Assessment of Kiswahili Poetry Teaching and Learning in Rwanda: A Contextual Perspective

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Abstract
While Kiswahili poetry has been reported to be an intriguing genre, students claim to face challenges when studying it. This paper aims to assess the teaching and learning processes of Kiswahili poetry in Rwanda, focusing on its relevance to the social and cultural context. The paper has examined six crucial aspects of teaching and learning to achieve its objectives: comprehending poetry and its importance, the Kiswahili subject syllabus, the subject content, learning objectives, the actual process of teaching and learning, and the evaluation of teaching and learning. The study is grounded in the Contextual Learning Theory. The study, purposively, selected 6 secondary school teachers of Kiswahili who teach in language combinations and their corresponding students in Gasabo District. The findings indicate that the problem of context has not been, thoroughly, considered in the teaching and learning of Kiswahili poetry in Rwanda despite its clear impact on the process. Consequently, students face difficulties in fully grasping this crucial subject matter. Hence, the study proposes solutions on better integration of the teaching of Kiswahili poetry with the Rwandan context and, further, recommends teachers to prioritize the

contextual aspects of Rwanda when teaching Kiswahili poetry.

Key Concepts: Kiswahili poetry teaching and learning, contextual learning, Kiswahili in Rwanda

Introduction

Several scholars have endeavoured to ascertain methodologies for teaching poetry in a broad sense (Cohen, 2011). To ensure the effective cultivation of Kiswahili poetry education, stakeholders have implemented several steps. One notable accomplishment in these endeavours is the identification of diverse guidelines for teachers to effectively teach Kiswahili poetry (Samwel, Seleman, & Kabiero, 2013).

Despite these efforts, international researches reveal that the teaching of poetry faces numerous problems. An important difficulty is the absence of a universally accepted and effective approach to teaching and studying poetry (Sinha, 2017). As part of their contribution, Samwel et al. (2013) argue against viewing poetry as a separate topic that must be taught in isolation. Their stand is that poetry is not only a special topic that can be integral in teaching other subjects but also the topic that is essential both inside and outside the classroom context as well.

Maitaria &Wafula (2018) assert that the Kiswahili language, that is historically associated with coastal communities, is now spoken by a broader population. The proliferation of the Kiswahili language has been a subject of intriguing debate among researchers in the field. This discrepancy arises from the varying perspectives held by experts regarding the identity of the Swahili people (Mlaga, 2018).

Mlaga (2018) proposes that we can use two unique criteria to comprehend the Swahili people and their literature. The first criterion involves considering the Swahili people as a broad group that encompasses both coastal and non-coastal regions. The second criterion is to take into account the Swahili population within their distinct communities. He asserts that the ongoing existence of this dispute is a result of significant historical events experienced by the Swahili people. As a result, new types of Waswahili will continue to develop, leading to a continuing expansion of the Swahili community.

In addition to the expansion of Swahili's territorial borders and its consequential impacts, Article No. 137 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (EAC) highlights the necessity of implementing Kiswahili as a subject in all member nations of the EAC. The purpose of this is to progressively cultivate the language in order to establish it as the common language of the community. All member states of the East African Community, including Rwanda, have universally adopted Kiswahili as a mandatory subject to comply with the treaty. It is within this subject that Kiswahili poetry, which sparked our interest in the present study, is taught.

Wafula & Njogu (2007) discuss the extent to which teaching Kiswahili poetry is still considered desirable. They also highlight the significant impact that the spread of Kiswahili language has had on Kiswahili poetry. They argue that the Kiswahili language had undergone significant historical, cultural and social changes, particularly in the 1970s. These changes have also influenced the structure and delivery of the Kiswahili poetry. One important improvement that is mentioned is to create poems

that incorporate a comprehensive range of cultural aspects from all sections of Kiswahili language.

When discussing the teaching and learning process, it is important to recognise that this process is governed by the intended objectives. Education aims to empower students to address the challenges faced by their community (Tripathi & Kumar, 2018). Hence, it is imperative that the process of education, consistently, aligns with the practical experiences of individuals within their specific community.

When considering all the points presented in this part, we must question whether it is feasible to include the teaching of Kiswahili poetry in the Kiswahili subject across all member states of the East African Community (EAC). We pose this inquiry due to the admonition that the teaching and learning of poetry ought to be in direct correlation with many challenges faced by the community. Teaching should align with the cultural context of the community. Does the EAC (now consisting of 8 member states) have a unified culture that allows for the complete representation of this culture through the teaching of Kiswahili poetry in any member state? If so, can the teaching of Kiswahili poetry, effectively and comprehensively, reflect a culture that shares the same characteristics?

