

**LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION:
APPROPRIATENESS OF TEACHING METHODOLOGIES USED BY
SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN UASIN GISHU COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT: *Life Skills Education was introduced into school curriculum in 2009 by the Kenya Institute of Education. The examined the role of teachers' pedagogical competences in the implementation of Life Skills Education in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. Based on the study this paper explores the appropriateness of the teaching methodologies used by the teachers in implementation of life skills curriculum. The study was guided by Overcoming Resistance to Change (ORS) theory. It employed the descriptive survey research design using stratified sampling and purposive technique to recruit participants. To this end, stratified sampling technique was used to select 80 head teachers and 290 teacher representatives. On the other hand, purposive sampling technique was used to select one County Education Officer and 5 QUASO Officers. The research further used questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the quantitative data while qualitative data was analysed by arranging the responses thematically in line with the objectives of the study. The study established that inadequate homework and exercises given to learners, lack of adequate presentations for evaluations and lack of end-term examinations had hindered the implementation of life skills education curriculum in public primary schools. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers need to adopt appropriate teaching methodologies in their implementation of life skills education. Appropriate methodologies are those that focus on achieving the best learning outcomes among students. Since life skills education is a relatively new subject area, school administrators in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other government agencies should provide specialized in-service training to help teachers master the best methods for effectively teaching life skills education.*

KEYWORDS: Appropriateness, Teaching Methodologies, Implementation, Life Skills Education Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Life skills Education (LSE) was proposed in schools as an intervention strategy to serve several purposes essential for enabling the discovery of the youth's personal capacities for social warmth, aptitude to enjoy and work with other people, and the competence to become effective members of society. It was assumed that the teaching of life skills education to young people could help prevent incidences of social maladjustment and enhance their development of human potential. The idea of teaching life skills has its roots in North America and European psychology. Life skills have both psychological and social dimensions. Psychological skills deal with mental functions and processes while social skills refer to enhanced interactive abilities with one's environment and culture (UNESCO, 2003).

Rhona, John, Vivienne, Jeff, Benand Daniel (1997) noted that an analysis of life skills field suggests that there is a core set of skills that are at the heart of life skills-based initiatives and

these are: decision-making and problem solving; creative thinking and critical thinking; communication and interpersonal skills; self-awareness and empathy, and lastly coping with emotions and coping with stress. The 1990 Jomtien World conference on education registered the concern of the international society over the relevance of education, particularly on the need to focus on appropriate life skills for all learners from all parts of the world. The conference reiterated the importance of skills that are relevant to life. Life skills enable learners to make use of knowledge gained, turn attitudes and values into actual abilities in reference to what to do and how to do it. Life skills are also required to enable learners cope with life issues and to make choices that could have important impact on their health and their present and future lives as adult citizens.

A report by Delors (2001) postulates that education has four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. Learning to be and learning to live are pillars which are more directly related to the psychological development of the child hence more specific skills than general, technical or vocational are needed to prepare adolescents to 'learn to be' and to learn to 'live together'. This indicates the need to teach life skills in schools. Life skills approach is an interactive educational methodology that not only focuses on transmitting knowledge but also helps the youth to explore their attitudes, feelings, opinions and values thereby developing psychosocial competencies and building resilience which will help them face life challenges effectively.

Being a new subject in the curriculum, life skills present certain requirements that have to be met for successful implementation. Quoting Hord (1998), Mugambi and Rose(2013) state that the success in the implementation of new curriculum is characterized by: planning to adapt change to the local setting, teacher training that is concrete, specific and ongoing, necessary administrative and organizational arrangements for the innovation, close contact with the change agent through training and support using interpersonal forms of communication, helping identify needs and solve problems, classroom consultation and advice from resource personnel, modelling by more experienced teachers, active support of the principal and providing a conducive learning atmosphere.

Over the past two decades, life skills education has come to be regarded as integral to preparing young people and adults to negotiate and mediate everyday challenges and risks and enable productive participation in society. It has also come to be seen as an important contributor to the quality of education through an approach that emphasizes the acquisition of competencies, content that is relevant to everyday life and the use of teaching and learning methods to develop skills and promote cooperative learning (UNICEF, 2012).

International and national political commitments have been made to LSE, with its inclusion in key global documents, such as the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (EFA) and the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS, in the agendas of multilateral agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, and in the national sectoral policies and strategies of many countries. This has led to the rapid expansion of LSE initiatives, with a very wide spectrum of content, scale, approaches and goals that show the challenge of defining and operationalizing a concept as broad, complex and multifaceted as life skills (USAID, 2010).

