

Influence of Pragmatic Philosophy and Acquisition of Self-Reliance Skills among Public Junior School Learners in Thagicu Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatic Philosophy measures in teaching and learning, focuses on experiential and hands-on approaches for learners' acquisition of self-reliance skills. However, concerns persist regarding the extent to which teaching methodologies in public junior schools promote self-reliance skills among learners in current Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya. This study investigated the influence of pragmatic philosophy measures to teaching methodologies on learners' acquisition of self-reliance skills in Thagicu Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya. The study was guided by Pragmatic Philosophy Theory and Self-Reliance Theory and adopted a correlational descriptive research design. The target population comprised 1,493 individuals and a sample size of 229. Data were collected through questionnaires. Piloting tested reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients at 0.78 and 0.79 respectively. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that pragmatic philosophy measures in teaching methodologies had the strongest influence on learners' acquisition of self-reliance skills. Kitchen gardening (M=4.19, learners; M=4.41, teachers) and group discussions (M=3.88, learners; M=4.29, teachers) were the most commonly applied methodologies, while nature walks were least utilized (M=2.64, learners; M=2.88, teachers) due to logistical and environmental constraints. A significant positive relationship was established between teaching methodologies and self-reliance ($r=0.538$, $p<0.001$). Regression analysis revealed teaching methodologies the strongest predictor in the model ($\beta=0.401$, $p<0.001$). The findings confirmed that learner-centered approaches were promoted, although implementation was uneven due to resource constraints. The study concluded that learners' acquisition of self-reliance skills was strongly influenced by the consistent use of learner-centered and experiential teaching methodologies. The study recommended increased teachers professional development on practical teaching strategies and funding for expansion of teacher training on competency-based education for pragmatic pedagogies. Further research should examine pragmatic teaching practices in urban junior schools and conduct longitudinal studies on self-reliance development among learners.

Keywords: Pragmatic Ideology, Teaching Methodologies, Self-Reliance, Junior School Learners, Competency-Based Education, Thagicu Sub-County

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a base through which individuals gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for personal and societal advancement. It empowers learners to navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities for self-reliance living. The transformative power of education is evident in its capacity to shape thought processes, behaviors, and interactions with the environment. Recent global initiatives underscore the critical role of leadership in education, emphasizing the need for effective governance to enhance equitable access to knowledge and technologies. Education that aims to support innovation and resilience for empowerment of African societies to unlock their full potentials for sustainable and prosperous futures (UNESCO, 2024).

In academia, Pragmatic Philosophy Theory, as emphasized by John Dewey and Charles Peirce, entails practical and experimentalism teaching aimed at developing learners skills. The task performance such as craft work lessons would require suitable teaching and learning methodologies with varied resources in order to enhance

learners skills acquisition in relation to learners differentiated abilities and needs in United State of America and Germany opposed to education in Sub-Sahara Africa due to barriers faced by teachers(Sharma et al, 2018).

Pragmatic Philosophy Theory in education advocates for teaching and learning approaches that are practically applicable and relevant to real-life situations. This educational philosophy encourages the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities through experimental learning. It requires choice of appropriate methodologies, resources and procedures Tamlinson (2013). According to Oketch (2024) in Rwanda and South Africa, Out-fashioned methodologies, inadequate resources, and teachers incompetences are major setbacks to the application of Pragmatic Philosophy measures (The Guardian, 2024). In India, significant investments have been made to boost education through initiatives like the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFED), which seeks to provide low-cost financing g to enhance educational infrastructure and access. African context, in East Africa, education systems have been scrutinized for their rigidity and lack of adaptability. A transition towards self-reliance skills education is advocated for creativity and practical skills (Simiyu et al, 2024). In Kenya, education sector is pivotal for social and economic development, serving as the foundation for creating the human capital required for sustained progress. Despite efforts to implement the CBC, challenges persist, including outdated teaching methods, resource inadequacies, and insufficient teacher trainings. These obstacles hinder the effective adoption of pragmatic philosophy measures, experiential learning approaches essential for fostering self-reliance skills among learners (The National Treasury, 2024). In Kitui County, a study by Simiyu et al (2024) draws attention to the practical challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum within the rural setup as in line with pragmatic philosophy. Teachers often lack both training and access to necessary tools, which weakens the experiential learning process. Despite these difficulties, he concludes that assessment models in such contexts should go beyond academics and foster character development essential for long-term self-reliance skills development to enable good adaptation for life demands.

