

Influence of Instructional Strategies used by Teachers in Implementation of Life Skills Education Curriculum on Academic Performance in Public Primary Schools in Matinyani Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to evaluate the influence of instructional strategies used by teachers in implementation of life skills education curriculum on academic performance in public primary schools in Matinyani Sub-County, Kitui County Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The target population was 27 head teachers and 81 class teachers in Matinyani sub-county. Simple random sampling method was used to select 81 class teachers and purposive sampling was used to select 27 head teachers to get a representative sample of 108 respondents. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. Data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 and presented in tables and charts. The findings were that most of the primary school teachers do not use participatory instructional strategies in teaching life skills education and this affects the overall academic performance of the pupils. The ministry of education should ensure implementation of life skills education curriculum in order to promote participatory learning. The findings of this study will shed light to all educational stakeholders in promoting quality education. **Key words:** Instructional strategies, Implementation, Life skills, Academic performance*

1. Introduction

Education is the means by which individuals are equipped with knowledge, skills and values that enable them to become productive citizens. Education is therefore very important in the development of both the individual and the nation. Early childhood and adolescence stages of life are critical formative years for the development of behavior and skills in an individual (UNICEF, 2010). During this period, learners in preschool and primary schools, including those with learning difficulties face varied challenges that need to be addressed. These challenges among others include negative peer pressure, gender bias, violence, early marriages, teenage pregnancies indiscipline, early sexual onset, drug and substance abuse, rape, incest and the HIV Aids pandemic. These challenges are compounded by various factors such as complex developmental changes during adolescence, lack of positive role models, negative mass media influence and inadequate and unreliable sources of information especially on human sexuality. A combination of these challenges render the youth vulnerable to social and health risk , such as HIV infection and other

related sexuality transmitted disease (WHO, 2010). Life skills education equips an individual with the ability to cope and overcome psychological and social challenges in the course of life.

Many countries are now considering the development of life skills education in response to the need to reform traditional education systems which appear to be out of step with the realities of modern social and economic life. According to WHO (2011) wide-ranging application of life skills education in primary prevention of violence in schools and student drop out has resulted to better foundation for learning skills that are in greater demand in today's society. Throughout the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR), there has been a growing awareness that life skill education for children and adolescents have for a long time been largely; neglected in education programmes. The formal education system prioritizes the imparting of academic knowledge. However, it has become increasingly clear that such prioritization of academic knowledge without acquisition of psychosocial skills is an inadequate way of preparing young people for complex challenges that exist in our world today. Mondo (2006) says that for effective curriculum implementation there is need to change the attitudes of policy makers, administrators and teachers. Therefore there is need for the pupils to be able to develop positive values, attitudes, skills and behavior in order to help them effectively deal with the challenges of everyday life.

In Kenya, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has long been aware of the need to adopt life skills education as a remedy to these psychosocial challenges. The main goals of the life skills approach is to enhance young people's abilities to take responsibility for making choices, resisting negative peer pressure and avoiding risk behavior. Through life skills education, learners are expected to acquire and develop skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, interpersonal relationships stress and anxiety management, effective communication, self-esteem and assertiveness (Arends, 1997). The teaching method should be learner centred learner friendly, gender sensitive, interactive and participatory.

The life skills education syllabus and the teachers guide suggest that teachers use participatory teaching and learning methods in which learners identify their own problems, discuss solutions, plan and carry out effective action programme (MOE, 2012). The participatory teaching and learning methods assume that learning is best achieved by actively involving learners during lessons. According to studies of Abobo (2012), the findings show that the participatory teaching and learning strategies recommended for the teaching of life skills education which includes: case studies, brain storming, field visits, pen discussions, storytelling, song, group discussion debates, posters, role play, games, projects, poetry recitals and drama.

Although the life skills curriculum is an excellent idea, its proper implementation is not automatically guaranteed. Good innovative programmes have failed in the past because of flaws in the implementation process. The implementation of life skills curriculum in primary schools will therefore prepare pupils to be able to attain both the vision 2030 and millennium development goals of education.

2. Objective of the study

This study aimed at establishing the influence of instructional strategies used by teachers in implementation of life skills education curriculum on academic performance in public primary schools in Matinyani Sub-County

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study targeted a population of 27 head teachers and 3 class teachers from each school of the 27 public primary schools in Matinyani Sub County. A total of 108 respondents were selected by use of purposive sampling and simple random sampling. Questionnaires and interviews were used for collection of the desired data whose analysis was done using SPSS version 21.0. Percentages and frequencies were employed in data analysis whose results were presented in tables.

