

## ATTITUDES OF PUPILS AND TEACHERS TOWARDS LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ELDORET MUNICIPALITY, KENYA

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**ABSTRACT:** *In the year 2009, the government of Kenya introduced Life Skills Education to help the students in coping with the challenges and demands for everyday life. It is important to understand how performed since then. As such, the study was conducted to find out the preparedness of public primary schools in the implementation of Life Skills Education (LSE) curriculum in Eldoret Municipality. Based on the study, this paper examines the attitudes of pupils and teachers towards Life Skills Education in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. The study was based on the 1997 Functionalist theory by Kinsley Davis. The study employed a survey design. Out of the total 42 public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality 13 of them were selected through simple random sampling. A sample size of 13 head teachers was purposively selected, from the 13 schools; 39 teachers, 3 from each school, were purposively selected. These comprised teachers of LSE. Stratified sampling was used to select one teacher from lower primary, mid-upper and upper primary. Pupils in Classes Six and Seven were purposively selected. The study, therefore, sampled was 299 respondents comprising of teachers and pupils. The data collection instruments used were: questionnaires and interview schedules for head teachers. Descriptive methods were employed in data analysis and data were presented in the form of frequency distribution tables, graphs and pie charts. Data from the interview schedules was analysed qualitatively. The study findings revealed that majority (69.1%) of the students in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality enjoyed learning Life Skills Education. This shows that students had a positive attitude towards learning of life skills education. In addition, it emerged that majority of the teachers believed that Life Skill Education was necessary for primary school children. It was therefore recommended that there is need to make its teaching and learning compulsory to all students as it contributes to personal and social development of a child at an early stage. Similarly, for teachers to develop an interest in teaching of LSE, there is need for them to be trained on LSE.*

**KEYWORDS:** Attitudes, Pupils, Teachers, Life Skills Education, Public Primary Schools, Eldoret Kenya

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Pupils Attitude towards Life Skill Education**

Governments have always set goals for national curricula that broadly align with their vision for human welfare, social cohesion and economic prosperity, although relative importance placed on each may vary. The contemporary contexts for setting these goals is globalization of the economy, media and communications infrastructure, escalating welfare, democratization, environmental degradation and, particularly in the sub-Saharan Africa, eradication of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Globalisation has implications for the skills required by the labour force now and governments' preferred models of citizenship.

Peace education is a response to escalating conflict and displaced populations. Human rights education, value education and developments in citizenship education are responsive to democratization. Environmental degradation has prompted the rise of education for sustainable development, currently being promoted through the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has presented the education sector with a complex set of challenges, leading to the regeneration of health education and adding urgency to arguments for gender-sensitive curricula. All these 'new' subjects fall under the broad curriculum area of Life Skills, that has been promoted internationally by UNESCO, often in collaboration with other relevant United Nations organisations, for example the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, in the case of peace education (Reardon, 2002).

Life Skills encompasses social attitudes, basic knowledge and practical skills. It includes, but is considerably broader than, vocational skills, practical skills and knowledge that lay the foundation for children to be economically productive when they enter the world of work. Both the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (World Conference on Education for All, 1990) and the Dakar Framework for Action (World Education Forum, 2000) define quality basic education as enabling learners to acquire literacy, numeracy and essential Life Skills. The Dakar Framework for Action draws on the Delors (1996) report's pillars of education to elaborate on skill areas, namely:

- Learning to know: Thinking abilities, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making, understanding consequences
- Learning to be: Personal abilities, such as managing stress and feelings, self-awareness, self-confidence
- Learning to live together: Social abilities, such as communication, negotiation, assertiveness, teamwork and empathy
- Learning to do: Manual skills, such as practising know-how required for work and tasks.

Therefore, curricular goals of promoting equity and social justice can lead to the planned incorporation of Life Skills in areas of learning to be and live together. Education for sustainable development or environmental education often integrates practical skills of conservation with 'live together' skills by fostering a sense of social responsibility and stewardship. Peace education can

be viewed as focusing on Life Skills for learning to live together and learning to do (Dubois & Trabelsi, 2007).