Narayan (2009) states that a clear definition facilitates common understanding of what life skills are, how they may be acquired and how they might be assessed. The term 'life skill' has gained currency in the fields of health, education and social policy; yet it is yet to have a full

and widely accepted definition. It has the virtue of linking personal and social skills to the realities of everyday life, but suffers because it is difficult and potentially contentious to determine which skills are relevant for life and which are ones not (UNICEF, 2012).

As the World Health Organization states, skills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of life skills is likely to differ across cultures and settings (WHO, 1997). The concept is thus highly elastic and has been stretched to embrace a very wide range of skills. This is problematic because, if all skills are relevant for life, the concept has little utility. In addition, there have been difficulties in translating the concept across languages, with additional elements or interpretations appearing in different language-speaking areas (Ben-Arie & Frones, 2007).

Much of the discourse on life skills has centred on a range of psychosocial skills, drawing on research in the social sciences, psychology and the new sociology of childhood that point towards their importance to our protection and well-being and our ability to live productive, meaningful and fulfilling lives (UNICEF, 2012). In combination with communication skills, these enable people to interact appropriately and manage their own emotional states. With the support of relevant knowledge, they are considered instrumental to people in negotiating and protecting themselves from a multitude of risky environments and behaviours. They have also become a focus for supporting vulnerable populations whose exposure to such risks is particularly high. In recent years the field of life skills has attracted the interest of economists trying to identify ways to reduce poverty and redress socio-economic inequalities (WHO, 1999).

Research evidence suggests that knowledge, attitudinal and skills based competency have to be addressed if shifts in risky behaviours are to be realized. Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life (Kaimuri, 2008). The introduction of LSE in Kenya dates back to 1999, when the Government of Kenya declared HIV and AIDS a national disaster. As part of the measures to tackle the pandemic, HIV and AIDS education, incorporating elements of LSE, was introduced into the school syllabus. Elements of LSE were further infused into other subjects, such as religious education, social studies and biology, over subsequent years (UNESCO, 2010).

In 2006, however, the Life Skills Stakeholders' Forum reached a consensus on the need for LSE to be taught as a stand-alone subject in both primary and secondary schools across Kenya, in response to increasing recognition that LSE could bridge the gap between students' knowledge and behaviour regarding HIV prevention (UNESCO, 2010). The Kenyan Institute of Education (KIE), which has been renamed as the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), led a situational analysis that supported the importance of LSE and confirmed the consensus around the need for a consistency in LSE teaching, which a stand-alone subject offered. With significant support and assistance from UNICEF, the KICD developed curricula and materials for the new subject that was to be taught in one session per week in both primary and secondary schools.

The LSE syllabus was rolled out in 2008, focusing on the three main areas of knowing and living with one's own self, knowing and living with others, and making effective decisions (UNICEF, 2012). The KICD definition in the 2008 syllabus aligns with that of the World Health Organization. LSE is a non-examinable subject, and the mode of delivery requires a different pedagogical approach and a paradigm shift in teaching practice and attitudes of

teachers, pupils, the school management and parents. Elements of LSE have received further emphasis through the reactivation of Peace Education in some areas following the post-election violence in 2007/08 (UNICEF, 2012).

The LSE lesson was to be substituted for one PE lesson per week at all class levels, so as not to overburden students with the additional class time from an additional subject. The MoE has provided guidelines on how LSE curriculum should be implemented. It states that LSE should be taught for one lesson a week in all classes in primary and secondary schools. LSE in Kenya aims to develop, nurture and promote thirteen core living values such as cooperation, simplicity, tolerance, respect, peace, freedom, unity, love, honesty, responsibility, humility, happiness and integrity – which were identified in consultation with religious organizations (Njeng'ere, 2014).

In the context of life skills, implementation means incorporating life skills education as an integral part of the school curriculum at all levels and in all stages (KICD, 2008). Life skills are acquired through everyday activities, in school, workplace, the home environment and the world. Teaching of life skills goes beyond providing information. It involves interactive methods such as role play, drama, debates, games and music, dance and group discussions among others (KICD, 2008). Implementing life skills, therefore, means that learners are exposed to activities which enhance learning and practicing of skills that help them to deal with the issues of daily life. It also means that teaching and learning of life skills must go beyond the classroom (KICD, 2008).