To address these inquiries, we will turn to an article titled *Sera ya Utamaduni* (1997). According to this document, culture encompasses all the artefacts and practices that a society generates to fulfil its desires and advance its progress. It is the unique way of life, perspective, and manner of living that sets a community apart from others. Culture is the primary

embodiment of a nation's identity and serves as a manifestation of its people's desire for existence.

From this explanation, it is evident that member states of the EAC have distinct cultural backgrounds. This is due to the fact that EAC comprises eight distinct nation-states, each with unique culture. Since culture plays a significant role in defining national identity, it is impossible to view the EAC as a single nation. Therefore, each nation must develop teaching tactics tailored to its unique culture and way of life if our approach to teaching poetry is to mirror the culture.

These specific approaches for each nation would enhance the teaching of Kiswahili poetry, leading to the attainment of its usefulness as evidenced by its status as a highly esteemed type of literature (Samwel et al., 2013). To validate this assertion, Mwangi (2005) argues that due to the significance of poetry in society, it is crucial for students to have a thorough understanding of this subject. Equally, Ineah (2018) affirms that poetry is integral to the understanding of various subjects and holds the central position in comprehension. This suggests that, in addition to facilitating the instruction of other subjects, poetry also possesses additional practical benefits for students and society as a whole.

The Kiswahili poetry usefulness highlight the practical value of Kiswahili poetry, demonstrating that it centres on everyday experiences of the Swahili people and portrays the essence of the Swahili community. The question at hand is how to design the teaching and learning of Kiswahili poetry in a way that encompasses the entire real-life experience of the East African Community (EAC), considering that Kiswahili has become a common

language in this context. This calls for a teaching model that brings Kiswahili poetry closer to the students. This highlights a deficiency in information that requires attention in the present investigation.

Arnold (1972), cited in Mazrui (2007), raised the same point and proposed renaming "Kiswahili literature" as "East African literature in the Kiswahili language." Arnold's argument was criticised for: firstly, East Africa is not characterised by a single culture. Secondly, his argument overlooks the importance of literature from other regions, such as Arabian literature. Lastly, Arnold fails to give sufficient attention to the literature of specific Swahili tribes (Mlaga, 2018). Nevertheless, Arnold's intention was to foster a sense of community among the diverse East African population through the medium of Kiswahili literature.

An initial counterargument to Arnold's assertion that East Africa lacks a singular culture carries significant ramifications, particularly within the realm of education. Teaching and learning processes should closely connect to the cultural context and real-life situations of students, which is why this is important. Therefore, each East African member state should have its own distinct approach to teaching Kiswahili poetry to effectively meet the needs of students in that particular country. During our literature review, we discovered that no previous research has addressed this gap in knowledge. Furthermore, no research has been undertaken, especially in the context of Rwanda. This lack of research has sparked our interest in doing the present study.

To attain this objective, we find it essential to first come across the correlation between poetry and real-life situation in which language users

find themselves. The fundamental principle is that poetry in a language serves to both depict and improve the life of a community, while the presence of a community brings poetry to life, transforming it into a vivid narrative.

Research indicates that poetry serves as a means to uphold and activate the lifestyle and cultural aspects of a specific group. Some individuals argue that a well-crafted piece of literature, including poetry, is one that, accurately, mirrors the experiences and realities of everyday life. Mazrui (1995) argues that teaching poetry facilitates the integration of students into their community and enhances their self-awareness.

Maitaria & Wafula (2018:75) provide another example of the connection between Kiswahili poetry and real life. The text states:

> Kiswahili poetry, like other significant literary genres, does not arise in a void. Instead, it is the authentic outcome of the community, serving as a means to save and showcase local culture ... A literary author, particularly a Kiswahili poet, derives inspiration or impetus from the immediate community in their vicinity. Thus, poetry serves as a repository and a precious medium for illustrating and elucidating significant societal matters.

The aforementioned highlights demonstrate a clear correlation between the real-life situation and cultural features of a certain culture and the poetic language used within that community. In other words, teaching poetry means instructing students about the cultural aspects embedded within these poetry texts. In the specific context of Rwandan students studying Kiswahili poetry as part of their cultural education, it is important to consider how to approach the teaching of Kiswahili poetry given its connection to real-life situations. It is important to consider that effective teaching should be sensitive to the social and cultural requirements of the students.

Research findings by Rejina (2021) highlight how vocabulary used in poetry which, heavily, relies on social and cultural contexts, may contribute to students' lack of learning motivation in second language classrooms. Occasionally, the use of complex terminology may refer to concepts that are unconnected or unfamiliar to students which can have a negative effect on their overall academic performance.

