR rested on the relationships built among the peers as well as seeking for guidance from those with better skills and competences. Consequently, CCTs emphasize the need to reflect on one’s strengths and seek help from colleagues who might be more knowledgeable in the specific EGR methodologies and knowledge.

Further participant KI\_01 and KI\_06 acknowledge lead teachers as valuable resources in EGR implementation. The lead teachers play a scaffolding function at the school level through mentoring and coaching of new entrants and those struggling with some concepts EGR concepts and methodologies. However, lead teachers’ effectiveness is attained in case of utilization of peer-to-peer support and resource persons. The refusal to make and accept referrals might limit potential collaborations as per the verbatim below: “*...they are resource persons; the lead teachers are a good resource in the implementation of EGR...No I don’t make referrals” KI\_03.*

Overall, the integration of mentoring, collaborative learning, and diverse teaching strategies showcases a well-rounded approach to fostering effective EGR practices among teachers, creating a supportive ecosystem for professional development.

#### 4.1.2 The Impact of Instructional Practices of CCTs on Pupils’ Literacy and Numeracy Skills

The participants highlight the positive impact of various teaching practices on literacy in Wakiso District. The emphasis on appropriate methodologies, such as blending syllables and sounds using reading instructional materials, signifies a comprehensive approach to teaching literacy. The integration of library lessons, oral literature, and local languages contributes to a well-rounded education, enhancing pupils’ reading abilities.

*“...Through the use of the above-mentioned practices, teachers are able to use appropriate methodology for teaching literacy. There is more use of reading instructional material which enables blending of syllables, sounds, and general comprehension of what is read. There is improvement in the teaching of library lessons, oral literature and use of local language. All these aid the pupil’s reading abilities. More reading games and jingles are used which make reading more interesting” KI\_01.*

The above verbatim affirms the impact of CCTs’ instructional practices on pupils’ literacy and numeracy skills as evidenced from the frequent use of reading instructional material in the efforts to blend syllables and sounds as well as the overall comprehension.

The adoption of these methodologies by both government and some private schools underscores their effectiveness, leading to improved reading and writing skills among learners. Peer-to-peer support among CCTs is identified as a valuable strategy, providing learners with opportunities to practice literacy and numeracy skills beyond formal classroom instruction. This fosters self-expression, confidence in using local languages, and the development of reading readiness and writing skills as per the following verbatim:

*“...Government schools and some private schools have embraced and adopted the methodology and this has helped many Learners to learn to read and write, in ..... CC” KI\_02*

*“...Using peer to peer support learners get an opportunity to practice their literacy and numeracy skills*

*with their peers even outside the classroom instruction”* KI\_03.

The verbatim above affirmed that the CCTs’ instructional practices had improved reading and writing skills among learners evidenced by the adoption of the EGR by both government and private schools in Wakiso District.

Furthermore, the mention of boosting confidence among learners by KI\_05-“*Boosting confidence among learners*”; suggests that the implemented strategies contribute not only to academic proficiency but also to students’ overall confidence and engagement in the learning process. The incorporation of phonemes/sounds, collaborative learning, instructional materials, and individualized/differentiated learning further illustrates a multifaceted approach to achieving literacy competencies. Overall, these practices create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that positively influences learners’ literacy development. The following observations were made by the key informants:

*“...Learners develop self-expression, confidence in using the local language. Learners develop reading readiness skills. Learners develop more writing skills”* KI\_04

*“...Through using phonemes/ sounds, through using collaborative learning pupils’ comprehension is enhanced, through using instructional materials, through individualized and differentiated learning pupils are supported to achieve competences in literacy and numeracy”* KI\_06.

From the above verbatim, it was affirmed that CCTs’ instructional practices were instrumental in boosting learners’ confidence in addition to academic proficiency which aligns with literacy and numeracy skills in Wakiso District.

#### 4.2. *The Role of EGR Training Programs in Enhancing CCTs’ Pedagogical Practices*

On the other hand, we asked participants to reflect on the role of training programs they have been conducting with teachers of EGR in primary schools in Wakiso district in improvement of their pedagogical practices. Their submissions revealed that the continuous training and professional development has greatly enhanced their competency and effectiveness in supporting literacy development in Wakiso District. The trainings focus on refreshing techniques, improving reading skills, and acquiring support supervision, coaching, and mentoring skills. These initiatives address gaps in practicing teachers’ earlier college training, ensuring a holistic skill set. As CCTs prepare and conduct these trainings, their competency, knowledge and skills to support literacy development effectively is enhanced. These notions were based on the following verbatim:

*“...The trainings we offer help us refresh our training techniques i.e., conducting participatory sessions. We also gain reading skills that we might have missed during our earlier college trainings. In addition, we gain support supervision skills, coaching and mentoring skills we use to assist teachers”* KI\_01

*“...Continuous project development initiatives have greatly contributed to our competency and effectiveness in supporting literacy development in Wakiso district. Continuous Professional Development courses that we attend at college conducted by the PSDO (Preservice Development Office) and the training we facilitate in workshops helps us to support teachers with confidence”* KI\_02

The verbatim above indicates that continuous training as a precondition for professional development was envisaged to enhance the competency and effectiveness of CCTs in improving literacy development among schools implementing the EGR in Wakiso District.