Statement of the Problem

Pragmatic Philosophy Measures in teaching for Kenya's Competency-Based Education (CBE) is an experiential approach in teaching intended to make junior school learners acquire self-reliance skills. Although CBE is aimed at giving useful skills for self-reliance, old-fashioned teaching methods, inadequate resources, low technological awareness and poor teacher readiness would make it hard for CBE to work well. Learners may end up in struggle within the process of education in order to develop important skills like critical thinking, problem solving and entrepreneurship for self-reliance. This would be led by high poverty levels and inadequate teacher support in Thagicu sub-county Kitui county Kenya. Therefore, it was found important to address these gaps as early as possible in the region so that the possible measures can be accounted for in implementation of pragmatic philosophy measures in competence based education that would enable acquisition of self-reliance skills to junior school learners for independent livelihood.

Objective

The study sought to investigate the influence of pragmatic philosophy to teaching methodologies on learners' acquisition of self-reliance skills in Thagicu Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya.

Hypotheses

The study was guided by hypothesis that there is no statistically significant influence of pragmatic philosophy to teaching methodologies on learner's acquisition of self-reliance skills in Thagicu sub-county, Kitui county, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study used correlational descriptive research design. Correlational research design established the relationship between pragmatic philosophy and self-reliance skills, while descriptive research helped to conclusively describe the characteristics of population as it was. The target population was 1493 subjects and the sample size was 229. Data was collected by use of questionnaires. The researcher ensured content, construct

and face validity of the instrument through the help of university supervisors. The reliability of research instrument was ascertained through pilot study with a correlation coefficient of 0.78. and 0.79

Data collection

Data were collected using questionnaires that targeted junior school learners and teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 229 respondents were issued with questionnaires. A total of 218 respondents returned questionnaires. Overall response rate was 95.20%. The high return rate enhanced the reliability of the data and minimized non-response bias.

Table 1 Response Rate

Category	Sample	Return	Non- Return	Response Rate (%)
Learners	210	201	9	95.7
Teachers	19	17	2	89.5
Total	229	218	11	95.20

Results on Learner's Questionnaire

The results findings are indicated in table 1. They revealed differentiated adoption of pragmatic philosophy teaching methodologies across learning activities. Group discussion recorded a relatively high mean ($M = 3.88$) which indicated that collaborative learning was commonly practiced despite contextual constraints. Kitchen gardening emerged as the most dominant activity ($M = 4.19$). This reflected its strong integration within both school and home environments. Practical lessons registered a moderate mean ($M = 3.36$) to suggest limited but present engagement in hands-on learning. Nature walks recorded the lowest mean ($M = 2.64$) to indicate minimal utilization despite learners' proximity to natural environments. Role play however showed moderate implementation ($M = 3.35$) particularly in humanities subjects as shown in table 1.

Table 2 Results on Learners questionnaire.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Group discussion	10	18	20	92	61	3.88	1.09
Kitchen gardening	4	8	16	90	83	4.19	0.93
Practical lessons (laboratories/works hops)	20	35	38	65	43	3.36	1.24
Nature walks (field-based learning)	48	60	32	38	23	2.64	1.31
Role play (CRE/social studies)	22	34	40	62	43	3.35	1.23

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

shows the prominence of kitchen gardening and group discussion underscores the practical orientation of teaching in rural schools which aligned with Pragmatic Ideology Theory. The theory emphasizes learning through experience and active engagement (John Dewey, 1938). Kitchen gardening reflected contextually relevant pedagogy that directly fostered self-reliance by equipping learners with survival and livelihood skills as per Self-Reliance Theory. The limited implementation of practical lessons and nature walks however highlighted systemic constraints such as inadequate infrastructure, scarcity of instructional materials and the physical burden on learners who often walk long distances to school. The findings are consistent with studies in sub-Saharan Africa which reported that while competency-based curricula advocate experiential learning, implementation is hindered by resource limitations (Nganga & Kambutu, 2019; Orodho, 2017). The moderate use of role play further suggested partial adoption of learner-centered strategies.

Results on Teachers' questionnaire

On Teachers, the findings indicated a strong inclination toward participatory and practice-oriented pedagogies. Group discussion ($M = 4.29$) and kitchen gardening ($M = 4.41$) emerged as the most consistently applied approaches. Practical lessons recorded a moderate mean ($M = 3.35$). The findings suggested that although teachers attempt to incorporate hands-on learning, such efforts were intermittently constrained by limited access to specialized facilities. Nature walks remained comparatively underutilized ($M = 2.88$) while role play ($M = 3.59$) showed moderate but selective application largely within humanities subjects as shown in table 3.

