

Utilization of Instructional Resources for Effective Implementation of Life Skills Education in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The teaching of life skills education was introduced in Kenyan schools in 2008, so as to equip learners with the adaptive abilities for effective living. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of instructional resources for the effective implementation of life skills education in public secondary schools in Kenya. The research objectives were: to investigate the availability of the instructional resources; to investigate the frequency of utilization of the instructional resources; and to investigate the effect of utilization of the instructional resources on the implementation of life skills education. The study adopted a concurrent triangulation research design, and data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. The sample size of 123 teachers and 16 principals was determined using simple random sampling and purposive sampling respectively. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings of the study showed that the availability and level of utilization of instructional resources for the implementation of life skills education was still low; and this compromises the effective implementation of life skills education. The study recommends that all public secondary schools be provided with adequate instructional resources for implementation of life skills education; and that teacher educators emphasize the need for utilizing instructional resources for effective implementation of life skills education.

Key Words: Life Skills Education; Instructional Resources; availability; utilization

INTRODUCTION

Background

Life skills refers to a large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can help individuals make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self-management skills that may help lead a healthy and productive life (UNICEF, 2012). Life skills education is currently viewed as an approach that can be used to address a wide range of issues affecting child and youth development all over the world. According to the WHO and UNICEF report (2012), where life skills education is well developed and practiced, it enhances the well-being of the society and promotes positive outlook and healthy behavior. In particular, it enables the individual to translate knowledge, attitude, skills and values into action and behave responsibly. This leads to healthy living, development of positive attitudes towards self and others, development of one's full potential, promotion of a state of mental well-being, promotion of risk free behavior and improved self-perception by building self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. Further, Life Skills Education has long term benefits to the society. These include educational, social, health and cultural benefits (Chirwa, 2009).

Life Skills Education has a long history of supporting child development and health promotion. Ndirangu et al. (2013) emphasize that in the traditional African communities, education emerged from the immediate surroundings of the child, real or imaginary; and children had to be equipped with understanding of the possibilities and problems of their surrounding by acquiring skills on how to overcome or exploit them. Further, the indigenous society demanded a close-knit society to enhance proper socialization skills; with the elderly members of the family or clan being responsible for skills training and induction by apprenticeship into the roles that were important for social and economic development. The traditional education also incorporated religious attitudes towards life; and such attitudes were mainly concerned with virtues that supported the laws, customs and the moral values of the community.

In modern times, the idea of teaching life skills can be traced back to North America (Baylies, 2000). In 1986, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion recognized life skills in terms of making wise, healthy choices in education and the general wellbeing of the child (learner). The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) connected life skills training to education by stating that education should focus on the development of the child's whole potential including the development of the important life skills for a more adaptive life in the school's life and the future career advancements. The 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) further emphasized the teaching of life skills education and included it among essential learning lessons for survival, capacity development and quality of life among learners in both basic and secondary levels of education (UNICEF, 2012). The 2000 Dakar World Education Conference took a position that all young people and adults have the human right to benefit from "an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be", and included life skills in two out of the six Education for All (EFA) Goals adopted in the same conference (Mulamba, 2015).

Most countries are reforming their educational systems to incorporate life skills education so as to help their populations handle emerging issues as well as developmental challenges. These countries have adopted a variety of programs ranging from prevention of drug abuse, adolescent pregnancy, HIV and Aids to conflict management (WHO, 1997). It is acknowledged that life skills education can slow the initiation into drug or substance abuse, help in curbing risky sexual behaviors and aid an individual to adjust accordingly to the social and health challenges within the society (Ndirangu, Wamue & Wango, 2013). Equipped with the right life skills, individuals are also able to make informed and responsible decisions as they tackle the challenges they face in life (MOE, 2008). However, if this fails, the individuals become maladjusted and the resulting behaviors are drug abuse, irresponsible sexual behavior, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, increased crime rates, violence, low academic achievements and general indiscipline.

UNICEF (2012) notes that there has been a commendable success in the implementation of life skills education in schools in East Asia, Indonesia, Jordan and Southern Asia where this curriculum was basically introduced to deal with Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), environmental issues, genital mutilation, conflict and drugs. Kilonzo (2013) further observes that the United Nations Children's Fund has been very instrumental in development of teaching and learning resources, formulation of supportive policies, and teacher training in East Caribbean, Myanmar, Burundi, Mozambique and Malawi. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), a consortium of some south Asian nations based on regional economic, socio-cultural cooperation is also working on ensuring that life skills education is incorporated in the secondary teacher curriculum (Munsi and Guha, 2014).

