Empowering Students in Africa for Social Activism through Action Research

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Abstract

The use of imperial languages and limited access to texts are among factors contributing greatly to the low quality of education in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA). With the goal to guide students to create supplemental reading materials and make space for African indigenous languages to be used in the learning process, the author conducted an action research for one month in one primary school in Northwestern Tanzania. The study involved 119 sixth-grade students, 19 teachers and 19 parents who worked together to write books for their school library. In doing so, the author related several disciplines in order to incorporate academic activities which resulted in knowledge integration in three dimensions: 1) at the researcher level, 2) at the research process, and 3) at the researched subjects' level. The article underscores ways in which researchers and scholars, research methodology, and educational practices can be integrated in ways that affect how much students learn, how well they learn and their ability to use their knowledge in practical and context-specific ways to better their world. This study shows how integration of academic activities to the solution of real life problems is a way to potentially generate more inter-disciplinary research, education, and communication.

Keywords: Literacy, Writing Workshop, Action Research, Language, Social Action, Social Justice

Introduction

Education quality means a learning system which allows the means, method and the content to have an interdependent relationship geared towards causing a positive effect on how well children learn, how much they learn, in addition to the extent to which their education transforms into an array of positive social and personal development (Maganda, 2013). Although the use of imperial languages in African schools and inadequate reading materials are among factors contributing greatly to the challenges that undermine Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) in gaining quality education, ways in which teachers teach and the curricular practices or design they use also contribute greatly to this challenge. Joining in campaigns to supply books to African countries and promoting the use of its languages in academia (Elley, 2000; Dutcher, 2004) the following article presents results from a participatory action research study I conducted at one primary school to create supplemental reading materials, while creating space for students' home languages to be used in their learning process. The article underlines why I, the author chose to use writing workshop, a curricular design not used in Tanzanian schools for writing instruction; it illustrates how the action research approach affected students' quality of learning by enabling them to use language as social action. More specifically, the article highlights ways in which students participating in the study addressed social cultural as well as social justice issues in their communities, thus, illustrating the integration of research and education to real life problem solving.

After explaining the relevance of this study, I give a background on teachers and teaching in Tanzanian schools. More directly, an overview of writing instruction in Tanzania will follow. To illustrate the role of a researcher in problem solving, a brief review of literature in regards to why I chose writing workshop as a curricular design, and ways I collaborated with teachers and parents before using it to address book shortage will come next. Hereafter, the methods and methodology utilized are explained to demonstrate how research played a major part in enabling students to use literacy to address their social problems. Last, the results of my analyses are presented and discussed to describe how the study led students to solve real life problems in their communities.

Relevance of the Study

This research is relevant in a realistic perspective. Understanding the potential to integrate varied educational activities to bring solutions to practical, context-specific problems is not only important, it is rather critical in exploring ways we address problems around the world. More specifically, the quest to raise the quality of education in Africa is a persistent issue. By examining how a research seeking to meet the need for books and address language issues in SSA was able to affect the quality of education and guide students to address social issues in their community, scholars from varied disciplines may realize: 1) The integration of research, education and communication are powerful means to solve problems 2) Intentions to solve a single problem may result in addressing other issues consecutively.

Background

Teachers and Teaching in Tanzanian Primary Schools

Teachers in Tanzania are divided in five categories, namely: grade IIIC, IIIB, IIIA, Diploma and Degree holders. The first category comprises of the least qualified teachers with only seven years of primary education and a short non-residential teachers' course, while the last group has teachers with a four year college degree (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008).

Teaching practices in Tanzania's public schools tend to be teacher-centered, controlling, traditional, theoretical, whole-class or transmission styles as opposed to learner-centered, autonomous, open-minded, contextualized or group-work (Barret, 2007). Knowledge tends to be divorced from students' lives; teachers have limited control on the form and content of subject matters; teachers maintain a physical distance between themselves and the class similar to that between an actor and his spectators (Bernstein, 2000); students often work independently rather than in small groups.