Life Skills are increasingly being incorporated into national curricula. They constitute a theme that cuts across subjects, as observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Jordan. They may be incorporated within a specific subject, such as the Nepal National Life Skills Education Programme infused into its health curriculum. The Indian National Curriculum Framework for School Education includes Life Skills linked to health, consumer rights and legal literacy. Other countries, such as Afghanistan, Lesotho and Sri Lanka, have established Life Skills within their curriculum as a subject area in itself (Hoffman, 2006).

### **Teachers' Attitudes toward the Teaching of Life Skills Education**

According to Kabiru and Njenga (2009), attitude is a mental disposition that is expressed towards something with favour or disfavour. It includes beliefs and opinions that tend to influence behaviour. They comprise favourable or unfavourable evaluations of reactions to objects, people or situations, for example, in presence of someone respectable.

A positive learning environment is dependent on teacher, instructional content and methods. Parents and teachers can create positive learning environments by applying child-centred methods, providing the necessary material resources and establishing friendly atmosphere where the learner feels accepted and valued. If pupils dislike the teacher they will also dislike the subject taught by that teacher. Therefore, teachers should create a pleasant environment.

Pupils tend to easily master subjects that they think are easier than those they believe to be hard. Children with positive attitudes are more likely to succeed than those with negative attitudes. It is, therefore, important to cultivate positive attitudes in learners. Once attitude has been formed it is difficult to change; students who have negative attitudes towards specific teachers and subjects remain with the same attitude for a long time. It is also important that parents talk positively about school, subjects and teachers so as to nurture positive attitudes in their children. When parents and teachers work hard they also encourage hard work and become role models to learners. Parents and teachers should also be aware that their attitudes towards children affect the way they relate with them (Kabiru & Njenga, 2009).

Life 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 2007, published by World Bank, which identifies "enhancing capabilities through life skills education" as one of the three policy directions recommended to assist the youth in developing and contributing to the society.

Recognizing the importance of these skills, the 164 nations committed to Education For All have included Life Skills Education as an essential learning outcome for all adolescents and young people. Life Skills Education is currently offered as part of the formal school curriculum in at least 70 developing countries. In 2004, Bangladesh established Basic Education for Hard-To-Reach Urban Working Children, a programme that teaches life skills along with such conventional subjects as reading and arithmetic.

Azerbaijan has introduced life skills education as an optional subject within the primary school curriculum, addressing topics including health, nutrition, gender, human rights, peace and tolerance, environmental sustainability, personal development and interpersonal communication. Older students learn about sexual and reproductive health and drug abuse.

In Malawi, life skills are taught as stand-alone subject and as part of classes in health, science, social studies and religion. In an effort to offer guidance on implementing life skills education, UNICEF has created a special website. It showcases promising examples of life skills education around the world, catalogue studies that have evaluated skills-based programmes and provides practical tools and materials for those ready to implement such programmes. There is need to ensure that these essential skills have a valued place at the top of every country's educational agenda. Young people, and especially girls, face higher risks that threaten their health and safety and limit their opportunities for learning. By teaching children how to make informed decisions and navigate their way in a world beset by challenges, life skills equip, enable and empower tomorrow's leaders.

When the psychological and social needs of the youth and children are not met, they become maladjusted and the resultant behavioural manifestations of this maladjustment could be drug abuse, early pregnancies, pre-marital sex and criminal activities, violence, riots and general indiscipline. LSE enables the youth to manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Life skills enable an individual to develop positive attitudes towards self and others. Developments of these competencies help the learners translate knowledge, skills and values into action. The skills enhance their abilities to make informed decisions and relate amicably with others in society (MoE, 2008).

A DFID (2002) report on the role of education in promoting young people's reproductive health education includes lessons learned from a consultative meeting held to start a five-year global DFID project called 'Safe Passage to Adulthood' that began in 1999. It provides background information about the overall programme and describes five in-school and four out-of-school, and four higher education programmes.

Teachers can function as role models, advocates for healthy school environments, guides for students in need of services, resources for accurate information, mentors and effective instructors. However, to meet these expectations, teachers need skills and knowledge as well as support from the educational system and broader community. Sexuality and reproductive health, HIV and Life Skills Education are often controversial subjects because some individuals believe that talking about sexuality in schools may increase sexual activity among learners. However, according to two exhaustive reviews of studies by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US National Campaign purposed to prevent teen pregnancy, sexuality education programmes do not lead to an increase in sexual activity among young people. Even more encouraging, the reviews found that effective Life Skills Education in schools can result in delay in first intercourse or, if young people are already sexually active, increase use of contraception (James-Traore, Finger, Ruland & Savariaud, 2004). A recent analysis of 11 school-based HIV prevention programmes for African youth identifies teacher training as critical. As the analysis concludes, "If a program is to be

faithfully implemented, teachers must be properly trained for and committed to it” (James-Traore *et al.*, 2004).