Life skills education in Kenya was formally introduced into Kenya's education system as a stand-alone subject after the 2007/2008 Post-Election Violence that led to massive loss of lives and property. This introduction was after an evaluation of the entire school curriculum and its role on holistic development of character, skills and attitudes in the individual and the entire society (MOE, 2008). Consequently, the curriculum was reviewed and life skills education was included in the syllabus in the primary and the secondary curricular (MOE, 2008). It should also be noted that majority of secondary school learners in Kenya are between the age of 13 and 19 years. These learners are faced with varied challenges which should be addressed through life skills education; including negative peer influence, gender discrimination, violence, pre-mature marriages, teenage pregnancies, indiscipline, career choices, early sexual activities, drug and substance abuse, rape, incest, and HIV and AIDS pandemic. The formal education system also puts a lot of emphasis and prioritization on imparting academic knowledge, thus ignoring the development of psychosocial skills which are necessary in preparation of young people in the handling of complex challenges that exist in the world today (Kilonzo, 2013). Among the topics which are covered in the life skills education are: assertiveness, effective decision making, conflict resolution, and friendship formation, the core living values, self-awareness and self-esteem, empathy, and negotiation skills. However, it should be noted that the teaching of life skills had been going on in many schools in Kenya, especially those established by the missionaries, long before formal introduction by the government through the Ministry of Education (Wasamu, 2011).

However, it should be noted that curriculum implementation, including that of life skills education, involves making the new curriculum and the materials and resources to be used generally available to all institutions within the jurisdiction of the curriculum development project (Shiundu & Omulando, 2004; Orstein and Hunkins, 2009; UNICEF, 2012). Thus, the effective implementation of Life Skills Education greatly depends on the availability, appropriate use and continuous evaluation of the resources used in its implementation. Chirwa (2009) in a study on challenges facing the teaching of life skills education in primary schools in Zomba District, Malawi, observed that shortage of instructional resources may be a barrier to effective teaching and learning of life skills education since many learners will mostly sit quietly and listen throughout the lesson; yet life skills lessons are supposed to be participatory. Afodu (2012) as cited in Abobo (2015) also noted that instructional resources function as a stimuli and support for both the teacher and learner during the learning process especially in removing the abstractness in some concepts. A well-chosen and appropriately used resource should be able to appeal to senses such as smell, sight, and touch among others so as to clarify ideas and eliminate abstractness of concepts. Mugambi and Muthui (2013) note that the utilization of instructional resources makes a difference for effective teachers as they keep in mind what they teach and what to teach with. Thus, the teacher should choose the most natural and appropriate resource to reinforce a particular activity (Abobo and Orodho, 2014).

Specific Problem

The implementation of life skills education in Kenya was launched in 2008, with the focus of addressing the gap between the knowledge acquired by the students and the way they behave while schooling and after their schooling period (Kilonzo, 2013; MOE, 2008). However, public secondary schools continue to experience challenges with student behaviour and discipline. Reports from Naivasha Sub-county Education office (NSCEO, 2015) show that most schools in the sub-county continue to experience student unrests, conflict among students, drop out from school before completing the four year course due to drug and substance related issues, early pregnancies and marriages among others. Although studies have been conducted to explain

the above mentioned challenges facing students in secondary schools in Kenya, not much has been done to assess the factors affecting implementation of life skills education especially in Naivasha sub-county. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the utilization of instructional resources as a possible factor affecting the implementation of Life Skills Education in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The research objectives were:

1. To investigate the availability of instructional resources for the implementation of life skills education.
2. To investigate the frequency of utilization of instructional resources in the implementation of life skills education.
3. To investigate the effect of utilization of instructional resources on the implementation of life skills education.

Theoretical Framework

This study was hinged on the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Albert Bandura (1986). The basic premise of this theory is that people learn not only from their own experiences, but also by observing the actions of others and the results of those actions. This therefore means that the learners who are exposed to life skills education and acquire the desired results may highly influence those that they interact with. Bandura (1986) further argues that what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave. The natural and extrinsic effects of people's actions, in turn, partly determine their thought patterns and affective reactions. SCT is applicable in this study because the way in which the teacher views Life Skills Education would determine the angle of implementing the program. In a school set-up, for example, teachers have the challenges of upgrading the academic performance and confidence of the students under their watch. Using Social Cognitive Theory, teachers can work to enhance student's emotional status, rectify students' shortcomings in their behaviors (personal factors), improve their academic performances and change the physical environment which may work to affect the success of students.

