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Contributions of High Enrollment and its Effects on the Implementation of Life Skills Education in Public Secondary Schools in Kuria East sub-County, Migori County, Kenya

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Abstract

Life-Skills Education has been found to important for survival everywhere including schools. The study was guided by this objective: To establish contributions of high enrollment and its influence in the implementation of Life-Skill Education (LSE) in public Secondary Schools in Kuria East Sub-County, Kenya. Secondary schools in this sub-county have been experiencing life coping challenges among students as compared to other Sub-counties in the region. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Kuria East sub-county has 12 public secondary schools. The targeted population was 12 head teachers, 447 public secondary school teachers, while 40 of them who taught life skill education were considered. The researcher used convenient sampling technique to select 12 principals for they are the only existing ones and snowballing sampling was employed in selecting 40 teachers who specifically teach life skill education in the sub-county. The instruments of data collection were questionnaires, in-depth interview, observation and document analysis. Reliability of the instruments was addressed through piloting in 5 schools and reliability coefficients were obtained by subjecting the instruments to a Split-half Technique and Spearman "Brown Prophecy formula". To ensure face and content validity of the research instruments, 2 experts in the department of Curriculum and Instruction, Kisii University were requested to scrutinize the research instruments so as to validate them. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Findings and conclusions of the study were generated from the analysis. The study found out that greater majority (n=37; 77%) of the respondents indicated that the number of students in class have an effect on the implementation of LSE. The researcher therefore recommended that LSE teachers be given lesser load so as to enable them

balance their teaching time with life skills education because of too much workload as much of the time was used in an effort to try and cover the wide syllabus.

Keywords: Kenya, Life Skills, Education, Enrollment, Implementation.

Introduction

It has been found out that conflict is an old phenomenon. Research done in America by Aldag and Kuzuhara (2002) postulated that, it has been in fact, as old as mankind has existed. Quite a number of issues normally bring about conflicts which eventually require life skill education (LSE) for coping especially among students. The term life skills refers to a broad group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can help children, students and even adults to make informed decision, communicate effectively and navigate their surroundings (UNICEF, 2007). Ordinarily, by weaving life skills into the fabric of our educational systems, we equip children with necessary tools to cope with challenges and confidently make their way in the world. In this regard, Conflict is a manifest in structural inequity and unequal distribution of resources. Similarly a study conducted in America by Otomar and Wehr (2010) argued that when it comes to managing people and working with them to achieve a common goal, like in a school, conflicts are inevitable since a school deals with different individuals with different needs and thinking. This therefore requires that students should be well equipped with useful life skills. They further attested that it is not always necessary that personnel in a school follow everything they are asked to since what is perfect for the school need not be perfect for all its personnel. This makes conflicts inevitable in schools and the strategies for managing conflicts mandatory for any person in the school. Principals and teachers consequently, need to use their judgmental skills on what the situation demands. According to Bowle and Aggleton (2005) it is a situation with at least two identifiable groups in conscious opposition to each other as they pursue incompatible goals. Conflicts are common phenomena in many regions of the world, especially in dry lands. The work done by UNICEF (2007), continue to note that today students face daunting challenges such as violence, poverty environmental degradation and diseases. Beyond reading, writing and arithmetic, a child's ability to navigate these increasingly complex challenges requires a broad set of competencies such as cognitive, social and practical and essential life skills as enshrined in Education For All (EFA) Goal number 6 (UN 2000).

The facts established by Tjosvold and Sun (2002) and that of Okoth and Yambo (2016) on conflicts and coping strategies acknowledges that breaking the vicious cycle of conflict in conflicts remains a challenge to most peace building initiatives including educational institutions. Life skills education therefore enables children and young people to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into action. It promotes the development of a wide range of skills that help children and young people cope effectively with challenges of everyday life, enabling them to become socially and psychologically competent.

According to UNICEF (2007); Mudis and Yambo (2015) life skills education is particularly important in such critical areas such as student protection and emergencies. The goal is to arm the students with every available weapon for their defense in the face of potential harm and it can be effectively be done practically in schools through prefects who act as a link between the school management and the students' body (Lutomia & Sikolia, 2006). It has been generally

believed that life skills are part of rights-based approach to learning, which students are entitled to quality education that respects their dignity and expands their abilities to live a life they value and transform the societies they live in. Putting life skill education into global perspective has not been a new idea. A report by World Bank (2007) on African education contended that these skills are firmly positioned within the context and framework of several recent global agreements and documents including the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which began in 2005, and World Development Report (WDR), published by the World Bank, which identifies “enhancing capabilities through life skills education” as one of the three policy directions recommended to assist youth in developing and contributing to society.