Traditional Writing Instruction in Tanzania

Writing instruction is embedded in the language arts classes of Swahili and English; each course's form and content is given in a syllabus. The English course for grade six, for example, details the specific competencies for students to master and the objectives of the course, in addition to topics, vocabulary, grammar points, means of assessment, number of class periods per topic and even resources to be used are listed. Writing is taught as discrete writing skills geared towards helping students master specific grammar points. For example, the first topic for standard six English courses is "expressing duration" and the teacher is given four strategies to help students master this topic. Among the four strategies given, one is guiding students to express duration by using the words "since and for." Under this strategy, five activities are given such as shown in figure 1 below (Edwards, 2002).

> **Exercise C**
>
> *For and Since*
> *(a) Fill the blanks with either for or since to complete the sentences below.*
> 1. Mr. Mambo has been a headmaster .... 1970.
> 2. Mrs. Mambo has been looking after her husband .... many years.
> 3. I have been reading this story .... two hours.
> 4. We have not seen our parents.......... a month.
> 5. They have not seen their parents .... last month.
> 6. You have been complaining .... yesterday.
> 7. Mary has been sleeping .... quite a long time.
> 8. The child is troublesome. He has been crying .... the mother left.
> 9. He has been the school headboy .... three years.
> 10. I have never gone out of my region .... I was born.
>
> *(b) Use for and since to complete the story below*
>
> > Mr. Juma is a hard-working man. He has been taking care of his children *(1)* .... his wife Aisha was admitted at Muhimbili National Hospital *(2)* .... six months. The family has been suffering as she was the house-keeper. They have not eaten pancakes or any delicious food *(3)*.................... she left. Mr. Juma works *(4)* .... many hours. He has taught his three children to be responsible *(5)* .... his wife got ill. He has also learnt to appreciate women and the housework *(6)* .... he started doing it himself. He has been telling his friends to respect women *(7)* .... they are not only hardworking but they work *(8)* .... many hours everyday.

Figure 1: Sample of English Standard Six Writing Exercise

C. *Soma maneno hayo kisha uyaingize katika sehemu inayohusika:*
remba, imba, toroka, mchezo, furaha, lima, utajiri, iba, kilimo, urembo, wimbo, furahi, utoro, cheza, tibu, tajirika

Nomino	Kitenzi	Nomino	Kitenzi
Urembo	Remba		

D. *Andika sentensi zifuatazo katika (a) wakati ujao (b) wakati uliopita:*
1. Mwalimu anaingia darasani kila siku.
2. Fundi cherehani anashona sare za shule.
3. Watoto wanalilia mpira wangu.
4. Hakuna mtu sebuleni.
5. Watu wote wanasafiri kwenda Masasi.
6. Mvua kubwa ya mawe inanyesha huko nje.
7. Frenki na Mese wanajiandaa kupika chakula cha safari.
8. Ninamsubiri Neema anipakulie chakula.
9. Fundi mwashi na kibarua wake wanajenga ukuta wa nyumba.
10. Ana analia kwa sababu hajui kusoma na kuandika.

E. *Soma methali hizi na vifungu vya maneno vinavyofuata, kisha kwa kila kifungu cha maneno taja methali ambayo ni sahihi kuitumia:*
(a) Ukiona vyaelea vimeundwa.
(b) Asiyeuliza hana ajifunzalo.

Figure 2: Sample of Swahili Exercise for Standard Six Pupils (Masoud, 2002)

All four activities are guided writing and emphasize mastery of grammar. Likewise, the Swahili syllabus details the competence and objectives students need to gain in addition to specified content, grammar, and learning strategies teachers ought to use. Similar to English, students do mathematical language constructions to know Swahili grammar (figure 2 above). As mentioned earlier, they complete exercises in order to understand language-structure rules rather than using language as a tool to express their lives and to shape their world. This lack of writing with a purpose was one of the reasons I sought to use writing workshop.

