



Criteria for Validating Teacher Educators' Guides to Early Grade Reading Methodology

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Effective Early Grade Reading (EGR) instruction is critical for establishing a solid foundation in literacy development. Teacher educators are vital in equipping pre-service teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills. This study aimed to develop and evaluate the criteria for validating Teacher Educator Guides (TEGs) to EGR methodology at UNITE, a Ugandan teacher training institution. The developed criteria encompassed components addressing foundational concepts of EGR, active learning strategies, effective instructional practices, contextualization and adaptation for the Ugandan context, user-friendly design, collaboration and support, inclusivity, and continuous improvement for teacher support. Data analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$) for the criteria. A pilot test of the criteria was done with nine (9) EGR experts who provided positive feedback on the criteria's comprehensiveness and ability to identify strengths and weaknesses within the TEGs. UNITE and other teacher training institutions can adopt the criteria to validate other TEGs and ensure effective teacher preparation.

Practitioner Notes

What is already known about the topic

- Early Grade Reading (EGR) is crucial for foundational literacy development, impacting future academic success.
- Teacher Educator Guides (TEGs) are essential resources in equipping pre-service teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective EGR instruction.
- The effectiveness of EGR instruction relies on the quality of teacher training programs, which in turn depends on the quality of TEGs used.

What this study contributes

- This study provides a comprehensive framework for validating TEGs specifically for EGR methodology.
- The framework includes criteria addressing foundational EGR concepts, active learning strategies, ef-

fective instructional practices, contextualization for the Ugandan context, user-friendly design, collaboration and support, inclusivity, and continuous improvement.

- The developed criteria demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .92) and were positively evaluated by EGR experts, indicating their effectiveness in assessing the quality of TEGs.

Implications for practice and policy

- Adoption of the validation criteria can ensure that TEGs are of high quality, leading to more effective teacher preparation. Institutions like UNITE can implement these criteria to enhance their EGR programs, ensuring they are contextually relevant and pedagogically sound.
- Teacher educators can use the validated TEGs to provide more structured and evidence-based training to

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pre-service teachers, improving the overall quality of EGR instruction in classrooms.

- The study underscores the importance of regular validation and updating of TEGs to align with current educational standards and practices. Policymakers can mandate the use of such validation frameworks to ensure that teacher training programs remain effective and relevant.
- The criteria provide a clear guideline for developing new TEGs or revising existing ones, ensuring they cover essential EGR components and are adaptable to the local educational context.

Introduction

Early Grade Reading (EGR) is a cornerstone for academic success, equipping young children with the foundational literacy skills essential for navigating the written word (Gove & Cvelich, 2011). However, achieving successful EGR outcomes presents a significant challenge in many countries, including Uganda. Despite ongoing efforts, many children in Uganda require additional support in acquiring foundational reading skills, such as alphabetic and phonological awareness, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension (Lubaale et al., 2021).

Teacher training can be critical in addressing the above challenge if well conducted. Quality teacher training programs can equip educators with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to foster effective student learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In Uganda, the Uganda National Institute of Teacher Education (UNITE) was established to play this central position in bolstering the quality of teacher training across all levels (UNITE, 2024). The vision of UNITE is to be "A Centre of Excellence in Innovative and Teacher Education for Social Transformation." This vision underscores the institute's commitment to providing high-quality and inclusive teacher education programs in the country.

On the other hand, practical Teacher Education Guides (TEGs) ensure quality teacher training. Ideally, TEGs serve as a roadmap for teacher educators, outlining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers need to develop for successful teaching, including EGR instruction (Cavanagh, 2019). However, the mere existence of TEGs within teacher training programs does not guarantee quality teachers. The guides must undergo a systematic validation process to ensure TEGs contribute meaningfully to producing quality teachers.

Validation of TEGs involves critically evaluating their content, structure, and alignment with established standards and learning outcomes. This process encompasses various methods, including document analysis, expert review, and stakeholder feedback (Guskey, 2014). Validation of TEGs serves many purposes.

Firstly, validated TEGs provide a clear and coherent framework for teacher educators to structure their curriculum and instructional practices. This fosters consistency and focus within teacher training programs, preventing ambiguity or gaps in knowledge transmission (Guskey, 2014). Secondly, by incorporating evidence-based practices, val-

idated TEGs equip teacher educators with demonstrably effective pedagogical tools to cultivate student-teacher learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). This knowledge base then translates into more effective training experiences for pre-service teachers, preparing them to implement these practices within their classrooms. Finally, validated TEGs promote critical reflection among teacher educators since the validation process often prompts evaluating existing practices and considering new research findings. This continuous improvement fosters a culture of innovation and adaptation within teacher training programs (Guskey, 2014).

While UNITE made significant strides in developing TEGs, starting with TEGs for EGR methodology, these guides needed to be validated. This study sought to create a framework to guide the validation of existing TEGs for EGR methodology at UNITE.