Therefore, the present paper aimed to assess the teaching and learning processes of Kiswahili poetry in Rwanda, focusing on its relevance to the social and cultural context. It also aims to address the identified knowledge gap in this area. The ultimate goal is to develop guidelines that will help integrate Kiswahili poetry more effectively into the Rwandan context.

Theoretical Framework

The present study was guided by Contextual Learning Theory. The fundamental concept of this theory, as stated by CORD (1999), is that the majority of students enhance their learning when they can relate newly acquired knowledge to real-world situations based on their own experiences.

According to Johnny (2008), this theory was developed to address the inquiries of students who question the rationales, significance and applicability of their studies in practical contexts throughout their lifetimes. Learning occurs, exclusively, when students, actively, engage with new information or knowledge in a manner that is, personally, meaningful within their own frames of reference (Texas Collaborative for Teaching Excellence, 2007), as quoted in Johnny (2008).

Utami et al. (2016) also support the Contextual Learning Theory. They argue that teaching is a process analogous to construction. According to their constructivist perspective, they propose that teaching should adhere to a bottom-up approach. According to this paradigm, the process of teaching should commence with basic and well-known concepts before progressing to more intricate ones. This approach grounds instruction in students' existing knowledge, familiarity, and interests to cultivate their motivation and preparedness for tackling more advanced skills.

The theory suggests that effective teaching occurs when it connects students' real-life experiences, when they understand the significance of what they are learning in addressing the challenges they face, when teaching is tailored to their daily requirements and when students, actively, engage in the process of knowledge generation. Evidently, the theory's fundamental principles advocate a necessity to align teaching and learning processes with the sociocultural context of students for a teaching to remain responsive and vivid. Hence, we consider this theory suitable for directing the present study as it aligns with our objective of assessing the teaching and learning of Kiswahili poetry in Rwanda from a contextual perspective.

Methodology

The current study employed a qualitative research design in which a purposive sampling strategy was used. Researchers conducted interviews with Kiswahili teachers, observed teaching and learning in classrooms, and reviewed texts. These methods yielded both primary and secondary qualitative data to answer the research problem.

The sample of this study consisted of 6 Kiswahili subject teachers in language combinations and their corresponding students who take Kiswahili

as a major subject in secondary schools in Gasabo district. The selection of this demography was based on the distinct qualities that make them well-suited to address the research inquiries of the subject matter under investigation.

The study used both GS Gikomero and GS Ndera secondary schools as the research sample. We engaged senior six students and teachers because, according to REB (2015), Kiswahili poetry, particularly written poetry, is taught in this grade level. We found this sample to be reliable in providing necessary data to achieve the current research purpose. On the other hand, Shikalepo (2019) argues that conducting a larger number of research studies in metropolitan areas compared to rural areas hampers economic development on the side of rural residence and recommends to ensure equitable research opportunities to both rural and urban areas. The Gasabo district platform classified the two mentioned secondary schools as having characteristics of both semi-urban and semi-rural environments, leading to their selection. This suggests that certain students attending these schools originate from rural regions, while others hail from urban areas. Therefore, our research allowed for the equitable participation of both rural and urban respondents as advocated before.

Findings and Discussion
This section presents the results of the assessment conducted on the teaching and learning of Kiswahili poetry in Rwanda. The assessment is based on the principles of Contextual Learning Theory and considers six key elements in teaching and learning.

Comprehension of Kiswahili poetry and its importance

Evidence from respondents indicated that some teachers possess inadequate knowledge of the comprehensive nature of Kiswahili poetry. Their preference for regular or blank verse, with little attention given to irregular or free verse, demonstrates their inadequate comprehension of the comprehensive nature of Kiswahili poetry. Here below is the definition of Kiswahili poetry according to teacher A[1]:

> Kiswahili poetry is a written literary genre that focuses on the creation and expression of poems. A poem is distinguished by consistent central and concluding consonances /assonances, with four verses per stanza and two sections per verse, each consisting of 8 syllables. Poetry is characterised by the use of symbolic language, which necessitates thorough examination in order to grasp the intended message.

Teacher A's statement suggests a limited understanding of poetry, as he/she seems to believe that poetry, exclusively, pertains to written forms, disregarding the existence of oral poetry. Another limitation of the preceding quotation is that the answer fails to acknowledge the presence of different types of poems that do not, necessarily, require specific features such as a regular number of verses, syllables, and consonance. This is consistent with the findings of Samwel et al. (2013, who indicate that traditional Kiswahili poems have had a notable presence in the classroom. Nevertheless, this has a detrimental impact on students' overall performance in this subject, as they are unable to meet all the specified criteria for creating meaningful poems. Students need to have the freedom to explore

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[1] Teacher A is a male respondent who didn't want his identification to be disclosed. He teaches at GS Ndera Secondary School. We conducted a face-to-face interview with him in November 2023.

various forms of poetry rather than, solely, focusing on meeting these criteria, particularly in the early stages.