Researcher and Problem Solving

Writing Workshop

Writing workshop is a process-based approach to writing instruction that emphasize the creation of classroom environments that encourage students to engage in and practice writing skills (Calkins, 1994). Their teachers as well as their peers form a collaborative writing team and write through recurring writing stages of brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and ultimately publishing. Students take ownership of their writing and they choose the audiences, topics, purposes and forms of their texts. They get to write about what really matters to them by weaving reading and writing into the fabric of their lives, while also collaborating with their parents (Calkins, 2006). More importantly, students use literacy to interact with a large number of other social factors, including political and economic conditions, social structure, and local ideologies (Gee, 2008). Also, writing workshop is increasingly used in multilingual classrooms hence the decision to use it in this study (Laman& Van Sluys, 2008). Some critiques of this model contend that it has made writing passive and consumerist and seldom links classroom writing to broader societal problems; I therefore used a critical perspective to guide the workshop (Heffernan, 2004). I reflected on Bomer and Bomer's ideas of developing students to be critical thinkers who take actions to better their societies (Bomer&. Bomer, 2001). In practice, I facilitated dialogue between students and teachers, guided students to write from their social contexts and instructed them to question, interpret and even critique practices in their society.

Collaborating with Teachers and Parents

Rather than deciding for them means suitable to address book shortage at their school, parents and teachers were invited to give their input. They suggested that the community raise funds to buy books; teachers convert students' writings from past writing competitions; parents tell stories, tape-record them and students write them. They also proposed students write the history of the school. The workshop was chosen because it didn't require any funding and would allow all 6th grade students to participate while providing the organizational structure to put gathered stories or historical information into writing.

Teachers also believed they could embeded (change this to "embed") text-creation in Swahili and English courses to sustain book creation in the future. Therefore, by choosing writing workshop as a curricular design, I allowed literacy to be a tool to meet the need for texts at Manyara School. Welcoming teachers and parents to suggest means to meet that need facilitated the integration of social networks, educational platforms, cultural norms and historical understandings into problem solving.

Methods and Material

This study is divided into five separate studies. The first part started in May of 2010 to June on site; the second through the fifth continues till 2015. The 119 students participating in the study were comprised of 65% girls and 35% boys enrolled in 6th grade in a school with a total number of 19 teachers. More than 80% of the teachers had more than 10 years of teaching experience but attended professional development workshops only once or twice in those years. Among the 19 parents in the study, 10 female and 9 male, 90% of them are farmers and all are literate. The students, teachers and parents came from 11 different linguistic groups; all of them speak Swahili while 65% speak Sukuma, the rest speak Chaga, Jita, Haya, Ruli, Hehe, Zinza, Iraq, Nyiramba, Nyaturu or Matta. I conducted the writing workshop for three weeks and students used any language(s) they wanted to write their books. Teachers assisted students at school while parents worked with them at home. This article presents part of the results mainly from the texts students wrote from the 2010 part.

Conducting the Writing Workshop

To introduce writing workshop to teachers and students, the first few days were devoted to teaching about what a writing workshop looks like and the roles students and teachers were expected to play. In table 1 below, you see lesson plans highlighting topics for each day, moving from the "what" is writing workshop to the "what goes on" in a writing workshop.

Table 1: Writing Workshop Lesson Plan Overview (Translated from Swahili by Author)

	Topic	Lesson	Day
1	Introducing the writing workshop (Meaning, theory and practice of writing workshop)	What is a writing workshop? (Meaning and theory behind WW) / What are the types of a WW (Topical and Genre studies) / What are the goals of this writing workshop?	1
		What are the characteristics of a WW (what students and teachers do; emphasize collaboration) How is the WW conducted (steps usually followed in WW)	2
		Reading like a writer; learning from other writers Different shapes of writing (Genres)	3
		What could we write about: birthing a text; brainstorming	4
2	Beginning to write	Choosing the audience: Identify the audience for your text (Who do you intend to write for, who do you want and think is going to read your book)	1
		Select the genre of your text (what shape do you want your text to be in? - (a memoir, abc book, "how to", a poem, etc)	2
		Choose a message: Decide what you want others to know or learn about through your text. (Ask yourself, what moves me, what am I passionate about, what do you wish you were passionate about, what concerns you, what do you want people to see through your writing)	3
		Select the way to communicate your message: Choose a place, a thing, or event: For example: A place: (Our house, our school, my classroom, my desk, our kitchen, our cornfield, sokoni); Our old kitchen (When I look at this kitchen, I feel like crying- its old and rusted; its roof reminds me of my grandmother)	
3	Continuing to write	Dress your selection with important details: (encourage students to ask their parents and teachers), Example: Cooking Ugali: my pride and joy (read this text and walk students through choosing important details; show how to integrate local language in a book)	1
		Edit your text: Peer and teacher editing, group work	2
		Illustrate your writing: Divide your text in meaningful parts; Illustrate each section	3
		Continue illustrating and editing	4
4	Publishing texts	Moving from drafts (group work)	1
		Transferring final draft to two separate bare books	2
		Read books aloud in the class; students give feedback to each other	3
		Read books aloud to parents and teachers	4