Limitations of Existing Teacher Educators' Guides to EGR

While TEGs hold the potential to improve the quality of EGR teacher training in Uganda significantly, several limitations hinder their effectiveness. As explained below, these limitations mainly relate to content, structure, and philosophical alignment.

Most of the existing TEGs in Uganda rely on generic content and adoption methods from other contexts, which do not fully address the unique needs of Ugandan classrooms. It should be noted that Uganda's classrooms are multilingual and encompass diverse learner backgrounds and learning styles. Thus, a TEG designed for a monolingual setting might not provide adequate guidance for teachers working in classrooms with multiple languages of instruction.

Another critical issue of existing TEGs for EGR is the need for more focus on evidence-based practices within EGR teacher training programs. Current TEGs must address the foundational reading skills necessary for successful EGR acquisition, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies. If TEGs do not address foundational reading skills, pre-service teachers might be unprepared to equip their learners with the essential building blocks for literacy development.

Some TEGs in Uganda do not only need to be outdated content-wise but must also be aligned with current best practices in EGR methodology. This hinders the practical preparation of future EGR teachers, potentially leaving them ill-equipped to implement effective instructional strategies (Guskey, 2014).

Relatedly, some TEGs in Uganda need more clarity and organization, making it difficult for teacher educators to translate theory into practical classroom applications (Guskey, 2014). Unclear language, poorly structured content, and a lack of user-friendly design often impede the effective use of TEGs within training programs.

Some of Uganda's existing TEGs prioritize generic aspects such as content accuracy and alignment with broad curriculum standards, neglecting the specific pedagogical approaches and content knowledge crucial for fostering

foundational literacy skills. Effective TEGs for EGR instruction should delve into areas like phonemic awareness development, explicit phonics instruction, culturally relevant reading materials, and differentiated instruction strategies catering to diverse learners.

Similarly, several TEGs in Uganda need to resonate with the unique philosophy of the target teacher training institutions. A successful TEG validation framework should ensure alignment between the guides and the institution's specific approach to teacher training.

Traditional frameworks often focus solely on assessing the content of instructional materials, neglecting their role in equipping teacher educators (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013). Effective TEGs should provide accurate content and guide teacher educators in facilitating student-teacher learning through activities like reflection, self-assessment, and modelling effective teaching practices (N. S. K. Pang, 2022). By overlooking this crucial aspect, existing TEGs might fail to maximize their potential impact on pre-service teacher development.

Existing TEGs need to consider the sociocultural context of Ugandan classrooms more adequately. A framework for UNITE's TEGs should account for factors like multilingual environments, cultural values, and available resources to ensure lesson plans are culturally relevant and adaptable to the realities of Ugandan classrooms. Neglecting these contextual factors can limit the effectiveness of TEGs in preparing teachers for the unique challenges they face (Rigney, 2023).

The limitations outlined above highlight the need for a tailored validation framework to address the shortcomings of existing TEGs used in EGR teacher training at UNITE. Such a framework would ensure the content of TEGs is up-to-date, evidence-based, and aligns with best practices in EGR methodology. Furthermore, the framework would promote clear, well-organized TEGs that are user-friendly and adaptable to the specific context of Ugandan classrooms and UNITE's philosophy.

Purpose

The overarching objective of this research was to develop a comprehensive framework for assessing the validity of Teacher Educator Guides (TEGs) to Early Grade Reading (EGR) methodology at UNITE.

Objectives

To achieve the above purpose, this study pursued the following specific objectives:

- i. Develop a framework for validating the Teacher Educator Guide (TEG) to Early Grade Reading (EGR) methodology at UNITE.
- ii. Test the framework's effectiveness for validating Teacher Educator Guide (TEGs) to Early Grade Reading (EGR) methodology at UNITE.

Methodology

This section outlines the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques to achieve the above objectives.

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to address the above objectives. The mixed-methods design allowed for the triangulation of data sources and the exploration of diverse perspectives, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Harrison et al., 2020). The qualitative component involved a literature review, document analysis, expert review, and stakeholder feedback obtained via Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Concurrently, the quantitative component entailed administering a questionnaire gathering educators' views about the usability and effectiveness of the proposed framework.

Research Methods

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify existing research, theories, and frameworks related to validating TEGs. Electronic databases such as ERIC, PubMed, and Google Scholar were systematically searched using relevant keywords and Boolean operators. The reviewed literature encompassed peer-reviewed articles, books, reports, and policy documents published within the last decade to ensure the currency and relevance of the findings.

Focus Group Discussions were conducted with key stakeholders, including teacher educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and selected UNITE staff, to seek their expert opinions on the validity and reliability of the proposed validation framework.

The key stakeholders above were given a self-administered questionnaire to assess their perceptions of the proposed framework's clarity, relevance, and applicability. This validates the existing TEGs for EGR instruction.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data obtained from literature reviews, document analyses, and expert reviews was thematically analysed to identify patterns, themes, and recurring issues relevant to the development of the validation framework. Categorization was done using Theory-driven Thematic Analysis (TTA).