However, findings from interviews conducted with teachers indicate that Kiswahili poetry holds significant importance. Its significance can be categorised into two distinct classifications. The first type of importance is limited to Kiswahili poetry, whereas the second type is more universal and can be achieved by various literary forms. Teacher A stated:

> Kiswahili poetry plays a vital role in teaching vocabulary. When students are presented with new poetry, it is typical for them to come across unfamiliar vocabulary. It is incumbent upon teacher to assist students in comprehending the significance of such vocabularies. Crucially, these vocabularies are provided within a specific context or in the typical usage of language, rather than simply presenting them as a standalone list with their definitions.

Teacher A regards poetry as a means for acquiring language. Significantly, vocabulary is acquired through the regular use of language. Contextual Learning Theory posits that students acquire new knowledge more effectively when presented in a familiar and practical setting and this vocabulary teaching methodology adheres to these principles. In this method, a student can, efficiently, commit to memory, replicate, and reconstruct the knowledge they have acquired in various communication settings, both within and beyond the classroom.

According to teacher D[2], Kiswahili poetry enables Rwandan students to become part of a larger Kiswahili community. Through this perspective, students have the opportunity to analyse and differentiate diversified

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[2] Teacher D is a female respondent who didn't want her identification to be disclosed. She teaches at GS Ndera Secondary School. We conducted a face-to-face interview with her in November 2023.

lifestyles depicted in poems and their own lives. They can also develop an understanding of and appreciation for the contextual and cultural diversity portrayed in these poems. Additionally, they can assess the stylistic significance of the different languages used in the poems. It is crucial to emphasise the significance of teaching Kiswahili poetry by connecting it to relevant contexts. This approach ensures that students can, fully, benefit from what they learn.

Kiswahili subject syllabus
The Kiswahili subject syllabus in Rwanda includes the teaching of Kiswahili poetry as a means to improve students' literary skills and promote their independence in life. Although the specific methods for achieving this objective are not specified, this commendable goal aligns with the Education Sector Strategic Plan's aim of preparing students with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of everyday life.

The aforementioned goal is enhanced by an additional ambition which states that instructing students in Kiswahili poetry will empower them to, actively, contribute to the favourable cultural and economic advancement of their community. Pursuing Kiswahili poetry empowers students to, actively, contribute to the transformation of both individual and community culture and economy.

Additionally, according to the Kiswahili Subject Syllabus, it is in senior six that students receive comprehensive instruction on Kiswahili poetry, particularly written poetry. In senior five, students are introduced to the concepts of oral poetry. Nevertheless, Niyirora (2022) holds the belief that it is essential to strengthen students' abilities starting in early grades rather than postponing them until higher levels of education.

In this particular situation, we were keen to examine the perspectives of teachers regarding the decision to delay the teaching of Kiswahili poetry until senior sixth, as opposed to introducing it in earlier grades. Teacher E[3] stated:

> We prefer to teach Kiswahili poetry in senior sixth grade because it is in this grade that students' abilities in the Kiswahili language are at least good. Even if it is conceived that students learn Kiswahili from senior one up to senior 3, some schools do not teach this subject appropriately and comprehensively. This means that in some cases, we start teaching Kiswahili from senior 4 up to senior six, when at least some students have a good command of the Kiswahili language. That is a good time for us to teach Kiswahili poetry as it has a special and difficult language compared to other genres.

Teacher E has observed that the teaching of the Kiswahili subject in Rwanda is inadequate. While the government plans to teach Kiswahili from senior one to senior three, some schools do not teach it at all. This lack of instruction, negatively, affects students' performance in the subject when they reach senior four in language combinations.

However, this contradicts the advice outlined in a letter written by Pat Mora (n.d.) to instructors regarding instructional guidelines for teaching poetry. This scholar argues that poetry can be taught at all grade levels due to a wide range of poems which can accommodate students with different levels of linguistic competency. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ascertain which poems are suitable for each learner based on their language proficiency level.

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[3] Teacher E is a male respondent who didn't want his identification to be disclosed. He teaches at GS Gikomero secondary school. We conducted a face-to-face interview with him in November 2023.