The CCTs’ competency in facilitating EGR methodology is strengthened through their employment of various teaching techniques tailored to different grade levels. Their proficiency is further developed through attending Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses, conducted by the Preservice Development Officer (PSDO), and cascading EGR knowledge to primary school teachers. This approach not only reinforces their own learning but also enhances their effectiveness by disseminating essential skills to teachers in the community, creating a sustainable impact on literacy development in the district. Overall, the combination of hands-on training, continuous professional development, and knowledge dissemination contributes to the continuous improvement of CCTs and their ability to support literacy development effectively.

*“...The above contributed to the competency and effectiveness of CCT’s by retooling us in the necessary*



*knowledge and skills that enables the us to support the development of literacy”* KI\_03

*“...To teach is to learn. Through training teachers on EGR methodology CCTs competences have been honed. Through attending CPDs and cascading the EGR knowledge and skills to the primary school teachers enhances the CCT’s effectiveness”* KI\_06

The verbatim affirms that CCTs’ application of a mix of teaching approaches led to their ability to uphold continuous professional development to improve the implementation of the EGR.

## 5. Discussion

The findings underscore the multifaceted role of CCTs in EGR initiatives, portraying them as pivotal trainers responsible for imparting EGR methodologies to primary school teachers in P1-P3 as also revealed by USAID/Uganda LARA Quarterly Report (2020). The engagement extends beyond theoretical training, actively involving teachers in practical EGR book usage and teaching material development. The findings were in tandem with the notions by Nyanzi-Kabanda et al. (2022) who also found the CCTs’ significant role in fostering community involvement highlights the importance of external support for teachers in implementing EGR methodologies effectively, emphasizing a collaborative approach for a community-wide commitment to enhancing early grade reading outcomes.

Moreover, the emphasis on monitoring and mentoring aspects of CCT responsibilities showcases a comprehensive strategy as also revealed by Ssenkande et al. (2022). Actively overseeing EGR implementation in classrooms, conducting Continuous Professional Development sessions, and providing support supervision contribute to the continuous improvement of teaching practices as also Ngaka (2021) revealed. This approach ensures that teachers are well-equipped and continuously supported in their efforts to enhance literacy skills among learners. The assertions by Westbrook et al. (2022) were echoed having established that the findings collectively illustrate the pivotal role of CCTs as trainers, community engagers, monitors, and mentors, reflecting a holistic strategy to improve EGR outcomes. The multifunctional engagement highlights the importance of collaboration, ongoing training, and community support in fostering effective early grade reading practices in primary schools as also reflected Okwera (2019).

The key informants’ insights into the use of both center and school-based trainings, lead teachers mentoring peers, and clustering schools for collaborative learning reveal a comprehensive pedagogical approach as also revealed by Okwera (2019). The study findings were a reflection of the findings by Suhendi et al. (2021) having established that integration of various instructional methods, such as partnered reading and continuous assessment, showcases a well-rounded approach to fostering effective EGR practices among teachers. The acknowledgment of lead teachers as valuable resources emphasizes their pivotal role, although the reluctance to make referrals may limit potential collaborations and this was consistent with the assertions by Tzurriel (2021). Overall, the combination of mentoring, collaborative learning, and diverse teaching strategies creates a supportive ecosystem for professional development, contributing to a dynamic and engaging learning environment that positively influences learners’ literacy development in Wakiso District.

### *Implications of the study*

- CCTs, as trainers and mentors, actively engage in practical EGR methods, emphasizing a comprehensive strategy for community-wide literacy enhancement.
- Recognizing external support, CCTs foster community involvement, highlighting the importance of collaboration for effective EGR methodologies and outcomes. This would enhance community involvement and collaboration.
- CCTs contribute to continuous professional development, support supervision, and monitoring, ensuring teachers are well-equipped for ongoing improvement in literacy instruction thus reaffirming the ongoing improvement of teaching practices.
- Integration of mentoring, diverse strategies, and collaborative learning creates a supportive ecosystem for effective EGR practices, emphasizing professional development.
- Effective methodologies, like blending syllables, paired with peer support, boost literacy skills, instilling confidence, and creating a dynamic learning environment for improved literacy development.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the insights gathered from key informants collectively illuminate the multifaceted role of CCTs in the context of EGR initiatives. Beyond their primary responsibility as trainers, CCTs actively engage in practical demonstrations, aiding in the development of teaching materials and fostering a community-wide commitment to EGR. The integral role of CCTs extends to monitoring, mentoring, and collaborating with teachers, contributing to the ongoing improvement of teaching practices. The study underscores a holistic strategy that integrates various instructional methods, collaborative learning, and continuous professional development, showcasing a comprehensive approach to fostering effective EGR practices among teachers. Notably, the acknowledgment of lead teachers as valuable resources, the emphasis on diverse teaching strategies, and the positive impact on literacy development underscore the dynamic and engaging learning environment created by these practices. The findings emphasize the significance of continuous training and professional development in enhancing the competency and effectiveness of CCTs, ensuring a sustainable impact on literacy development in the educational landscape of Wakiso District. This study underscores the crucial role of CCTs in shaping EGR outcomes. The findings emphasize the importance of targeted training programs for CCTs and advocate for their continued support in educational systems.

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