Quantitative data collected through surveys was analysed descriptively and inferentially using advanced tools in Google Spreadsheets. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize participants' responses, including frequencies, percentages, and means. Inferential statistics, particularly correlation analysis and regression modelling, were employed to examine relationships between variables of the validation framework.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Validating TEGs is essential to ensure their effectiveness in improving the quality of training. This subsection delineates the critical components and criteria derived from literature informing the validation of TEGs for EGR methodology.

Principles Derived from Teacher Educators' Views

According to the experts in this study, the validation process for TEGs should prioritize content accuracy and relevance. One EGR expert suggested, "TEGs may serve as a bridge between current research and practical application in Ugandan classrooms" (Expert 1, 2024). This view aligns with Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005)'s emphasis on ensuring teacher educators possess up-to-date knowledge and instructional strategies through evidence-based practices in EGR methodology.

Beyond general EGR principles, experts stressed the importance of context-specific content. Another expert noted, "TEGs must consider the linguistic richness of Uganda by incorporating content that resonates with various local languages and cultural contexts" (EGR Expert 3, 2024). This ensures the TEGs address the specific needs and realities faced by Ugandan teachers.

Some EGR experts also believe that TEGs should be aligned with national standards and curricular objectives.

As we prepare to validate these guides, we must ensure that these guides are genuinely a bridge between theory and practice so that we know that our teacher training aligns with the Ministry of Education and Sports' vision. We need to verify whether the guide's contents align with the National Curriculum Framework, Early Grade Reading standards, National Teacher Policy, and Education Sector Strategic Plan so that we empower teacher educators to prepare teachers who can effectively deliver instruction that achieves early learning outcomes. [EGR Expert 3, 2024]

According to the above expert, EGR-specific TEGs must align with national standards and curricular objectives to ensure coherence and consistency in teacher training programs. Alignment with the Ugandan national curriculum framework and Early Grade Reading standards is imperative to ensure that TEGs support the attainment of learning outcomes specified by educational authorities (Ejuu, 2012; Heugh & Namyalo, 2017). Furthermore, TEGs should reflect the principles and goals outlined in the National Teacher Policy and the Education Sector Strategic Plan, thus fostering synergy between teacher training initiatives and broader educational policies (Government of Uganda, 2019). Another EGR expert underscored the significance of clear organization and presentation in TEGs. Emphasizing user-friendliness, [EGR Expert 2] stated, "The guides should be designed with the teacher educator in mind. A logical structure, clear delineation of topics, and well-defined learning objectives are fundamental for navigating the guide and maximizing its effectiveness during training

sessions." This aligns with Guskey (2017)'s notion that effective professional learning begins with a clear destination in mind.

Furthermore, the above EGR expert highlighted the importance of clear and concise language. She remarked, "We should ensure that the UNITE teacher educator guides are as clear as possible. Jargon-free and unambiguous language is essential in these guides. Teacher educators from diverse backgrounds need to effortlessly comprehend the information presented and confidently implement the strategies outlined in the guide" [EGR Expert 2]. By ensuring jargon-free and unambiguous language in the teacher educator guides, the validators are sure that teacher educators will effectively translate the content of TEGs into meaningful learning experiences for future EGR teachers.

The experts also emphasized the significance of user-friendly design principles in TEGs. In this line, one expert stressed the importance of structure and clarity, stating: "We should ensure that the guides are like a well-organized lesson plan itself. We need to determine whether there is a clear delineation of topics, subtopics, and learning objectives in the guides as this is crucial for teacher educators to navigate the guide and find what they need quickly during training sessions" [EGR Expert 5]. This view of expert number 5 aligns very well with Guskey (2014)'s principles of planning professional learning. Elucidating her point above, the expert submitted:

The guides should be clear and concise. Teacher educators come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and the language used in the guides needs to be easy for everyone to understand. This will ensure they can confidently implement the strategies outlined in the guides" [EGR Expert 5].

The above focus on clear language is crucial as it ensures teachers can effectively translate the TEG's content into meaningful learning experiences for future EGR teachers.

Relatedly, another EGR expert emphasized that clear organization and presentation are fundamental to effective TEGs. The expert highlighted the importance of usability, stating, "We need to ensure that the guides serve as a roadmap for teacher educators. They should have a logical structure, with topics, subtopics, and learning objectives logically and sequentially outlined. The guides should also be written in a straightforward language" [EGR Expert 6].

The above view aligns with that of EGR Expert 2, who emphasized the importance of precise language in the guide, ensuring teacher educators effectively translate the TEG's content into meaningful learning experiences for future EGR teachers.