The main objective of implementing life skills education is to provide learners with skills and information to make informed choices about issues affecting their lives (King, 2007). King indicates that effective implementation involves ongoing advocacy where stakeholders are continuously sensitized about life skills education, enhanced teacher training, provision of right and adequate resources, use of different methods in teaching, better coordination among partners. Ndirangu, Ngare and Wango (2013) state that the introduction of life skills education in schools by the Ministry of Education both came as a directive and also as a result of the ineffectiveness of the guidance and counselling programme. They further posit that the contemporary world requires a modern outlook that may inadvertently place life skills before counselling.

Teacher Attitude towards Life Skills Education

Ithagi (2007) defines perceptions as mental images that individuals have about their surroundings. Perceptions create attitudes. Research has revealed that positive perceptions by teachers greatly contribute to their professional and personal growth. A study carried out by Ashton (2001) indicates that teachers in Armenia attribute their passion for life skills education to the fact that it enables them to use new approaches in their work. Other than effectively interacting with learners, teachers were also able to more positively relate with parents and guardians. Teachers also confessed that they became more committed to teaching and also enjoyed their work. They were also able to employ life skills methods in teaching other subjects and their self-esteem was raised (Ashton, 2001).

According to Ithagi (2007), teachers' attitudes greatly determine the success or failure of an education programme being implemented. Positive teachers spend a lot of time with the learners by preparing adequately. A positive attitude towards a project is likely to increase the commitment with which those implementing it will perform (Ithagi, 2007). Quoting Ashton

(2001), Ithagi (2007) states that learners are either marginalized from or empowered in a subject by the perception and attitude of the teacher towards it. This implies that learners will like a subject if their teachers show positive attitudes towards the subject; similarly, learners will equally dislike a subject if their teachers hold negative and unfavourable attitudes towards the subject.

A study by Kaimuri (2008) has revealed that teachers in Lesotho seem to have less value for life skills education because the subject is not examinable. Kaimuri (2008), on the other hand, indicates that, in Uganda, head teachers and teachers give more priority to vocational and livelihood skills at the expense of life skills education. Accordingly, administrators concentrate more on improving laboratories and workshops, getting qualified teachers for examinable subjects and arousing students' interests on practical subjects (Kaimuri, 2008). Staff meetings mainly concentrate on how to improve academic standards, discipline and staff welfare but there was little concern for life skills education.

Society's perception of certain subjects also determines teaching approaches. UNICEF (2006) reports that teachers in Swaziland are not confident in teaching life skills such as use condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS; these teachers, especially those teaching in Roman Catholic Church-sponsored schools, fear losing their jobs. Ithagi (2007) reports that a good number of teachers in Nairobi's Kamukunji Division have recognized the importance of life skills. However, they equally feel that the knowledge gained by learners from life skills sessions is not being put into practice because problems such as teenage pregnancies, drug and substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases, among others, are still rampant among young people.

Ithagi (2007) also notes that some teachers are dissatisfied with the teaching of life skills education because it was forced on them. In addition, teachers do not have professional documents for its implementation (Ithagi, 2007). Teachers have also complained that they have not been trained to handle the life skills subject and that there is no time to implement it due to an already overloaded curriculum. Teacher attitudes towards a subject reflects directly on their love or hate for that subject. Positive attitudes can be created in learners if they are actively involved in life skills sessions (Kaimuri, 2008). Learners should also be given opportunities to practice what they have learnt in order to gather confidence and value for life skills education. An evaluation study on the implementation of life skills curriculum carried out by Ashton in Armenia in 2001 has revealed that students have a very positive attitude towards life skills education. Ashton (2001) attributes this to democratic classroom situations where teachers regard themselves as equals with the learners.

Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies in Implementation of Life Skills

According to Sindhi (2016), teachers' pedagogical competency refers to the right way of conveying knowledge, skills and application to learners. These are methods and processes of conveying the content to be taught. Teachers are also to guide, help and give counselling to the learners. Wango (2007) defines a competent teacher as one who promotes cultural transmission and perpetuates civilization by passing on as heritage essential basic skills and subject from one generation to another. Therefore, learners should be assisted to adapt skills necessary for future. Sindhi (2002) emphasizes that pedagogical competency includes understanding of human knowledge, mastering of subject matter and having interest in continuous professional improvement of knowledge. For good classroom control, a competent teacher should attend

workshops, conferences and seminars so as to develop effective communication skills and use variety of teaching methods.

