

Nile English Course Book 5 is in the final stages of review, will be back on the syllabus

By Martin Kitubi

Senior English teachers and experts have called upon curriculum experts to return the Nile English Course books which were once used on the primary schools' syllabus to improve teaching and learning of English.

Printed and published by the Government in 1970, the Nile English Course books served between 1970 and 2006, as a recommended textbook from P5 to P7.

The books were properties of the Government and were not for sale.

The books were used in both public and private government-aided primary schools for over 35 years. They were famous for their stories and approach to teaching English language.

Teachers argue that the book was more resourceful, than some of those on the syllabus today.

Dr Rebecca Florence Kirunda, a senior lecturer of English literature at the department of languages Kyambogo University, says: "The book was engaging and it helped pupils learn English easily through storytelling. The approach was good for the children since it was easy to recall a story."

She made the remarks recently at Nabisunsu Girls' School speech day.

She explained that the Nile English Course books enabled primary school pupils learn without cramming.

"By the time children reached secondary school, they would have attained skills like listening, writing, speaking and reading. This is not the case today. Few secondary school students have these skills," she added. Stories like *The Hyena, Hare and fox, The strong man in Singapore, Why the chicken lives with man* as well as *Mr. Chameleon and Mr. Elephant*, among others in the Nile English Course Book 5, were known to many pupils in the 1990s to mid-2000s.

Aleto Nella, an English examiner with Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), backs the revival of the Nile English Course.

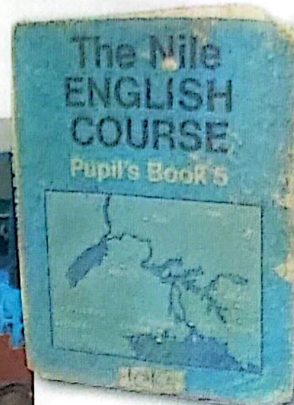
She argues that the book enabled children to be creative and to develop their writing and reading skills.

"As teachers, we would engage children to read parts

Teachers want Nile English Course book back



Nabisunsu Girls from Yellow House celebrating Kauthara Namanya's victory after she won the school speech day competition recently. Photo by Abbey Ramadhan



The books were used in primary schools for over 30 years

of the story and then ask them questions. By the time a teacher came to class, pupils were prepared to read more stories in the book," she said.

Nella, who is the head of the English department at Bat Valley Primary School in Kampala, expressed concern that many students cannot compose stories due to lack of such books.

She also calls for the revival of English Book A and B versions for lower primary school.

"These books have been phased out; yet they helped Primary One and Two pupils improve their reading skills."

The English Books A and B handled storytelling and grammatical development respectively in P1 and P2.

"Can any of the children forget about the *Gulu Gulu (Goat) goes to school* story in the lower primary school? Goats were at home and a child was curious about how a goat could walk to school," she explains.

The English Books A and B had lyrics for songs which enabled pupils in lower

primary learn English.

"They had been written in present tense, reflecting on their life at home and at school. Children could easily grasp what was being taught," she explains.

Reason for concern

For the last five consecutive years, Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), at Primary Seven and Senior Four, has been noting with

concern the students' lack of comprehension of what is set.

Looking at the recent release of the 2016 national examinations, UNEB executive secretary Dan Odongo noted that students find it difficult to use correct grammar, spelling, tenses and punctuation while writing English compositions.

He said some teachers make students cram passages from books, making learners

reproduce textbook answers when responding to questions which require imaginative composition.

However, experts say the proper learning of English as a subject and using it to pass all the other examinations starts at an earlier age of training, right from primary school.

How was the book dropped?

The Nile English Course books were among the first books to be published by the Government and it was used in primary schools.

Following studies by the then education ministry, a competence-based curriculum was called, which saw the Nile English Course book out of schools as the major recommended English textbooks in primary schools.

The market of textbooks was then liberalised, which attracted several publishers, including St. Bernard, Fountain, Spotlight, Net Media and Longhorn English books, among others which are used today in primary

schools.

Studies like the Education Review Commission of 1989, led by Prof. Senteza Kajubi, a renowned scholar at the time, called for curriculum reviews, which saw books like the Nile English Course dropped.

Other education studies included the Government white paper on education of 1992, Basil Kiwanuka report on the curriculum task force of 1993 and the implementation of Universal Primary Education policy to increase accessibility without compromising quality, relevance and equity of the late 1990s.

The education ministry, through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), handled the review in three main phases, which included P1-P4 thematic curriculum and P4 the transition year rolled out between 2007-2009 and 201 respectively.

The revised curriculum was first piloted in 2006 and was rolled out in Primary One in 2007. The final rollout was 2012.

WILL 'NILE ENGLISH COURSE' RETURN?

Elly Musana Wairagala, a curriculum specialist for pre-primary and primary schools at the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), says there have been several calls to have the book recalled.

Musana says the Nile English Course Book 5 is in the final stages of review and will soon be back on the syllabus.

"The book was not phased out. It is one of the books recommended for use in the country, but most schools use the Nile English Course Book as a supplementary book," he explains. "We want to meet the demand of our parents and educationists. They have insisted that they want the book back. The Nile English Course Book 5 will be back in use in the next academic year."

NCDC stresses that the book is undergoing grammatical update and editing to include what is taught today in other recommended books.

The nominee must:

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- Be a small or medium scale entrepreneur (except those doing farming as an enterprise).
- Be drawing his/her livelihood from the business.
- Have an enterprise that has been in existence for at least 1 year
- Have an enterprise with 10 or more employees



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