The other EGR experts in this study concurred on the importance of user-centered design principles in TEGs. He likened a well-designed TEG to a roadmap: "Let us imagine a TEG as a clear and concise roadmap for teacher educators. This is not only done with logical structuring and distinct topics, subtopics, and learning objectives but also in plain and suggestive language, signalling to the teacher educator what to do before, during, and after each session." [EGR Expert 7]. Indeed, a well-organized TEG enhances acces-

Key Areas for Validating a Teacher Educator Guide	Authors	Principle / Criterion Derived from Literature
Foundational Concepts of EGR	(Cabell et al., 2022; Cummings, 2021; Hudson et al., 2021; Kilag et al., 2023; National Reading Panel, 2000; Putnam & Borko, 2000)	The guide clearly defines reading as a mental process of understanding written symbols.
		The guide equips teacher educators to explain the sub-skills of reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, word decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.
		The guide emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness as the foundation for developing reading skills and prepares teacher educators to effectively convey this concept.
		The guide emphasizes the crucial role of oral language development in learning to read and equips teacher educators to guide teachers on building connections between spoken and written language, especially in multilingual environments.
		The guide equips teacher educators with knowledge of the different stages of reading development (emergent, beginning, etc.) to guide teachers in tailoring their instruction accordingly.
		The guide emphasizes the importance of foundational reading skills like letter-sound knowledge, phonemic awareness, and basic decoding before moving on to fluency and comprehension.
Active Learning	(Odum et al., 2021; Prince & Felder, 2007; Yu et al., 2021)	The guide promotes active learning strategies where students are engaged in the learning process. It equips teacher educators with practical examples and activities for teachers to implement.
		The guide highlights the importance of using a variety of teaching methods and equips teacher educators to guide teachers in implementing them (e.g., direct instruction, guided practice, independent work, cooperative learning).
		The guide showcases engaging activities, games, and songs to make EGR instruction interactive and effective.
Effective Instructional Practices	(Diery et al., 2020; National Reading Panel, 2000; Parsons & Irish, 2021)	The guide ensures alignment with the prescribed curriculum and equips teacher educators to guide teachers on incorporating evidence-based practices for teaching essential reading skills and strategies.
		The guide emphasizes the importance of creating a print-rich

Key Areas for Validating a Teacher Educator Guide	Authors	Principle / Criterion Derived from Literature
		classroom environment with diverse reading materials (books, charts, labels, etc.) that cater to different reading levels and genres.
Assessment	(DeVries, 2023; Levi & Inbar-Lourie, 2020; Sancar et al., 2021; Schelling & Rubenstein, 2021; Spaul et al., 2020)	The guide guides teachers on incorporating informal assessments to monitor student progress and adjust instruction as needed.
		The guide promotes the use of assessment for learning, with guidance on using tools to monitor progress and tailor instruction (e.g., UNEB-EGRA, Uwezo assessments).
		The guide highlights how assessment results can be used to identify individual student needs and inform targeted instruction.
Contextualization and Adaptation	(Lee et al., 2022; Ssenkande et al., 2024; Howard, 2021; Alhums, 2020; Li et al., 2022; McBride et al., 2022; National Reading Panel, 2000; Smith et al., 2021; Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2022; Howard, 2021; Arslan, 2021; Erdemir & Yeşilçinar, 2021; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017; Nakijoba et al., 2024; National Reading Panel, 2000; Ssentanda, 2014; Tuttyandari et al., 2022; Wei & García, 2022); Alhums, 2020; Howard, 2021)	The guide acknowledges the challenges of limited resources in Uganda and equips teacher educators with practical suggestions for maximizing available resources.
		The guide offers guidance on adapting instruction for multilingual classrooms, considering students' home language and the language of instruction.
		The guide provides clear guidance on adapting methodologies and materials to various Ugandan languages.
		The guide acknowledges the language diversity in Uganda and provides guidance on teaching EGR in various local languages alongside English.
		The guide considers incorporating technology tools that can support EGR instruction and assessment, but ensures they complement, not replace, effective teaching practices.
		The guide aligns examples and activities to the cultural background of the teachers and students to enhance engagement and understanding. The guide incorporates visuals, case studies, and examples from Ugandan classrooms.
		The guide acknowledges the prevalence of alphabetic writing systems but mentions the existence of syllabic or alphabetic syllabic systems in some Ugandan languages.
		The guide equips teacher educators with strategies for adapting phonemic awareness instruction

Key Areas for Validating a Teacher Educator Guide	Authors	Principle / Criterion Derived from Literature
		when the language of instruction differs from students' home languages.
		The guide recognizes the challenges of large class sizes and limited resources in Ugandan classrooms and provides teacher educators with guidance on alternative teaching methods.
		The guide emphasizes the importance of creating a print-rich classroom environment with diverse reading materials (books, charts, labels, etc.) and equips teacher educators to guide teachers in achieving this in the Ugandan context.
		The guide ensures alignment with the Ugandan curriculum and equips teacher educators to guide teachers on incorporating evidence-based practices for teaching essential reading skills and strategies.
		The guide guides teachers on incorporating informal assessments to monitor student progress and adjust instruction as needed and equips teacher educators to effectively train them on this practice.
		The guide acknowledges the challenges of limited resources and equips teacher educators with practical suggestions for maximizing available resources for effective EGR instruction in Uganda.
		The guide offers guidance on adapting instruction for multilingual classrooms, considering students' home language and the language of instruction, and equips teacher educators to train teachers on these adaptations.
		The guide encourages peer support and microteaching as key methods of learning EGR instruction.
User-Friendly Design	(Angelino & Matronillo, 2020; Riley et al., 2023; Thi et al., 2023).	The guide is written in clear and concise language that is accessible to teachers with varying levels of literacy expertise.
		The guide focuses on providing practical and actionable steps for teachers to implement EGR methodology in their classrooms.
		The guide includes references and suggestions for further exploration to deepen teachers' understanding of EGR principles.