Teacher training in the context of Life Skills Education often challenges existing norms for educational institutions and the community. In six rural communities in western Kenya, from 1999 to 2003, a project targeting youth ages 10 to 19 sought to build the capacity of teachers to teach sexuality and other Life Skills Education topics (James-Traore *et al.*, 2004). The effort was coordinated by the Population Council in collaboration with the Programme for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) and the Kenyan Ministries of Education, Health and Gender, Sports and Culture as part of a larger operations research project. About 100 teachers from primary and secondary schools were trained in content and participatory methods. Teams that attended trainings comprised three teachers and head teachers from 33 schools, including five secondary and 28 primary schools. Religious leaders also approached the project, asking to become involved. Consequently, about 80 of these leaders were trained in adolescent health and sexuality. Since many of the schools had a religious affiliation, an agreement had to be reached on the curriculum content. As a result, issues like condom use and homosexuality were not included in the intervention, although the teachers still were expected to teach Life Skills Education.

There is need to provide adequate opportunities for in-service training for practicing teachers to enhance their skills beyond those acquired during their pre-service training. There is need for teachers to be in-serviced on emerging issues, such as LSE, drugs and substance abuse, gender issues, guidance and counselling. The current situation calls for an urgent development of a comprehensive in-service programme to equip teachers with the requisite skills.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The MOE has decentralized its services to the levels of districts for the purposes of increasing efficiency and accountability. The implementation of LSE at the grassroots is guided by the Sessional Paper no. 1 of 2005 (RoK, 2005) and KESSP which have been operationalized through the ministry’s strategic plan and the Districts strategic plans. The district strategic plans domesticate the national plans which are decentralized at the district in line with their unique environment and characteristics. Not many studies have been done in relation to Life Skills Education programmes since it is a relatively new curriculum. There are no studies relating to the preparedness of schools in implementation of Life Skills Education in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. Therefore, there was need to conduct a study in Kenya and specifically in Eldoret Municipality in order to fill the existing gap. The concern of the study was to understand the extent to which the programme has been implemented. Following the the study, this paper, therefore, assesses the attitudes of learners and teachers towards Life Skills Education in public schools in Eldoret Municipality.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study sought to investigate the school preparedness in implementing Life Skills Education in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. The research adopted a mixed methods approach design. The study employed a survey data collection process where variables were investigated

without any manipulation or alteration. The target population of this study was head teachers, teachers and pupils of all public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality.

Out of a total 42 public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality, 13 of them were selected through simple random sampling. A sample size of 13 head teachers were selected from the 13 schools. Thirty-nine teachers, 3 from each school, were purposively selected. These included those teaching LSE. Stratified sampling was used to select one teacher from lower primary, mid-upper and upper primary. Where the school had 2 or less number of LSE teachers, they all automatically participated in the study. To select the pupils, those in classes six and seven were purposively selected.

Stratified sampling method was used to divide the pupils according to their gender and then simple random sampling was used to select 5 girls and 5 boys from each class in each school giving a total of 20 pupils per school. A total of 13 public primary schools participated in the study. From these schools, a total of 13 head teachers, 39 teachers and 260 pupils were selected to participate. The total sample was 299 respondents.

The research instruments that were used in the study were questionnaires and interview schedules. The collected data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Closed-ended questions from the questionnaires were analysed qualitatively and data presented in the form of frequency distribution tables, graphs and pie charts while the open-ended questions and interview schedules were analysed qualitatively by identifying themes and similarities emerging and reporting them. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program helped to generate frequency distribution tables.