4. Results and Discussions of the Study

The study sought information on the influence of instructional strategies used by teachers in implementation of life skills education curriculum on academic performance in public primary schools in Matinyani Sub County. To achieve this objective the respondents were required to indicate the instructional strategies used in their schools in teaching life skills. The results were as shown in Table 1

Table 1

Instructional Strategies used in Teaching Life Skills Education

Strategy	Frequency	Percent (%)
Participatory	48	44.4
Non- Participatory	60	55.6
Total	108	100.0

Table 1 shows that majority (55.6%) of teachers used non-participatory strategy in teaching life skills education while 44.6 % used participatory strategy where pupils are involved in the learning process. Some of the participatory strategies include: storytelling, drama, role play, reciting poems among others. This made the pupils to like the life skills education.

The researcher further obtained responses where the respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 where, 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4 Agree and 5- Strongly Agree

The results were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The Extent to which Instructional Strategies are used in Teaching Life Skills Education

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers use participatory instructional strategies to improve pupils' academic performance	3(8.3%)	3(8.3%)	2(5.6%)	10(27.8%)	18(50%)
Pupils enjoy classes where they are involved in the learning process	2(5.6%)	3(8.3%)	2(5.6%)	9(25%)	20(55.6%)
Pupils are not motivated to attend lessons where they don't participate in the learning process	10(27.8%)	5(13.9%)	4(11.1%)	6(16.7%)	11(30.6%)
Teachers are encouraged to use participatory instructional strategies	2(5.6%)	3(8.3%)	1(2.8%)	10(27.8%)	20(55.6%)
Mean responses	4(11.1%)	3(8.3%)	2(5.6)	9(25%)	18(50%)

Source: Researcher Field Data (2016)

Table 2 shows that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that teachers who use participatory instructional strategies improve pupils' academic performance and pupils enjoy those classes where they are involved in the learning process. Also pupils are not motivated to attend lessons where they will not participate in the learning process and teachers are not encouraged to use participatory instructional strategies. Participatory instructional strategies enable pupils to interact with each other as well as the teacher thus creating interest in the learning process. Therefore there is need to implement life skills curriculum because it is likely to improve academic performance of learners even in other subjects.

These results agree with Abobo (2012) who argued that the participatory teaching and learning methods recommend for the teaching of life skills education which includes: field visits, brainstorming, pen discussions, storytelling, songs, group discussion, debates, role play, projects, poetry recitals and drama. Teaching in classroom is not a one-off encounter. Therefore teachers are required to develop procedures for regulating the complex dynamics of pupil-pupil and teacher-pupil relationships. This is well achieved through the use of participatory instructional strategies in Life skills education which is transferred to other subjects. Participatory instructional strategies allow teaching to convey messages and values that may reach well beyond those of the particular learning tasks which give a lesson in its formal focus. By sharing life skills, pupils become more effective and able to discover their own strengths and interests in life.

The study revealed that more than half of the schools use non participatory methods of teaching and this hinders pupils' retention. This means that pupils are not properly guided in the acquisition of skills such as decision making, conflict resolution and communication skills. As a result pupils are unable to reach full personal development which has implication on the overall academic performance.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that most of the primary school teachers in Matinyani Sub County do not use participatory instructional strategies in teaching life skills education.

This affects the pupils' interest in learning as well as the overall academic performance. Additionally, both teachers and pupils spend much time in non participatory instructional strategies where pupils have little or no time to build social skills away from books. Worse still, the pupils rely on teachers wholly to provide knowledge because learning is basically teacher centred making the pupils passive recipients of knowledge as they only listen to the teacher.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations emanated from the findings of this study:

- i. Curriculum planners, developers and designers should evaluate the various instructional strategies for teaching and learning to ensure holistic development of a learner.
- ii. The Ministry of Education should ensure implementation of life skills education curriculum is done appropriately within the time frame of each level. At the same time, teachers should adhere to the appropriate implementation of curriculum in order to ensure participatory learning.
- iii. Learning should be natural for the learners to get actively involved in the learning experiences.

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