Subject content

When asked about the central ideas or themes commonly found in Kiswahili poems, teacher Nsabimana[4] stated that these poems explore various issues that can be classified into two distinct categories: those that explore universal themes and those that delve into topics specific to the lives of the Swahili people. Kiswahili poems, primarily, explore the universal human experience as well as the unique aspects of the Swahili people's lives.

Given the two distinct kinds of primary themes found in Kiswahili poems, we were keen to investigate if either category has any impact on the processes of teaching and learning. Teacher C[5] says:

> When a poem addresses universal or overarching themes, students exhibit a willingness and enthusiasm to study and comprehend the poem. Example are poems titled "Uzuri wa Msichana and Ngonjera ya Daktari na Mwalimu" which students greatly appreciate and can effortlessly commit to memory and recite. However, when a poem focuses on the lives of particular Waswahili, students lose their motivation to analyse it and appear inattentive.

This excerpt demonstrates that students have a greater appreciation for Kiswahili poems that explore universal aspects of life as opposed to those that focus on specific aspects of Swahili culture. In other words, students appreciate poems that reflect their daily experiences and are linked to their immediate environment. The Contextual Learning Theory suggests that connecting selected subjects to the real-life experiences of students, greatly, improves learning. The theory also suggests that when educational materials

[4] Nsabimana is a male respondent who allowed us to disclose his identification. He teaches at GS Gikomero Secondary School. We conducted a face-to-face interview with him in November 2023.

[5] Teacher C is a female respondent who didn't want her identification to be disclosed. She teaches at GS Gikomero Secondary School. We conducted a face-to-face interview with her in November 2023.

focus on tangible and emotionally impactful topics for students, it leads to a deeper level of learning compared to superficial knowledge.

In light of these circumstances, we were enthusiastic about evaluating the impact of Kiswahili poetry on advancing national objectives and diverse governmental endeavours. These objectives may include, but are not limited to, promoting self-reliance, combating genocidal ideologies, achieving gender parity, providing comprehensive education, ensuring universal education, and improving reproductive health. Teacher [6] responds:

> Some of the contents that are discussed in Kiswahili poems are not interesting for students. Think of, for example, poems about the history of colonization, the liberation war, and issues related to *minazi, majigambo,* trapping, *jando na unyago* and others that are specific to a particular group of Waswahili. Students seem to demonstrate disinterest in such topics. I think Kiswahili poetry should align with time. There are contemporary issues that are evolving which need to be integrated into current poems for them to stay up-to-date.

In this excerpt, it is noteworthy that many aspects of Kiswahili poetry, though significant from various perspectives, appear to lack appeal among students of the present generation. Secondly, it is important to establish a connection between Kiswahili poetry and the goals and projects that have priority in Rwanda. Teacher F's views align with those of teacher B on the same subject. The teacher says:

> It seems that some poets adhere strictly to archaic compositional standards, resulting in their inability to create poems on modern subjects that would captivate today's students. Why is it uncommon to see Kiswahili poems that express appreciation for ICTs, entertainment, the significance

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[6] Teacher F is a female respondent who didn't want her identification to be disclosed. She teaches at GS Ndera secondary school. We conducted a face-to-face interview with her in November 2023.

of technical and vocational education, self-employment, women empowerment, and other themes that appear to be prioritised in contemporary times?

Based on the arguments put forth by teacher B, we can somewhat concur that there is a compelling necessity to establish a connection between Kiswahili poetry and specific Rwandan agendas. This would enable students to better comprehend and value the aesthetic, practical, and pertinent aspects of Kiswahili poetry. However, we cannot, definitively, assert that poems of this nature do not exist at all.

Formulation of learning objectives

The Kiswahili syllabus outlines four specific learning objectives related to the study of Kiswahili poetry: (1) proficiently reading poems by accurately identifying letters, syllables, words, and sentences; (2) thoroughly analysing the genre of Kiswahili poetry; (3) identifying vocabulary specific to Kiswahili poetry; and (4) crafting well-structured sentences employing Kiswahili poetry vocabulary.

The first goal focuses on reading poetry accurately by identifying letters, syllables, words and phrases. This objective aligns with the research findings of Samwel et al. (2013) as they denote that Kiswahili poetry, effectively, improves the teaching of various abilities. On the other hand, we deem this objective unsuitable for senior six children, as we believe that a student should not progress to this grade without possessing a fundamental understanding of letters, syllables, words, and phrases.

We deem the second objective which involves, thoroughly, examining the Kiswahili poetry genre as imprecise and ambiguous. The lack of self-explanation in a text can hinder a reader's comprehension of the intended

message. However, clarity is still crucial when establishing learning objectives.