Recognizing the critical importance of these skills, UNICEF (2013) postulated that the 164 nations committed to Education for All have included life skills as an essential learning outcome for all adolescents and young people. Today, life skills education is offered as part of the formal school curriculum in at least 70 developed countries. So far, teaching children and students how to make informed decisions and navigate their way in a world beset by challenges, life skills equip, enable and empower tomorrow’s leaders. According to Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2008) life-skills education curriculum entailed the following: Knowing and Living with others, which include skills such as effective communication skills, conflict, assertiveness resolution and negotiation skills, skills on friendship Formation, assertiveness and peer pressure resistance Skills; the second category knows and living with oneself includes skills like self awareness, self esteem, coping with emotions and coping with stress. The last category in life-skills curriculum is skills of effective decision making which includes critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. Similarly, Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) when dealing with principals decision making recommended that education system should impart life skills as they can go a long way in preventing youth involvement in violence acts and unwanted vices in schools.

Statement of the Problem

Just like other parts of the country, Kuria East sub-county has experienced inter-clan conflict that dates since time immemorial; largely being triggered by cattle raids. Despite the peace treaties made by Human Rights Commission which brought together administrators, civic leaders’ religious leaders and sub-county Peace Committees which were formed with representation from both clans, relevant training and skills in peace building and conflict resolutions were given to them. As reported by ACORD (2007), more persons were displaced and few people lost their lives as a result of inter-clan clashes since. Furthermore, the Sub-county Education Officer in Kuria East reported that 28 primary and secondary schools were affected. Although life skills education has been implemented in schools in this region, there seem to be a great need to explore reasons as why life-skill education has not been fully implemented perhaps due to high enrolment.

Considering Concept of Life Skills and Safety in Schools

The work of Mondy et al (2010) illustrates that life skills education is the existence of a balance of three components: knowledge or information, attitudes and values and Life Skill as the most effective method of developing and changing behavior. These sentiments are underscored by UNICEF (2013) which opined that life skills are essential for immediate and long-term survival of

the child, providing the essential knowledge and skills that enable children and youth to cope with emergencies during conflict.

From African perspective, especially in Kenya, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, KICD (2008), defines life skills as the abilities which enables an individual develop an adaptive, acceptable and positive behavior so comprehensive behavior change approach that focuses on the development of the whole individual, that seeks to fulfill objectives such as helping learners develop self awareness, assertiveness, communicate effectively, relate meaningfully with others, and avoid risky behaviour. The report further asserts that LSE has a critical role to play in preventing emergencies especially complex ones. It can serve to prevent war and foster peaceful society, and contributes to controls on some natural disasters and practices that encourage environmental degradation, which are some of the issues that propagate conflicts.

High enrollment in schools and the Implementation of LSE in Public Secondary Schools

Globally, research of Gladdings (2004) on school leadership and effectiveness and UNICEF (2013) reiterated that life skills education has been taken for granted a premise which has been supported by many. The formal education system has been more concerned with imparting academic knowledge at the expense of preparing young people with skills needed in facing challenges existing in the world today. In South Africa, Prinsoloo (2007) also noted that overcrowding in the classrooms acts as a barrier in the process of teaching curriculum subjects which makes it hard for teachers to impart knowledge and skills appropriately. Prinsoloo quotes one teacher involved in his study on the implementation of Life skills as arguing that 'to teach 40 or more learners at the same time in a short period is a difficult task'. This comment reveals a perception that teachers feel that they are not always able to create an atmosphere of personal trust between themselves and all the learners in their class. More study by Gross and Guerrero (2008) explained that the working environment in the majority of schools in America, India and Malawi was 'deplorable with dilapidated school structures and large class sizes. These daunting conditions contribute to teacher discontentment with their work' the low morale of teachers may affect their performance and consequently affect the implementation of any curriculum subject including life skill education. According to Osaghae (2010) in Uganda the curriculum was already crowded due to high enrolments; there was no adequate time to teach life skills education and thus was difficult to insert in the teaching timetable. Care is needed to avoid adding number of topics, but rather seeing life skills education as a comprehensive and flexible means to cover various development issues facing children and adolescents. In a study by Wanjama et al (2006) in Kenya, postulated that teachers are not able to balance their teaching time with life skills education because of too much work load as much of the time was used in an effort to try and cover the wide syllabus. An assessment report by Mondy et al (2010) and (UNESCO, 2013) discovered that the large class due to Free Secondary Education has made it difficult to give attention to all the learners. It takes longer to mark books due to the increased number of students; this has left no time for teachers to even complete examinable subjects let alone the non examinable ones. Many teachers agreed to having to do double work of what they used to do before. It is therefore within the scope of this study to determine whether the