The regression and Chi-square tests helped in identifying the significance of data and relationship between school preparedness and implementation of life skills education. Quantitative techniques (frequency tables and charts) were used for the presentation of quantifiable data that was presented textually using descriptive statistics. This was used to confirm and support the qualitative data which is most useful for understanding the rationale or theory underlying relationships.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Attitudes of Pupils towards Life Skills Education**

The study sought to find out the attitudes of pupils towards Life Skills Education in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. To achieve this objective, the students were requested to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement on a four Likert scale questions in the questionnaire. Their responses were scored and the results were as presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Attitudes of Pupils towards Life Skills Education**

Attitude Statements	SD	D	A	SA
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)
In our school attending LSE lessons is a must	51(24.3)	67(31.9)	23(10.9)	69(32.9)
I enjoy learning LSE	34(16.2)	31(14.8)	47(22.4)	98(46.7)
LSE is not as important as other subjects	101(48.1)	21(10.0)	56(26.7)	32(15.2)
It is a boring subject	121(57.6)	46(21.9)	35(16.7)	8(3.9)
LSE has really assisted me in my everyday life	16(7.6)	18(8.6)	67(31.9)	109(51.9)
I spend adequate time revising LSE	71(33.8)	14(6.7)	46(21.9)	79(37.6)
In our school attending LSE lessons is a must	23(10.9)	67(31.9)	51(24.3)	69(32.9)

The results in Table 1 above shows that 69(32.9%) students strongly agreed with the statement that “in our school attending LSE lessons is a must”, 67(31.9%) students disagreed with the statement and 51(24.3%) students strongly disagreed with the statement while 23(10.9%) students agreed with the statement. It emerged that majority (56.2%) of the students believed that attending LSE lessons was not a must to all students. This shows that students may not necessarily attend LSE lessons and this could hinder LSE implementation in public primary schools.

Similarly, 98(46.7%) students strongly agreed that they enjoyed learning LSE, 47(22.4%) students agreed with the statement, 34(16.2%) students strongly disagreed with the statement while 31(14.8%) students disagreed with the statement. It was therefore found that majority (69.1%) of the students in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality enjoyed learning Life Skills Education. This shows that students had a positive attitude towards learning of life skills education. This supports the findings of Abobo (2012) in a study of the challenges facing implementation of life skills education in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District, Kenya. Abobo (2012) found that students had positive attitudes towards teaching of Life Skills Education.

Similarly, 101(48.1%) students strongly disagreed with the statement that LSE is not as important as other subjects, 56(26.7%) students agreed with the statement, 32(15.2%) students strongly agreed with the statement while 21(10.0%) students disagreed with the statement. It can, therefore, be argued that majority (58.1%) of the students believed that LSE is as important as other subjects. This implies that students believed that life skills education is an important subject and were ready to learn the subject.

On the statement that LSE is a boring subject, 121(57.6%) students strongly disagreed with the statement, 46(21.9%) students disagreed with the statement, 35(16.7%) students agreed with the statement while 8(3.9%) students strongly agreed with the statement. The study findings suggested that majority (79.5%) of the students were of the view that LSE was not a boring subject implying that they enjoyed learning LSE in their schools.

Further, 109(51.9%) students agreed with the statement that LSE has really assisted them in their everyday life, 67(31.9%) students agreed with the statement, 18(8.6%) students disagreed with the statement while 16(7.6%) students strongly disagreed with the statement. The study findings

showed that majority (83.8%) of the students believed that LSE had assisted them in their daily lives.

Similarly, 79(37.6%) students strongly agreed with the statement that they spent adequate time revising LSE, 71(33.8%) students strongly disagreed with the statement, 46(21.9%) students agreed with the statement while 14(6.7%) students disagreed with the statement. It emerged from the study findings that majority (59.5%) of the students in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality spent adequate time learning LSE. This shows that most students have a positive attitude which drives them to understanding LSE.

In addition, 69(32.9%) students strongly agreed with the statement that in their schools attending LSE lessons was compulsory, 67(31.9%) students disagreed with the statement, 51(24.3%) students agreed with the statement while 23(10.9%) students strongly disagreed with the statement. It, therefore, seems that majority (57.2%) of the students were of the view that LSE lessons were compulsory in their schools. Even though LSE is not examinable, it is usually taught during Physical Education lessons in public primary schools.