Furthermore, based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, 1956), we believe that the third objective is at a lower level of cognitive and should be complemented by other objectives involving higher-order thinking. This is because the third objective necessitates students to possess the ability to recall or comprehend words that are frequently utilised in Kiswahili poetry (such as *mshororo*, *vina*, *ukwapi*, *utao*, *ubeti*, …) and does not permit students to cultivate their higher order thinking talents. Furthermore, this type of knowledge does not align with one of the tenets governing Contextual Learning Theory which states that knowledge gained in the classroom should be applicable in real-world situations to meet the demands of everyday living.

The fourth objective is to construct a well-crafted statement utilising vocabulary specific to Kiswahili poetry. We, extensively, investigated the specific poetic vocabularies that are being referenced. Some of the vocabularies are: *vina*, *mizani*, *mshororo*, *ubeti*, *mloto*, *kimalizio*/*kiishio*, and *kibwagizo*. These vocabularies are peculiar to the domain of Kiswahili poetry and cannot be used in every day's language use. Thus, attempting to utilise such vocabularies to construct well-formed sentences is considered to be a deceptive goal that is difficult to achieve. Hence, we deem this objective to be deceptive and unachievable.

Following the identification of obstacles in establishing learning objectives in the Kiswahili syllabus, the subsequent section will concentrate on evaluating the learning objectives offered by teachers in their lesson plans.

Teacher C was requested to submit his/her lesson plan for evaluation. Regrettably, we were unable to locate any instructional blueprint about Kiswahili poetry. The triangulation approach was employed, wherein an interview was done to evaluate the teaching objectives of teacher C. The answer has been extracted as provided:

> Our objectives revolve around three main points. Firstly, students should acquire knowledge of the terminologies used in Kiswahili poetry, such as *kibwagizo*, *ubeti*, *vina*, *mshororo*, and others. Secondly, they should be able to distinguish poetry from other literary genres. Thirdly, they should be able to perform a structural analysis of poems. Lastly, they should be able to enumerate the importance of poetry.

Upon analysing these objectives, it became apparent that Teacher C was affected by the aims outlined in the National Kiswahili Syllabus, particularly objective number 3 as stated in the preceding section. The similar interpretation can be ascribed to them, particularly about their suitability for early grades rather than the final year of secondary school. It is crucial to emphasise that Teacher C failed to establish the learning target, which, significantly, impacted the overall effectiveness of their instruction. Below is a modified lesson plan for Teacher D that focuses on teaching Kiswahili poetry.

Figure 1: An Example of Lesson Plan (Primary Data, 2023)

In the figure 1, teacher D has set two learning objectives: (1) "*kusoma shairi kwa usahihi kwa kutambua herufi, silabi, maneno na sentensi*", translated as: "reading poems properly by recognizing letters, syllables, words and sentences" and (2) "*kuchunguza kwa usahihi utanzu wa ushairi*", translated as: "properly examining poetry genre". All of these learning objectives have been, directly, cited from the Kiswahili national syllabus. Their corresponding discussions have been offered in the third and fourth paragraphs of this section.

The problems identified in this section include teachers who teach without setting clear learning objectives, teachers who set objectives that do not align with students' level of understanding and objectives that are inappropriate for developing higher-order thinking. Additionally, some objectives remain ambiguous and misleading. We can, therefore, conclude

that both teachers and the national Kiswahili Syllabus haven't, effectively, established desirable learning objectives for teaching Kiswahili poetry.

The actual process of teaching and learning

The process of imparting and acquiring knowledge is, predominantly, carried out within the framework of a curriculum. Curriculum is an essential instrument for the facilitation of teaching and learning. This is because it is designed to function as a strategic plan that directs the two processes.

During classroom observation, we discovered that some of teachers were adhering to traditional teaching approaches that focus, primarily, on imparting knowledge. For instance, a teacher would disseminate copies of a poem among students, instructing them to recite each line in unison, one after the other, until the conclusion of the piece. Following a group reading, students are instructed to recognise unfamiliar words, which the teacher, then, clarifies within the context of a poem. Students are, then, expected to record these newly learned words and, finally, students respond to the questions of comprehension and commit to memorizing a poem for reciting it.

The aforementioned approach is observed to be non-compliant with the recommendations of the competence-based curriculum (CBC). This is because a teacher is perceived as the focal point of instructional and educational processes, rather than merely a facilitator. The students appeared passive and inquired about the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. They were unable to make any attempt to deduce the meaning of these words within the context of the entire poem.