Table 3 Results on Teachers Questionnaire

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Sd
Group discussion	0	1	1	7	8	4.29	0.69
Kitchen gardening	0	0	2	6	9	4.41	0.71
Practical lessons (laboratories/workshops)	2	3	3	5	4	3.35	1.18
Nature walks (field-based learning)	2	6	3	4	2	2.88	1.15
Role play (CRE/social studies)	1	2	4	6	4	3.59	1.01

Notes: Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

According to results in table 2, teachers' rating when juxtaposed with learners' responses displayed a similar pattern of emphasis but at slightly elevated levels. The results indicated that while teachers perceived themselves as implementing pragmatic methodologies, learners may experience these approaches less consistently in practice. Such discrepancies have been documented in prior studies where teacher self-reports tend to reflect pedagogical aspirations rather than actual classroom realities in Israel (Pallegrino and Hilton.,2024). The reported emphasis on group discussion and gardening reflects alignment with experiential learning principles. The modest ratings for practical lessons and nature walks however highlighted persistent structural constraints such as inadequate facilities and competing time demands. Findings reflected Self-Reliance Theory perspective in that partial implementation of the strategies may limit the full development of independent problem-solving competencies.

Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Methodologies

The composite index in table 5 below shows teaching methodologies yielded a mean score of 3.61 ($SD = 1.15$). The results indicated a moderately high level of implementation of pragmatic teaching approaches across the sampled schools.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Methodologies

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Teaching Methodologies	3.61	1.15

The findings suggested that learner-centered strategies such as group discussions and kitchen gardening were fairly well integrated into classroom practice while others like practical lessons and nature walks were less consistently applied. The overall pattern reflected a teaching environment that was progressively shifting from traditional, teacher-centered methods toward more experiential and participatory approaches albeit within the constraints of limited resources and infrastructural challenges characteristic of rural settings.

Such a level of implementation aligned with Pragmatic Ideology Theory which emphasized learning through active engagement (Dewey, 1938). Consistent use of such methodologies was also expected to enhance learners' acquisition of self-reliance by fostering practical skills, independent thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Correlation of Teaching Methodologies and Self-Reliance

Table 5 Correlation of Teaching Methodologies and Self-Reliance

Variable	Self-Reliance (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teaching Methodologies	0.538**	0.000

Note: **p < 0.01 (2-tailed)

Results indicated in table 6 shows a moderate to strong positive and statistically significant relationship between teaching methodologies and learners' self-reliance ($r = 0.538$, $p < 0.001$). The findings suggested that increased use of pragmatic, learner centered teaching methodologies was associated with higher levels of self-reliance among learners. The statistical significance further confirmed that the relationship was reliable and not due to chance.

Regression of Pragmatic Ideology and Self-reliance

The regression model adopted for the study included:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Learners' Self-Reliance

X_1 = Teaching Methodologies

β_0 = Constant

β_1 = Coefficient for teaching methodologies

ε = Error term

Table 6 Regression Findings

Variable	Unstandardized Beta (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.986	0.254	—	3.88	0.000
Teaching Methodologies	0.472	0.068	0.538	6.94	0.000

The regression results in table 7 revealed that teaching methodologies have a positive and statistically significant effects on learners' self-reliance ($\beta = 0.538$, $t = 6.94$, $p < 0.001$). The above findings indicated that a unit increase in the application of pragmatic teaching methodologies led to a substantial improvement in learners' self-reliance. The relatively high beta coefficient suggested that teaching methodologies were a strong predictor of self-reliance compared to other variables. The constant term ($\beta_0 = 0.986$) reflected the baseline level of self-reliance in the absence of those methodologies.

The findings provided strong empirical support for the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}) and affirmed that teaching methodologies significantly influenced learners' acquisition of self-reliance. The outcomes were consistent with Pragmatic Ideology Theory which posited that knowledge was best acquired through active engagement and experiential learning. The significant effect of methodologies such as group discussions, practical activities and experiential tasks demonstrated their critical role in fostering independence, creativity, and problem-solving skills among learners. The findings were in agreement with previous studies which have established that learner centered pedagogies significantly enhance competency development and real-life application of knowledge (Mir,2025). Methodologies empower learners from a Self-reliance Theory perspective

to take initiative and apply acquired skills in practical contexts. The results underscore the centrality of pedagogical approaches in shaping meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the objective of the study the following conclusion was made: Teaching methodologies grounded in pragmatic philosophy constituted the most influence on learners' acquisition of self-reliance. Learner-centered approaches emphasized participation, independence, problem solving and practical competences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers should engage in continuous professional development that emphasizes pragmatic and learner-centered pedagogical approaches. Teachers workshops should focus on practical strategies for facilitating experiential learning, problem-solving and independent thinking. Teachers also need to strengthen lesson preparation practices particularly in organizing materials and aligning activities with learning objectives.

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