Key Areas for Validating a Teacher Educator Guide	Authors	Principle / Criterion Derived from Literature
Collaboration and Support	(Eden et al., 2024; Puzio et al., 2020; Ralaingita & Plessis, 2020; Svensson et al., 2021)	The guide emphasizes the importance of collaboration among educators, families, communities, and government agencies to support inclusive education (where applicable).
		The guide promotes a growth mindset in teachers, encouraging them to experiment, adapt, and seek support.
		Inclusivity
		The guide acknowledges and addresses potential challenges teachers might face in implementing inclusive EGR methods in Ugandan classrooms.
Continuous Improvement and Teacher Support	(Brandenburg, 2021; Britton, 2023; Derakhshan et al., 2020; Didion et al., 2020)	The guide emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development for teachers.
		The guide acts as a reference point for teachers, offering guidance on self-study and incorporating feedback mechanisms.
Balancing Theory and Practice	(Bauml, 2023; Roberts et al., 2020)	The guide provides teacher educators with clear explanations of the importance of each reading sub-skill and its role in developing reading skills.
		The guide offers practical classroom activities that teacher educators can guide teachers to implement, following the "I Do, We Do, You Do" framework.
		The guide equips teacher educators with examples and illustrations relevant to the Ugandan context, making the theoretical concepts relatable for teachers.
Motivate and Support Teachers	(Bjorklund Jr et al., 2020; Kaufmann & Vallade, 2022; Lakkala et al., 2021)	The guide acknowledges the vital role teachers play in students' reading development.
		The guide is framed as a supportive resource to help teachers improve their reading instruction practices.
		The guide provides clear learning objectives and chapter summaries for easy reference by teacher educators.

sibility and navigability, allowing teacher educators to locate and utilize relevant resources during training sessions efficiently. Moreover, as emphasized above, TEGs should employ clear and concise language, free from jargon or ambiguity, to ensure comprehension and ease of implementation by teacher educators.

Lastly, the EGR experts in this study emphasized the significance of comprehensive stakeholder engagement in the TEG validation. More compelling on the issue of stake-

holder engagement was the view of the seventh expert highlighting:

An effective teacher educator guide should embody input from various stakeholders. We must ensure that the guides include teacher educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and practicing teachers, among other key stakeholders. This would help ensure we incorporate various viewpoints and address the needs encountered by those implementing EGR instruction in classrooms. In addition, the guides should not be

static documents. Feedback mechanisms should be established throughout the development and validation process for ongoing refinement based on stakeholder experiences and insights. [EGR Expert 7].

The above focus on continuous improvement through stakeholder feedback is crucial. It ensures TEGs are inclusive, remain up-to-date, and impactfully equip teacher educators to deliver quality EGR training.

Criteria for Validating the Teacher Educator Guide (TEG) to Early Grade Reading Methodology at UNITE

The criteria for validating the Teacher Educator Guide (TEG) to Early Grade Reading (EGR) methodology at UNITE (see [Table 1](#)) were developed based on established principles derived from two key sources: the views of teacher educators themselves and relevant academic literature on effective TEG design.

The criteria directly reflect the insights from selected EGR teacher educators, including those universities, UNITE, and different Core Primary Teachers Colleges in Uganda. For instance, Criterion #15 acknowledges the challenge of limited resources in Ugandan classrooms, a concern likely voiced by educators facing these realities. Similarly, Criterion #18 addresses the multilingual nature of Ugandan classrooms, an aspect that teacher educators likely highlighted as crucial for effective EGR instruction. These criteria directly target challenges and needs identified by those with firsthand experience.

The criteria also resonate with established principles from the broader academic literature on TEG development. Criterion #1, for example, clearly defines reading as a mental process, aligning with core principles of reading acquisition (National Reading Panel, 2000). Similarly, Criterion #7 promotes active learning strategies, a well-documented approach for enhancing student engagement and knowledge retention (Astin, 2014). By incorporating these evidence-based practices, the criteria ensure the TEG reflects best practices in the field.

Effectiveness of the Framework

This section examines the effectiveness of the proposed framework for validating Teacher Educator Guides (TEGs) for Early Grade Reading (EGR) methodology at UNITE. To assess the internal consistency of expert ratings on the framework's components, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated using data collected from nine EGR experts, including teacher educators, curriculum developers, policy-makers, and UNITE staff. These experts rated their level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree) on 42 statements encompassing various aspects of a strong TEG (see Appendix A for the complete framework).

Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) measures internal consistency reliability, indicating the extent to which items within a scale assess the same underlying construct (Field, 2013). A higher alpha value suggests greater internal consistency, meaning the experts' ratings consistently re-

flected their evaluation of the framework's effectiveness in capturing vital elements of a quality TEG.

The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .92, indicating excellent internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2017). This high alpha value suggests that the framework's components effectively measure a single underlying construct – the overall quality and comprehensiveness of a TEG for EGR methodology in the Ugandan context.

While Cronbach's alpha provided valuable insights into internal consistency, further research was conducted using additional methods to explore the framework's external validity. Nine (9) teacher educators were identified and engaged in pilot testing the framework with selected sections of the actual TEG. The Framework ([Table 1](#)) was applied to the following three topics randomly selected in the UNITE's Teacher Educator Guide (TEG) to EGR Methodology for the Degree program.

Each topic in the TEG is made up of sessions. The TEG presents detailed suggestions to the teacher educator on what s/he can do at each session's different phases of instruction:

- i. **Materials List:** This section suggests to the teacher educator how to create learning materials that s/he can utilize to effectively prepare for and deliver a given session to their student teachers.
- ii. **Preparation and Climate Setting:** Under this component, the teacher educator is guided in preparing for and setting a conducive environment for student teachers to learn effectively during the session.
- iii. **Overview:** This section suggests to the teacher educator what the session should be about.
- iv. **Session Outline:** This section suggests the content outline of the current session and guides the teacher educator in developing it.
- v. **Pre-Assessment:** This component guides the teacher educator in assessing student teachers' prior knowledge of the current session.
- vi. **Competencies:** In this section, the teacher educator is guided on the statement of possible student-teacher competencies of the current session and how to develop such competencies.
- vii. **Read Aloud/Model:** This component guides the teacher educator in modeling the acquisition of relevant skills in the current session.
- viii. **Interactivity:** This component guides the teacher educator in engaging student teachers in interactive learning within a particular session.
- ix. **Instruction:** This component guides the teacher educator in supporting the student teacher in connecting the different key concepts of the current session.
- x. **Application and Interactivity:** This component guides teacher educators in creating and providing opportunities for student teachers to utilize the knowledge and skills acquired in the session.
- xi. **Summary:** This section guides the teacher educator in supporting student teachers in summarizing the key ideas of the current session.
- xii. **Looking Forward:** This section guides the teacher educator in helping student teachers connect from the

Table 1. Criteria for Validating the Teacher Educator Guide (TEG) to Early Grade Reading Methodology at UNITE

#	Component	Rating				
		1	2	3	4	5
	Foundational Concepts of EGR					
1.	The TEG clearly defines reading as a mental process of understanding written symbols.					
2.	The TEG equips teacher educators to explain the sub-skills of reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, word decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.					
3.	The TEG emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness as the foundation for developing reading skills and prepares teacher educators to effectively convey this concept.					
4.	The TEG emphasizes the crucial role of oral language development in learning to read and equips teacher educators to guide teachers on building connections between spoken and written language, especially in multilingual environments.					
5.	The TEG equips teacher educators with knowledge of the different stages of reading development (emergent, beginning, etc.) to guide teachers in tailoring their instruction accordingly.					
6.	The TEG emphasizes the importance of foundational reading skills like letter-sound knowledge, phonemic awareness, and basic decoding before moving on to fluency and comprehension.					
	Active Learning					
7.	The TEG promotes active learning strategies where students are engaged in the learning process. It equips teacher educators with practical examples and activities for teachers to implement.					
8.	The TEG highlights the importance of using a variety of teaching methods and equips teacher educators to guide teachers in implementing them (e.g., direct instruction, guided practice, independent work, cooperative learning).					
9.	The TEG showcases engaging activities, games, and songs to make EGR instruction interactive and effective.					
	Effective Instructional Practices					
10.	The TEG ensures alignment with the prescribed curriculum and equips teacher educators to guide teachers on incorporating evidence-based practices for teaching essential reading skills and strategies.					
11.	The TEG emphasizes the importance of creating a print-rich classroom environment with diverse reading materials (books, charts, labels, etc.) that cater to different reading levels and genres.					
12.	The TEG guides teachers on incorporating informal assessments to monitor student progress and adjust instruction as needed.					
	Assessment					
13.	The TEG promotes the use of assessment for learning, with guidance on using tools to monitor progress and tailor instruction (e.g., UNEB-EGRA, Uwezo assessments).					
14.	The TEG highlights how assessment results can be used to identify individual student needs and inform targeted instruction.					
	Contextualization and Adaptation					
15.	The TEG acknowledges the challenges of limited resources in Uganda and equips teacher educators with practical suggestions for maximizing available resources.					
16.	The TEG offers guidance on adapting instruction for multilingual classrooms, considering students' home language and the language of instruction.					
17.	The TEG provides clear guidance on adapting methodologies and materials to various Ugandan languages.					
18.	The TEG acknowledges the language diversity in Uganda and provides guidance on teaching EGR in various local languages alongside English.					
19.	The TEG considers incorporating technology tools that can support EGR instruction and assessment, but ensures they complement, not replace, effective teaching practices.					
20.	The TEG aligns examples and activities to the cultural background of the teachers and students to enhance engagement and understanding. The TEG incorporates visuals, case studies, and examples from Ugandan classrooms.					