### Teachers Attitudes towards the Implementation of Life Skills

The study also sought to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of life skills education in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. To achieve this objective, the teachers were requested to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement on a four Likert scale questions in the questionnaire on their attitudes towards teaching of life skills education. Their responses were scored and the results were as presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Teachers' Attitudes towards the Implementation of Life Skills**

Attitude Statements	SD	D	A	SA
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)
LSE is necessary for primary school children	3(8.1)	6(16.2)	19(51.4)	9(24.3)
I spend a lot of time preparing and planning for LSE	16(43.2)	11(29.7)	5(13.5)	5(13.5)
I enjoy teaching LSE	6(16.2)	11(29.7)	12(32.4)	8(21.6)
I teach LSE using teaching aid always	7(18.9)	6(16.2)	15(40.5)	9(24.3)
I evaluate learners more frequently	19(51.4)	10(27.0)	4(10.8)	4(10.8)

The results in Table 2 above shows that 19(51.4%) teachers agreed with the statement that Life Skill Education is necessary for primary school children, 9(24.3%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement, 6(16.2%) teachers disagreed with the statement while 3(8.1%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. It emerged from the study findings that majority (75.7%) of the teachers in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality believed that Life Skill Education was necessary for primary school children. This shows that teachers believed that life skills education was important at an early age of development as it contributes to personal and social development of a child at an early stage. This reinforces the findings of Rooth (2005) who argues that life skills education can delay the onset of drug usage, prevent high-risk sexual behaviour and promote beneficial social adjustment. Further, UNICEF (2004, 2005) holds the view that life skills

education is regarded as the practice and reinforcement of psychological skills that contribute to personal and social development and the prevention of health and social problems.

On the statement that teachers spend a lot of time preparing and planning for LSE, 16(43.2%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement, 11(29.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement, 5(13.5%) teachers agreed with the statement while 5(13.5%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement. It can, therefore, be argued that majority (72.9%) of the teachers in public primary schools within Eldoret Municipality were of the view that they spend little time in preparing and planning for LSE. This can be attributed to the fact that LSE is a non-examinable subject and, therefore, teachers do not pay a lot of attention in its preparation and planning. This was found to concur with the study findings of Rooth (2005) who, in a study in South Africa, has found that Life Skills Education is not being taken seriously because it is not an examinable subject. According to Rooth (2005), in some cases, LSE is not taught at all despite the fact that it is included on the timetable.

Similarly, 12(32.4%) teachers agreed with the statement that they enjoyed teaching Life Skills Education, 11(29.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement, 8(21.6%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement while 6(16.2%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. It seems therefore that majority (54.0%) of the teachers in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality enjoyed teaching Life Skills Education. This shows that teachers had a positive attitude towards teaching of LSE in primary schools. Teachers' attitudes have to be positive if curriculum innovations are to be effected and this depends on their preparation for the innovation. When teachers have a clear understanding of curriculum innovations and have the necessary competencies, it becomes easier for them to implement it.

Further, 15(40.5%) teachers agreed with the statement that they teach LSE using teaching aid always, 9(24.3%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement and 7(18.9%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 6(16.2%) teachers disagreed with the statement. The study findings suggested that majority (64.8%) of the teachers in public primary schools within Eldoret Municipality always used teaching aids during the LSE lessons. The availability of teaching aids in schools helps students to fully understand LSE and see its practicability in life.

Similarly, 19(51.4%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement that they evaluate learners more frequently, 10(27.0%) teachers disagreed with the statement and 4(10.8%) teachers agreed with the statement while on the other hand 4(10.8%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement. It can, therefore, be shown from the responses that majority (78.4%) of the teachers in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality never evaluated learners in LSE. This was further attributed to the fact that life skills education is a non-examinable subject and, therefore it is hard for teachers to evaluate students (Rooth, 2005).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study findings, it is clear that students enjoy learning life skills education. This implies that most students have a positive attitude towards life skills education, even though LSE lessons are not compulsory to all students. Similarly, teachers in public primary schools believe

that Life Skill Education is necessary for primary school children. This means that teachers believe that life skills education is important at an early age of development as it contributes to personal and social development of a child at an early stage. Although LSE is a non-examinable subject, there is need to make its teaching and learning compulsory to all students as it contributes to personal and social development of a child at an early stage. Moreover, for teachers to develop an interest in teaching of LSE, there is need for them to be trained on LSE. This could also lead to development of a more positive attitude of teachers towards the teaching of LSE.

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