reported shortage of teachers and a big classroom population has any influence on the implementation of life skills education in Kuria East sub-county and what the administrators are doing to make sure the programme is well implemented.

Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The target population were the 40 teachers who specifically teach life-skill education in their respective schools and the 12 principals of public secondary schools.

Table 1. Sampling Procedure

Respondents	Target Population	Percentage	Sample Size
Teachers	40	100	40
Principals	12	100	12
Total	52		52

Table 1 indicates the number of respondents representing the target population in public secondary schools in Kuria East Sub-county. All the 40 LSE teachers were snowball sampled because they were few and had the required characteristics (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). Since 30 percent has been a number considered to be statistically significant, the researcher therefore used it to get the sample size which has been supported by Best and Khan (2006). Questionnaires are very convenient tools where a large numbers of subjects are to be handled. Questionnaires facilitate easy and quick responses (Kothari, 2006). The quantitative data emanating from the field were edited, coded and then numbered. They were then entered into a database prepared in SPSS version 20 that aided in analyzing the data. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically. For quantitative data, Cross tabulation, and frequencies were adopted and the findings were presented using graphs, tables, frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The statistical information presented was derived from 52 questionnaires distributed to 12 principals and 40 teachers. Nine (9) questionnaires meant for the principals were completed and returned, thirty nine (39) questionnaires meant for the teachers were completed and returned giving a response rate of 75 percent, ninety seven point five (97.5%) respectively as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Response Rate

Category	Returned	Not Returned	Totals
Teachers	39	1	40
Principals	9	3	12
Total	48	4	52

The completed questionnaires were submitted to a statistician for data processing and analysis. The questionnaire consisted of the following sections: Biographical information, high enrollment, availability of Teaching and learning materials, teaching methods and teachers' training.

Effect of High Student Enrollment on the Implementation of Life-Skill Education

In this section, the researcher endeavored to answer the research question: To what extent has high enrollment affected the implementation of LSE in the secondary schools in Kuria East Sub-County?

Number of Students in Class

It was important to ascertain whether the numbers of students in class have an effect on the implementation of LSE, a yes or no response was required. Table 4.6 presents response regarding the effect of numbers of students in class on the implementation of LSE.

Table 3. Number of Students in Class

	Frequency	Percentage
Neutral	8	17
Low	3	6
High	37	77
Total	48	100

It is evident from table 2 that the greater majority of principal and teachers responded (n=37; 77%) and indicated that the number of students in class have an effect on the implementation of LSE to higher extent and this calls for a better and a quick action to remedy the situation for the proper survival of students and eventual academic achievement. This response was found to be in line with Prinsoloo (2007) in South Africa who specifically noted that overcrowding in the classrooms acts as a barrier in the process of teaching curriculum subjects. Similarly, another study by Wanjama et al (2006), who discovered that in Kenya, teachers are not able to balance their teaching time with life skills education because of too much work load, and high class enrolment as much of the time was used in an effort to try and cover the wide syllabus.

It was also important to ascertain whether LSE was taught as a subject in the schools and when principals were asked, they 63 percent of them responded that the teachers were more concentrating on examinable school subjects than LSE which is not require summative evaluation. This finding also conquered with findings of Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) who prescribed that other useful subjects like physical education has also not been taught for it is not examinable yet very important. This therefore should be factored in list of school decisions to be made foe well being of students.

Recommendations

The study found that student enrolment affect the implementation of LSE due to overcrowding, the study recommends that care is needed to avoid adding a number of topics, but rather considering life skills education as a comprehensive and flexible means to cover various development issues facing children and adolescents. The world over experiences challenges of various conflicts which normally impact negatively to students. Life-skill education has been found to provide handy solutions for students to cope.

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