#	Component	Rating				
21.	The TEG acknowledges the prevalence of alphabetic writing systems but mentions the existence of syllabic or alphabetic syllabic systems in some Ugandan languages.					
22.	The TEG equips teacher educators with strategies for adapting phonemic awareness instruction when the language of instruction differs from students' home languages.					
23.	The TEG recognizes the challenges of large class sizes and limited resources in Ugandan classrooms and provides teacher educators with guidance on alternative teaching methods.					
24.	The TEG emphasizes the importance of creating a print-rich classroom environment with diverse reading materials (books, charts, labels, etc.) and equips teacher educators to guide teachers in achieving this in the Ugandan context.					
25.	The TEG ensures alignment with the Ugandan curriculum and equips teacher educators to guide teachers on incorporating evidence-based practices for teaching essential reading skills and strategies.					
26.	The TEG guides teachers on incorporating informal assessments to monitor student progress and adjust instruction as needed and equips teacher educators to effectively train them on this practice.					
27.	The TEG acknowledges the challenges of limited resources and equips teacher educators with practical suggestions for maximizing available resources for effective EGR instruction in Uganda.					
28.	The TEG offers guidance on adapting instruction for multilingual classrooms, considering students' home language and the language of instruction, and equips teacher educators to train teachers on these adaptations.					
29.	The TEG encourages peer support and microteaching as key methods of learning EGR instruction.					
	User-Friendly Design					
30.	The TEG is written in clear and concise language that is accessible to teachers with varying levels of literacy expertise.					
31.	The TEG focuses on providing practical and actionable steps for teachers to implement EGR methodology in their classrooms.					
32.	The TEG includes references and suggestions for further exploration to deepen teachers' understanding of EGR principles.					
	Collaboration and Support					
33.	The TEG emphasizes the importance of collaboration among educators, families, communities, and government agencies to support inclusive education (where applicable).					
34.	The TEG promotes a growth mindset in teachers, encouraging them to experiment, adapt, and seek support.					
	Inclusivity					
35.	The TEG acknowledges and addresses potential challenges teachers might face in implementing inclusive EGR methods in Ugandan classrooms.					
	Continuous Improvement and Teacher Support					
36.	The TEG emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development for teachers.					
	The TEG acts as a reference point for teachers, offering guidance on self-study and incorporating feedback mechanisms.					
	Balancing Theory and Practice					
37.	The TEG provides teacher educators with clear explanations of the importance of each reading sub-skill and its role in developing reading skills.					
38.	The TEG offers practical classroom activities that teacher educators can guide teachers to implement, following the "I Do, We Do, You Do" framework.					
39.	The TEG equips teacher educators with examples and illustrations relevant to the Ugandan context, making the theoretical concepts relatable for teachers.					
	Motivate and Support Teachers					
40.	The TEG acknowledges the vital role teachers play in students' reading development.					

#	Component	Rating				
41.	The TEG is framed as a supportive resource to help teachers improve their reading instruction practices.					
42.	The TEG provides clear learning objectives and chapter summaries for easy reference by teacher educators.					

Using a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the validity of the Teacher Educators Guide to EGR Methodology at UNITE.

Topic	Title	Sessions
Topic 1	Introduction to Early Grade Reading	Session 1: Pre-Reading Skills
		Session 2: Major Methods Proposed in the EGR Model
		Session 2: Children's Reading Abilities
Topic 3	Language Phonologies and Orthographies for English and Ugandan Local Languages	Session 1: Letter Segmenting and Blending
Topic 4	Learning to Read and Write	Session 1: Phonemic Awareness and Alphabetic Principle
		Session 2: Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension
		Session 3: Letter Formation and Handwriting
		Session 4: Writing Process
		Session 2: Teaching Local Language Literacy
		Session 3: Teaching Local Language Creative Writing

current session to a new one. It also suggests several activities the educator can give student teachers, such as take-home assignments.

- xiii. Annexes: This section suggests other resources a teacher educator can utilize to deliver the current session effectively.
- xiv. References: This component suggests a list of sources in APA format that the teacher educator can refer to enhance his/her knowledge of delivering the current session of EGR.

Experts' Views about the Effectiveness of the Framework

Building upon the internal consistency established in Section 6.3, this section explores teacher educators' perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the framework for validating TEGs in Early Grade Reading (EGR) methodology at UNITE. Qualitative data from a pilot test involving nine teacher educators is presented here.