Statement of the Problem

Life skills are psychological competences which enable an individual to develop adaptive and positive behaviour so as to deal effectively with the challenges and demands of everyday life. The youth face many challenges in this fast-changing world. These challenges may be psychological, social and economic among others, which are compounded by various factors such as complex developmental changes during adolescence, lack of positive role models, negative mass media influence and inadequate, inaccurate and unreliable sources of information. Life skills education should, therefore, equip the learners with psychosocial, competencies, the ability to make informed decision, solve problems, think creatively and critically, communicate effectively, build healthy interpersonal relationships which is lacking among the youths (Abobo, 2012).

Therefore, there is need for research to be conducted to ascertain the influence of teachers' pedagogical competencies on the implementation of LSE. Since these factors mentioned are hindering the policy of the Ministry of Education to provide Education for All (EFA), there is urgent need to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of LSE in schools. It is against this background that the study looked into the role of teachers' pedagogical competences on implementation of life skills education curriculum in Wareng Sub-County Uasin Gishu County.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed descriptive survey research design. This design provides access to available source of information for gaining knowledge and insight into a given phenomenon under investigation (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). It was, therefore, found useful in trying to understand and describe the role of teachers' pedagogical competences on the implementation of life skills education curriculum in public primary school in Wareng Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County. The design helped in formulating important principles of knowledge and propose solution to prevailing challenges in the LSE curriculum implementation.

The study was carried out in Wareng Sub-County in Uasin Gishu County. The research targeted 376 respondents, namely 1 County Education officer, 5 QUASO Officers, 80 head teachers and 290 teacher representatives. The study employed stratified sampling and purposive techniques. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the head teachers, teacher representatives and purposive sampling technique was used to select the County Education Officer and the QUASO Officers. Yamane's (1967) formula was used to provide a simplified way for calculating the research sample size. A 95% confidence level and $\alpha=0.05$ was assumed during the study. Upon getting the desired number of teachers and head teachers, the researcher used simple random sampling method to select 42 head teachers from 80 and 150 teachers from the 290. The same procedure was to select teachers. Therefore, from the 270 respondents, 192 were selected as well as the 5 QUASO officers and the County Education officer. The sample size therefore came to 198 respondents.

The main instruments used to collect data in the study were questionnaires and interviews. Data analysis entailed categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data to obtain answers to research questions. The purpose of analysis was to reduce data to intelligible and

interpretable form so that the relations of research problems can be studied and tested (Kerlinger & Lee, 2002). The primary data collected were systematically organized and then analysed using descriptive statistics. This involved the use of frequency distribution tables, measures of central tendency and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish the appropriateness of the teaching methodologies used by the teachers in the implementation of life skills education curriculum in public primary schools in Wareng Sub-County. To achieve this objective, the respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on a five point Likert scale items in the questionnaires. Their responses were as tabulated and presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Appropriateness of Methodologies used in LSE Curriculum Implementation

Statement	SD	D	UD	A	SA
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)
There are adequate homework and exercises	63(34.2)	50(27.2)	24(13.0)	22(12.0)	25(13.6)
There is enough presentations for evaluation	89(48.4)	56(30.4)	8(4.3)	18(9.8)	13(7.1)
End term examinations are given out	101(54.9)	47(25.5)	12(6.5)	6(3.3)	18(9.8)
There is continuous assessment	91(49.5)	38(20.7)	8(4.3)	12(6.5)	35(19.0)

Source: Field Data (2016)

Table 1 shows that 63(34.2%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement that there were adequate homework and exercises given to learners, 50(27.2%) teachers disagreed with the statement, 25(13.6%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement and 24(13.0%) teachers were undecided on the statement while 22(12.0%) teachers agreed with the statement. The study findings further showed that a majority (61.4%) of the teachers in public primary schools in Wareng Sub-County believed that there were inadequate homework and exercises given to learners. This implied that the implementation of life skills curriculum in public primary schools were hindered by the inadequacy of homework and exercises given to learners.

In addition, 89(48.4%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement that there were enough presentations for evaluation, 56(30.4%) teachers disagreed with the statement, 18(9.8%) teachers agreed with the statement and 13(7.1%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement while 8(4.3%) teachers were undecided on the statement. From the responses, it emerged that majority (78.8%) of the teachers in primary schools in Wareng Sub-County believed that there were inadequate presentations for evaluation of life skills education. This shows that the implementation of life skills education in public primary schools in Wareng Sub-County was hindered by lack of adequate presentations for evaluations. This supports earlier study findings by Kolosoa and Makhakhane (2009) who report that some challenges facing life skills education included lack of evaluation techniques employed by teachers.