During interviews with teachers, they highlighted numerous challenges that impede their integration of the CBC into their teaching of Kiswahili poetry. The obstacles were synthesized as follows: (1) The lack of specificity from programme designers regarding how to teach poetry within a CBC framework, (2) The inadequate foundation of students in the Kiswahili language which hinders the incorporation of CBC in Kiswahili poetry teaching, and (3) The scarcity of Kiswahili poetry resources for students to independently learn this topic.

Assessment of teaching and learning

Assessment is considered to be an essential component of both teaching and learning processes. Considering this fundamental nature, it was imperative to investigate the criteria that assessors employed while evaluating Kiswahili poetry and the resulting impact. In addition to utilising the Contextual Learning Theory, the study on assessment also incorporates a Revised Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. To foster the intellectual growth of children, teachers must assess their abilities using the higher order thinking levels of the taxonomy (Sudirtha, 2022).

The provided text illustrates the Kiswahili poetry assessment modified from the third-term Kiswahili examination for Literature-Kinyarwanda-Kiswahili senior six students at a selected school during the academic year 2022/2023:

Ukanda wote ulimwe, kila fasi tabasamu,
Sote tusimame wima, tuyalinde mazingira.

Mazingira ni ya wewe, na kwa kila binàdamu,
Mpinzani si mwenziwe, yeye hana la mwalimu,
Atajiua mwenyewe, mbele kuna mashutumu,
Hatajua hata kamwe, kwamba yeye ni dhalimu,
Sote tusimame wima, tuyalinde mazingira.

a) Shairi hili lina beti ngapi? Alama 2
b) Eleza maana ya **Hazina** kama lilivyotumika kwenye shairi husika. Alama 2
c) Andika vina vya katikati na vina vya mwisho vya shairi hili. Alama 2
d) Shairi hili lina mishororo mingapi? Alama 2
e) Andika ubeti wa tatu kinathari (kwa maneno yako mwenyewe) Alama 5
SEHEMU YA IV: UTUNGAJI Alama 20
Chagua mada moja kati ya hizi zifuatazo kisha utunge insha isiyozidi maneno kati ya 150 na 200
15. Madhara ya kuharibu maji asili nchini Rwanda .
16. Hapo zamani za kale , palitokea mzee mmoja. Alikuwa na wake wawili na Watoto watano kwa ujumla............ (endeleza hadithi hii unavyotaka mpaka imalizike)
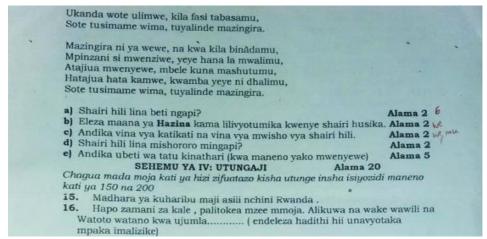
Figure 2: Kiswahili Poetry Assessment (Primary Data, 2023)

In this assessment, questions share a common characteristic in that they are classified as lower-level based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of Educational aims. Question (a) requires about the total number of stanzas that make up the poem, categorised under the theme of remembering. Question (b) asks for the meaning of the word "*hazina*" as used in the poem (categorized under comprehension). Question (c) requires identifying the core and concluding recurring consonant sounds in a poem categorised as a remembering, Question (d) requires about the total number of verses that comprise the poem, falling under remembering while question (e) pertains to the task of rephrasing the third stanza using one's own words, falling under the category of understanding.

In addition to being at a lower level, the aforementioned questions do not adhere to the principles of CBC. They prohibit critical introspection, stifle student innovation and fail to provide students with practical skills applicable to real-world scenarios. Hence, there is a requirement to enhance the aforementioned examination by including questions that evaluate

advanced cognitive abilities, to ensure comprehensive coverage of all levels of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

One could assume that this type of evaluation is limited to formal examinations conducted in a classroom setting. Nevertheless, this assertion is inaccurate as similar scenarios can be observed in certain nationwide examinations. This is an image of Kiswahili poetry questions that were taken from the Kiswahili National Examination for Senior Six Students in the Academic Year 2018.
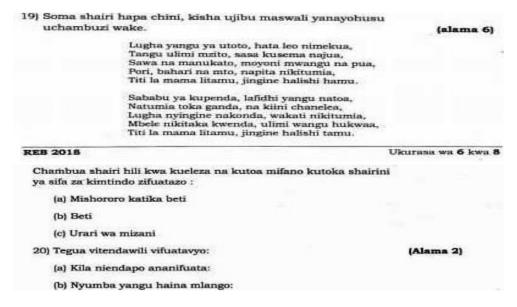
19) Soma shairi hapa chini, kisha ujibu maswali yanayohusu uchambuzi wake. (alama 6)

Lugha yangu ya utoto, hata leo nimekua,
Tangu ulimi mzito, sasa kusema najua,
Sawa na manukato, moyoni mwangu na pua,
Pori, bahari na mto, napita nikitumia,
Titi la mama litamu, jingine halishi hamu.