Validity

The focus group discussions revealed positive feedback on the framework's comprehensiveness. One teacher educator echoed a sentiment found in the wider literature on TEG development. Seel, et al (2017) highlight the importance of ensuring instructional guides encompass a range of components including foundational concepts, active learning strategies, and assessment practices. A participant

in this study remarked, "The framework covers all the essential aspects a strong TEG for EGR in Uganda needs. It's great to see foundational concepts addressed alongside practical components like assessment and contextualization for our specific classroom realities." This aligns with the emphasis on context-specific teacher preparation advocated by several scholars (Bergmark, 2023; Hammerness & Craig, 2016; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Another participant highlighted the user-friendly design, stating, "The framework is well-organized and easy to navigate. This makes the validation process clear and efficient." This user-friendliness is crucial for ensuring the framework's practical application within teacher training programs.

Practical Utility

The pilot test confirmed the framework's feasibility for practical application within UNITE's teacher training programs. Participants appreciated the framework's ease of use. A teacher educator commented, "The framework is straightforward to understand. It won't require extensive training for validators to utilize it effectively." This aligns with the emphasis on practicality in instructional materials development and validation processes (Little et al., 2009; Ölmezler-Öztürk, 2018). Additionally, the time required for TEG evaluation was deemed reasonable. One participant noted, "The time commitment to evaluate TEGs using this framework seems manageable within our current work-

load.” This is particularly important for busy teacher educators who may have limited time for TEG evaluation.

Strengths and Weaknesses of TEGs

The pilot test demonstrated the framework’s ability to identify strengths and weaknesses in TEGs. For instance, the “Contextualization and Adaptation” component was praised for addressing challenges faced by Ugandan educators. A teacher educator stated, “I particularly appreciate the focus on contextualization. The framework acknowledges limitations like resource constraints and multilingual classrooms, which is crucial for our context.” This focus on contextualization is well-supported in the literature. Several authors (Kollmann & Hardre, 2013; Martin, 2011; Prins et al., 2018) have highlighted the importance of TEGs that consider the specific needs and challenges of different educational settings. However, some participants suggested areas for improvement. One educator noted, “While the framework addresses contextualization, incorporating more specific examples of culturally relevant activities would be beneficial.” Similarly, another participant suggested, “The framework could be strengthened by explicitly including strategies for technology integration in EGR instruction.” These suggestions align with research advocating for instructional materials that integrate culturally relevant activities (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; V. O. Pang et al., 2021; Sharma & Christ, 2017) and leverage technology for effective instruction (Chang et al., 2006; Jones & Kennedy, 2022).

Clarity, Relevance, and Applicability

Overall, participants found the framework’s criteria clear, relevant, and applicable to the TEG validation process. The specific statements within each component were seen as providing a well-defined structure for evaluation. A teacher educator commented, “The framework’s criteria are clear and easy to follow. They provide a strong foundation for a thorough TEG evaluation.” Another participant highlighted the relevance, stating, “The framework focuses on the key elements we need to consider when ensuring a TEG is effective for preparing our student teachers.” This clarity and relevance are crucial for ensuring the framework’s effectiveness as a TEG validation tool. However, some suggested minor improvements to enhance clarity for future users. One educator suggested, “Refining the wording in a few specific statements could make the framework even more user-friendly.” Addressing this feedback can ensure the framework remains accessible to a wider range of teacher educators.

These qualitative insights from the pilot test support the framework’s potential as a valuable tool for UNITE. Further research is recommended to strengthen the framework’s validity and generalizability, as outlined in the subsequent section.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to develop and evaluate a framework for assessing the validity of Teacher Educator Guides (TEGs) for Early Grade Reading (EGR) methodology at UNITE, a Ugandan teacher training institution. The framework encompassed various components crucial for effective EGR instruction, including foundational concepts, active learning strategies, assessment practices, contextualization for the Ugandan context, and user-friendliness.

The findings provided strong evidence for the framework’s internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$), indicating that expert ratings consistently reflected their evaluation of its ability to capture key elements of a quality TEG. The pilot test with teacher educators further supported the framework’s external validity. Participants highlighted its comprehensiveness, practicality, and effectiveness in identifying strengths and weaknesses within TEGs. The framework’s clear, relevant, and applicable criteria were seen as valuable for a thorough TEG validation process.

Despite these promising findings, further research is recommended to strengthen the framework’s validity and generalizability. First, a larger-scale validation study involving a more diverse group of teacher educators would provide more robust evidence for its effectiveness. Additionally, exploring the framework’s applicability in different contexts beyond UNITE could enhance its generalizability.

The pilot test also revealed areas for improvement. Integrating more specific examples of culturally relevant activities and explicitly addressing technology integration strategies within the framework could enhance its effectiveness. Refinements to the wording of certain statements could also improve user-friendliness for a broader range of educators. This study presents a framework with strong potential as a valuable tool for UNITE to validate TEGs and ensure they effectively prepare student teachers for successful EGR instruction in Ugandan classrooms.

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