As indicated above, I started by defining writing workshop and explaining what teachers do at each step. I emphasized collaborative learning - the kind that lets students interact with each other and their teachers as co-participants in the learning process (Perez, 2004). I oriented teachers with ways to support their students' learning. For example, during brainstorming, I taught teachers to use such questions as: What concerns you in this community; what would you like to tell the world; what do you see or do every day you wish someone else knew. I underlined the importance and ways for students to write from their lives. At that point, I also articulated how writing is a form of social action and could call people to take action on issues or problems within a community. Throughout the study, I worked to build alliances with my participants. I taught the workshop, teachers helped students in class and parents worked with their children at home to write the books. After the workshop, I held meetings to invite students', teachers', and parents' thoughts about the writing workshop. I adhered to the participatory action research principle of building alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation of the research process throughout the study (McIntyre, 2008). At the end, students learned, teachers guided, parents collaborated, books were written and social issues were addressed.

Research-Subjects and Problem Solving

Findings

Learning draws from the socio-cultural contexts of the learner (Perez, 2004). The students talked about and wrote about issues inherently present in their lives. The English and Swahili teachers helped me put students in 16 groups. The titles of the books students wrote, one book per group indicated a plethora of social issues they addressed (Table 2).

Table 2:Titles of Student-Created Books (*pay attention to space between words*)

Book title (in Swahili)	English translation	Group name	Number of students
Faidayakusoma	Benefits of education	A	8
Orphan children		B	7
Kupingamadawayakulevya	Condemning the use of illegal drugs	C	8
Kutowanyanyasawaathirikawaukimwi: Tanzania bilaukimwi, inawezekana.	Not to discriminate against HIV AIDS victims: It is possible for Tanzania to get rid of AIDs	D	8
KufahamishajamiikuhusuUkimwi	Educating our community about AIDS	E	6
Kitabu cha malaria	A book about Malaria	F	8
Umuhimuwaelimu	The importance of education	G	9
Watotoyatima	Orphan children	H	8
Safari ya Arusha: Tembeauone	A journey to Arusha: expand your worldview	I	7
ShuleyetuNyalikungu	Nyalikungu our school	J	7
Tanzania bilarushwainawezekana	It is possible for Tanzania to get rid of corruption	K	4
Ajaliyamagaribarabarani	Car accidents in the highway	L	7
Historiayashuleyetu	The history of our school Nyalikungu	M	7
ShuleyetuNyalikungu	Nyalikungu our school	N	8
Hakiganikwawatotoukiwanyimaelimu	Is it right to deny children their right to education?	0	8
Usalamawaraiabarabarani	Highway safety for citizens	P	12

The data for this category was mainly from the content of student-created books. I examined the issues they explored through their texts even though those issues were also discussed during and after the workshop (Table 3).

Table 3: Issues Explored in Student-Created Books

Book title	Issues explored
Benefits of education	Why is it important to be educated? How have educated people profited from their education? What do people loose from lack of education
Orphan children	Ways people become orphans; Challenges orphans face; What they need; Reasons and ways to help orphans
Condemning the use of illegal drugs	Who uses illegal drugs; Why children use such drugs; Disadvantages of using illegal drugs
Not to discriminate against HIV AIDS victims	Negative views of HIV victims; ideologies of how people contract HIV; Common ways HIV patients are treated and how they should be treated
Educating our community about AIDS	Ways the disease is contracted; who gets HIV; views about getting tested to know if you have the disease; what happens when you have been diagnosed; signs that a person has HIV; proper ways to care for HIV victims
A book about Malaria	Ways people get Malaria; ways to help people from getting malaria; beliefs or myths about ways Malaria is contracted
The importance of education	The significance of getting an education; how education betters life; calling young people to be educated
Orphan children	Unfair treatment of HIV victims; call to help orphans
A journey to Arusha: expand your worldview	Traveling to other parts of the country broadens people' worldview
It is possible for Tanzania to get rid of corruption	The prominence and effects of corruption; why and how receiving bribery destroys the country
Car accidents in the highway	The danger citizens face in the highway; effects of car accidents to Tanzanians
The history of our school Manyara	How, when, and why the school was started; its first name and location; what it looks like now
Manyara our school	Descriptions about Manyara's location; its beauty; its community; its contribution to the Mande town
Is it right to deny children their right to education?	Children' right to education; unfair treatment of school age children
Highway safety for citizens	Ways to avoid car accidents