Sababu ya kupenda, lafidhi yangu natoa,
Natumia toka ganda, na kiini chanelea,
Lugha nyingine nakonda, wakati nikitumia,
Mbele nikitaka kwenda, ulimi wangu hukwaa,
Titi la mama litamu, jingine halishi tamu.

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Chambua shairi hili kwa kueleza na kutoa mifano kutoka shairini ya sifa za kimtindo zifuatazo :

(a) Mishororo katika beti

(b) Beti

(c) Urari wa mizani

20) Tegua vitendawili vifuatavyo: (Alama 2)

(a) Kila niendapo ananifuata:

(b) Nyumba yangu haina mlango:

Figure 3: Kiswahili Poetry Assessment (Field Data, 2023)

Despite the three-year deployment of a CBC in Rwanda, the examination in Figure 3 appears to be similar to those produced during the era of a knowledge-based curriculum. The assessor requests an explanation of the significance of the structural elements of the poem, such as verses inside a stanza, stanzas, and the regularity of metres or syllables. The assessors in Figure 2 and 3 have encountered the same issue of setting examinations that

do not adhere to the recommendations of CBC as outlined by Sudirtha (2022). Therefore, it is advisable for assessors of Kiswahili poetry, at all levels, to incorporate questions that assess higher levels of cognition. This will enable students to, fully, leverage transferable skills, enhance higher-order thinking, and improve problem-solving abilities, among other benefits.

Remedies for contextualizing the teaching and learning of Kiswahili poetry in Rwanda

The discussed instabilities in the domain of Kiswahili poetry instruction and education in Rwanda have prompted the development of potential solutions aimed at enhancing the accessibility of Kiswahili poetry teaching and learning for students. The crux of the matter is that, when teaching is contextualized, it becomes, increasingly, attuned to the specific requirements of students and the broader society.

Firstly, to create poetry that consider the specific circumstances of Rwanda and utilise it for illustrative instances. This can be accomplished if poets in this field, actively, compose poetry on a range of topics related to the Rwandan context. This poetry should pertain to diverse government programmes and agendas that are given priority in Rwanda. If accomplished, students may perceive poetry as a genre that is more relatable to their own experiences since it would mirror their real-life circumstances.

Secondly, to consider using Kiswahili poetry as a means of augmenting the instruction of many subjects. We believe that poetry can serve as a valuable tool for teaching students various lessons or topics. To accomplish this, students may find poetry to be accessible and beneficial due to its

interconnectedness with many scientific disciplines, rather than perceiving it solely as a distinct form governed by intricate rules and regulations.

Thirdly, to engage students in the process of creating Kiswahili poetry specifically on subjects that captivate their attention, instead of selecting verses that may be too challenging for their intellectual capacity or discussing uninteresting or unfamiliar topics. To accomplish this, students would, gradually, develop the ability to comprehend and engage with poetry, rather than perceiving it as a more intricate form of literature reserved for more proficient persons.

Fourthly, to organize Kiswahili poetry contests centred on specific themes that consider the unique circumstances of Rwanda. During these competitions, criteria for determining winners can be established. Once the winners are selected, verses that meet predetermined parameters can be gathered, restructured and improved. These verses can then be compiled into an anthology which can, subsequently, be published in a dedicated issue. This activity has the potential to, progressively, achieve success and address the previously highlighted issue of reference shortage as reported by the respondents.

Lastly, it is important to prepare more instances and circumstances for students to practise and become acquainted with Kiswahili poetry. According to Talug (2012), these moments are highly beneficial, particularly for the internalisation of acquired knowledge. Additionally, it can facilitate the accessibility of Kiswahili poetry to students.

Conclusion

The study indicates that, despite the importance of teaching and learning Kiswahili poetry in Rwanda for boosting other topics and creating a conducive classroom and real-life learning environment, there are challenges that hinder its effective teaching and learning. One of the key challenges is teaching it in a decontextualized manner, which presents difficulty for students in Rwanda. In light of the previously indicated dilemma, the study suggested five remedies which, if followed, would bring the best in tackling the identified problems.

According to the research findings and conclusion, this study recommends that stakeholders in the field of education, particularly teachers, should give more importance to the context when teaching Kiswahili poetry in Rwanda. This is important for students and society as a whole to fully benefit from the widely recognised topic of Kiswahili poetry.

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