In addition, 101(54.9%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement that end term examinations were given out to learners, 47(25.5%) teachers disagreed with the statement, 18(9.8%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement, 12(6.5%) teachers were undecided on

the statement while 8(4.3%) teachers agreed with the statement. The study findings showed that majority (80.4%) of the teachers in public primary schools in Wareng Sub-County reported that end term examinations for life skills education were not administered to learners. This implies that the fact that life skills education was non-examinable negatively has affected its implementation. The findings concur with Rooth's (2005) views concerning South Africa that Life Orientation is not being taken seriously because it is not an examinable subject. In some cases, it is not being taught at all despite the fact that it is included on the timetable. In other schools, it is not even included on the timetable. The non-examinable status of Life Orientation in South Africa is thus undermining its implementation.

Further, 91(49.5%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement that there was continuous assessment of life skills education in primary schools, 38(20.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement, 35(19.0%) teachers strongly agreed that there was continuous assessment of life skills education and 12(6.5%) teachers agreed with the statement while 8(4.3%) teachers were undecided on the statement. From the responses, it emerged that majority (70.2%) of the teachers in public primary schools in Wareng Sub-County were of the view that there were not continuous assessments in life skills education in schools. This contradicts the report which suggested that it was important for regular assessment of life skills programme to be carried out in order to stay abreast on changing priorities and make improvements where necessary. In this study, teachers in public primary schools were not carrying out continuous assessment of Life skills education and this affected its implementation since they (teachers) could not understand the emerging needs in life skills education.

Implications of the Research

Life skills education has long-term benefits to society. These include educational, social, health, cultural and economic benefits. Its implementation is, therefore, paramount to the overall well-being of society. The findings of the study are thus of great significance to teachers, since they are the major agents concerned with imparting of the necessary values, attitudes knowledge and skills for positive behaviour change.

Head teachers could also be helped to understand the shortcomings in the curriculum development cycle and attempt to address them. Relevant educational authorities, for instance the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), can equally benefit since they are bestowed with the task of developing, implementing and evaluating the curriculum. The Ministry of Education (MOE) and Quality Assurance Officers (QUASOs) is sensitized on what is happening in schools in relation to implementation of LSE and thus find the need to strengthen curriculum evaluation strategies. Relevant departments of universities and other institutions of higher learning, including teacher training colleges, are made aware of the fate of LSE curriculum implementation in schools.

Non-Governmental Organizations, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Conferences on Population and Development (ICPD), the World Health Organization (WHO), among others will also benefit from the study findings since LSE falls under their umbrella of activities. The study findings may further help schools to understand and strategize on how to best improve implementation of LSE curriculum through utilization of teachers' pedagogical competences. Future researchers in this field and related topics will similarly benefit since the findings will shape their own studies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings showed that a majority of the teachers believed that there were inadequate homework and exercises given to learners. This implied that the implementation of life skills curriculum in public primary schools were hindered by the inadequacy of homework and exercises given to learners. In addition, majority of the teachers in primary schools in Wareng Sub-County believed that there were inadequate presentations for evaluation of life skills education. This shows that the implementation of life skills education in public primary schools in Wareng Sub-County was hindered by lack of adequate presentations for evaluations.

Further, majority of the teachers in public primary schools in Wareng Sub-County reported that end term examinations for life skills education were not administered to learners. This implies that the fact that life skills education was non-examinable negatively affected its implementation. In some cases, it is not being taught at all despite the fact that it is included on the timetable. In other schools, it is not even included on the timetable. Similarly, majority of the teachers in public primary schools in Wareng Sub-County were of the view that there were not continuous assessments in life skills education in schools. In this study, teachers in public primary schools were not carrying out continuous assessment of life skills education and this affected its implementation since they (teachers) could not understand the emerging needs in life skills education.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that teachers need to adopt appropriate teaching methodologies in their implementation of life skills education. Appropriate methodologies are those that focus on achieving the best learning outcomes among students. Since life skills education is a relatively new subject area, school administrators in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other government agencies should provide specialized in-service training to help teachers master the best methods for effectively teaching life skills education.

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