To analyze data, I used a thematic approach whereby like-minded ideas are grouped together to form a theme (Marshall &Rossman, 2011). This data-set includes ideas expressed by students through their books after learning how to write from their lives (Table 4).

Table 4: Data Analysis- from Titles to Themes

Book title(s)	Idea	Theme
Manyara our school; The history of our school;	Students talked about their lives in school	
Orphan children; Orphan children; condemning illegal drugs; the importance of school; Educating our community about AIDS; A book about Malaria	Students wrote about their community's needs	Students explored socio-cultural issues
Highway safety…; Car accidents…; Is it possible for TZ to get rid of corruption? benefits of education; Journey to Arusha;	Students wrote about their life experiences	
Not to discriminate against HIV AIDS victims Is it right to deny children their right to education?	Students condemned discrimination about HIV Students challenged common beliefs about HIV Students spoke against child labor	Students pursued social justice issues

As discussed earlier, prior to the workshop, students answered questions from a written text, they did fill-in the blanks writing exercises and wrote with no sense of audience or purpose. They didn't write freely about any topic they wanted or something they knew; they wrote to master grammar skills. In addition, the writing occurred only on the school campus, and their parents had no part in it. The workshop repositioned students in ways that enabled them to draw from their lives in order to write their texts.   The patterns as described on table 4 show that students explored socio-cultural issues, and they pursued social justice issues.

Students explored socio-cultural issues: The issues students explored in their books fit in three categories: students wrote about their lives in school, needs in their community and their life experience. Below I highlight one example of what they wrote in their books regarding needs in their community.

Students wrote about their community's needs: A total of 16 books were written (Table 2), with three of them about their elementary school. I share an excerpt from one of the books written by group N regarding needs in their school. In this book, students noted how wonderful their school is and then proceeded to discuss a need for posters and other needs at their school.(The paragraph below is an excerpt from a book, hence the indent)

> Our school needs many more things. For example, we need desks. We don't have enough desks. So often we sit on the floor. When we sit on the floor, we can't write well; our feet get tired; our uniforms get dirty; the ants bite us; our notebooks get torn and are smothered with people's spit. Right now our class needs 23 desks… Our school also needs a fence. A fence will provide security so people don't come to steal our flowers: they are stealing many of the ones we just planted. Many people have made our school a dumping area. They throw away their junk behind our classrooms and some even use the bathroom outside. Many of us end up with cholera, and diarrhea because of the human waste constantly on our school campus. We desperately need the fence. It will also be really nice to get music instruments like piano or even a radio; recreational things like basketball… We have never seen crayons before, but we see how they helped us illustrate our books. If we can get such things, it will help us a lot.

In their book, group N named specific things needed: desks, a fence, music instruments, basketball, and crayons. They also explained ways in which they believe the lack of those materials negatively impacts their lives: lack of desks leads to dirty uniforms, sicknesses and ant bites for example. A fence would provide security and help make their school campus cleaner. In their writing therefore, they made writing a tool to make their needs known. This kind of writing was purposeful and connected to issues in their specific school though could be shared by a wider community of Tanzanians. `

While also soliciting help for orphans, additionally, in other books, students took action to address such practices as using illegal drugs, taking bribes, and discrimination (Table 4). Two of the books addressed discrimination against HIV victims, which I focus on below.

Students pursued social justice issues: Throughout this study, students exemplified critical literacy. That is, they used language to express their disapproval of specific actions in their community. As a teacher-researcher, I applied one of the four dimensions of critical literacy: disrupting the commonplace (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). This stance encourages teachers to exercise their roles and responsibilities as educators who develop a questioning perception toward what students do in the classroom. I therefore welcomed and encouraged students to write about important issues in their lives, and as a result, they were able to use literacy as a tool to critique and bring hope to social problems in their community. They condemned discrimination about HIV, challenged common beliefs about malaria, and wrote against child labor. Below I highlight excerpts from the book on condemning discrimination of HIV victims.

Students condemned discrimination about HIV: According to the 2012 HIV AIDS report, HIV/AIDS in Tanzania is a generalized epidemic estimating over 400 new infections every day (Arvet HIV and AIDS, 2014). In the last decade, researchers show that groups affected by HIV include youth, petty traders, people living in poverty, military personnel, commercial sex workers, long-distance truck drivers, and migrant workers; although a 2005 study shows a changing dynamic. Most people believe those who contract HIV AIDS do so mainly through sexual intercourse, making HIV victims be regarded as immoral. Knowledge of sexually transmitted infections is 'disturbingly low' in Tanzania. The educated have more knowledge while the poor and those living in rural areas tend to know less about HIV. Generally, Tanzanians don't like to get tested because of the aforementioned stigma but several initiatives are in place to address this issue.

The following excerpt from the book, Don't discriminate HIV AIDS victims, demonstrates how one group of students pursued social justice by calling on community members to stop the discrimination of HIV AIDS victims. In this fictional story based on a true story, Fatuma's friend, Hamisi contracted the disease while in his mother's womb. When his mother passed away due to HIV, Hamisi had to live with his aunt who discriminated against him. This excerpt shows Fatuma reflecting on what Hamisi's aunt told her during her visit:

> I felt so sad for him (Hamisi). His aunt let him eat by himself while the rest of the family ate together. I asked his aunt, 'Why do you let him eat alone?' The aunt replied, 'He is HIV AIDS positive.' …So, here is what we need to know about AIDS. Using syringe is one way someone can contract the HIV virus. Not only through sexual activities but also by sharing sharp things such as razors, syringe, pins, scissors etc… A child in her mother's womb can also contract AIDS if the mother is HIV AIDS positive. Our message to you is that, we should not take advantage of the HIV victims and we should take care and raise orphan children. (**Indented to show it is an excerpt from a book**)
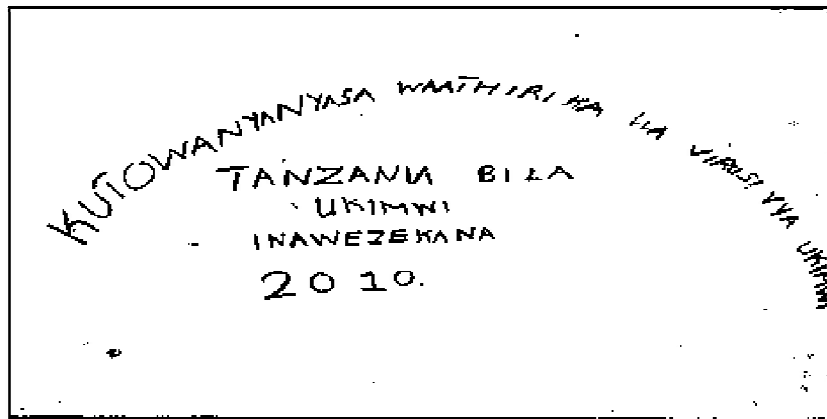

Figure 3: Book title "Kutowanyanyasawaathiriwawavirusivyaukimwi" Don't Discriminate HIV AIDS Victims by Group D
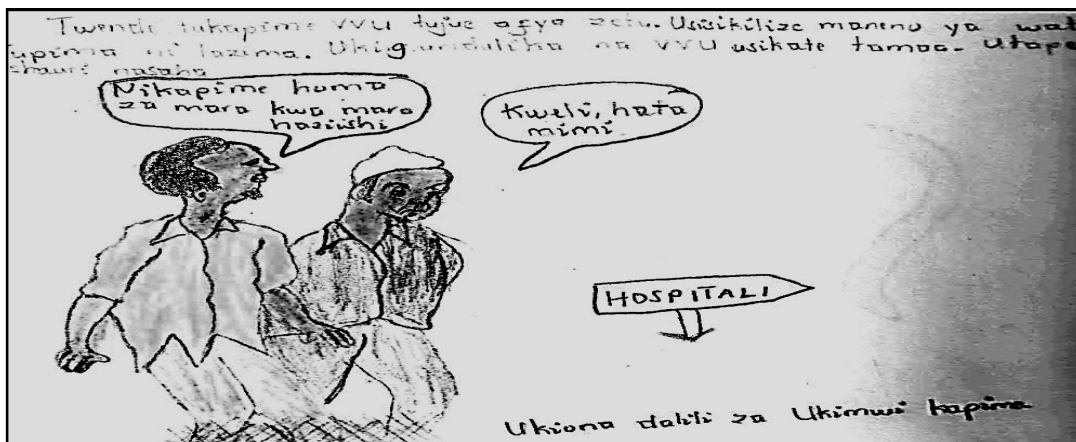

Figure 4: Excerpt from the Book "Don't Discriminate HIV AIDS Victims" by Group D

In the same book, students also educated their community about HIV. First, they explained how a person contracts the disease. Next, they troubled the notion that a person contracts HIV solely through sexual intercourse, and then went on to explain what can be done to prevent the spread of the disease. In addition, they wrote to those who already had the disease, advising them to take good care of themselves by suggesting the kind of foods patients need to eat.

Following this call to action, students encouraged their community members to get tested. Their advice was against the norm and hence a plea telling people not to listen to those discouraging them from getting tested. They stated, "Don't listen to what people say; it is important to get tested" (Figure 4 above). They continued to educate people about what happens after a person gets tested, "If you discover you have the HIV virus, don't be discouraged, you will get wise counsel." The content of this book is yet another demonstration of how the writing workshop gave students the opportunity to use language to change their community and to address significant social issues. It repositioned them to be agents who spoke to their community through texts rather than filling in the blanks with missing words.

Discussion and Conclusion

When I designed this action research, my main intention was to see students create texts. Considering African languages have been and continue to be highly undermined in the academia, the other goal was to demonstrate the value of these languages and how they can be used in the learning process even when they are not the sole medium of instruction. This study was a way to ponder and wrestle with the issue of raising the quality of education in SSA. I wanted to see literacy used as a powerful tool to persisting needs. What ended up happening was a marriage between educational practices, research and communication which resulted in solving not only physical problems but also guiding students to think critically about their world and take action to bring about changes.

I realized that, the decision to introduce writing workshop as a curricular framework brought a different approach to not only teaching but also, to ways teachers, parents and students work together to solve problems in their community. I became an integration agent who facilitated ideas nested in people's minds to bloom and spread within their own communities. Because action research necessitates a partnership between the researcher and the researched, the alliance I formed during this study allowed parents to exercise their cultural roles as knowledge givers in ways that did not go against their traditions. By this I mean, though I taught the workshop, it is parents who enhanced their children's writing. Books that educated community members on HIV or Malaria drew heavily from parents who were medical doctors, for example. Also, teachers learned new ways of supporting learners and by doing so, they became co-learners whose understanding and teaching expertise formed an integration of literacy and communication to speak to context-specific problems.

There was an amalgamation of multiple disciplines in this study. Science, language, history, politics, and economics ideas intersected in order to make this research fruitful. Hence, I would suggest future research explorations that might look closely at possible strategies to integrate multiple disciplines to enhance literacy practices in SSA. Another area would be that of looking at what role the sciences could play in enhancing the quality of education. More specifically, what would happen if teachers partner with medical doctors to examine and address several myths regarding prominent diseases in African communities? In what ways could parental knowledge be channeled to enhance students' learning while allowing students to take an active role to speak to their communities? Is it possible and is it appropriate for Tanzania and other African countries to adopt western curricular designs such as one used in this study? Even more, it will be great to have this study replicated in a larger scale and for a number of years in order to form a significant hypothesis regarding the potential to integrate literacy and research in problem solving.

While this study was conducted in a short amount of time, sixteen supplemental books were created, African languages were used in school, social cultural issues and social justice issues were examined and addressed. In the end, research, education and communication integration resulted in solving problems.

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