METHODOLOGY

The study used both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in a concurrent triangulation design. The study was conducted in Naivasha Sub – County, Kenya. The target population for this study constituted 180 teachers and 29 principals drawn from the 29 public secondary schools in Naivasha sub-county. The schools where the sample population was drawn from were identified through stratified sampling procedure, to enhance representation of all types of schools in the study. The schools in the sub-county were stratified on the basis of mixed day, boys boarding and girls boarding. Schools were then selected from each stratum to make up the total number of 16 schools which were used in the study. To obtain the sample size of 123 teachers from the public secondary schools, the sample size determination table developed by Krejcie and Morgan, (1970) was used. Simple random sampling was used to sample the teacher population while the principals' sample (16) was arrived at through purposive sampling. The tools used in data collection were questionnaires for teachers' respondents and interview schedule for the principals. The questionnaire that was administered consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. For the close-ended questions, the teachers were provided with a list of alternative responses to choose from in order to facilitate consistent answers to questions. The items on the interview schedule focused on the availability of instructional resources and level of utilization of instructional resources. The validity and reliability of the research instruments were confirmed through a pilot study that was conducted outside of the study area. The data collected was analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analyses. The results were presented in frequency tables, and in narrative form.

Table 1: Target population

School category	Number of schools	Number of principals	Number of Teachers
Mixed day	23	23	136
Boys boarding	3	3	20
Girls boarding	3	3	24
	29	29	180

Table 2: Sample Size

School category	Number of schools	Number of principals	Number of Teachers
Mixed day	12	12	93
Boys boarding	2	2	15
Girls boarding	2	2	15
	16	16	123

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To realize objective one, the respondents were asked to indicate the availability of instructional resources used in life skills education in the schools they were teaching life skills education. The data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Availability of Instructional Resources

Instructional resource	Available		Not available	
	f	%	f	%
MOE syllabus for LSE	28	27.7	73	72.3
Recommended course book for LSE	41	40.6	59	58.4
Charts	15	14.9	85	84.1
Radio	7	6.9	94	93.1
Magazines	13	12.9	88	87.1
Video	4	4.0	97	96.0
Teachers guide	2	2.0	99	98.0

Data on Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents (72.3%) said MOE syllabus for life skills education was not available in their schools, while 27.7% of the respondents said that the MOE syllabus for life skills education was available. On recommended course book for life skills education, 58.4% of the respondents indicated that the course books were not available with 40.6% indicating that they were available. Majority of the teacher respondents indicated that charts, radio, magazines, video and teachers' guide (84.1%, 93.1%, 87.1%, 96% and 98% respectively) were not available for teaching life skills in their schools. Very few of the teacher respondents (14.9%, 6.9%, 12.9%, 4.0% and 2.0% respectively) indicated that charts, radio, magazines, video and teachers' guides were available. From the findings of the study it can be concluded that instructional resources for the implementation of life skills education were not available. The consequence of this unavailability of instructional resources is that many learners are left out in the learning process, a practice that poses a challenge to the effective implementation of life skills education.

The interview with principals on availability of instructional resources for the implementation of life skills education reinforced the unavailability of the resources in schools. One of the principals interviewed reckoned that:

My school doesn't have enough instructional resources for life skills implementation because much of the resources the school accesses is allocated to subjects that are directly linked to national examination performance. (Principals' interview; 9th November 2015)

It is evident from this remark that there are no adequate instructional resources to aid in the implementation of life skills education in public secondary schools in Naivasha sub-county. These findings agree with those of Kilonzo (2013) who found that teaching and learning resources were not available to 81% of the respondents and those of Mutegi (2012) which found that instructional resources on the implementation of life skills education were unavailable and where available they were inadequate.

The second objective of the study was to determine the frequency of use of the available instructional resources for the implementation of life skills education. The teachers of LSE were asked to indicate whether they used the recommended course books, flipcharts, radio, video/projector, magazines and teacher guides in the teaching of life skills education. The responses are as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4 Utilization of recommended instructional resources

SCALE RESOURCES	Always		Often		Rarely		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Textbooks	48	47.5	15	14.9	31	30.7	7	6.9
Flipcharts	2	2.0	16	15.8	53	52.5	30	29.7
Radio	7	6.9	18	17.8	35	34.7	41	40.6
Video/projector	1	1.0	4	4.0	38	22.8	58	57.4
Magazines	3	2.9	6	5.9	10	16.8	75	74.2
Teachers' Guide	1	1.0	5	4.9	21	20.8	74	73.3

The data in Table 4 shows that course books are used in the teaching of life skills with 47.5% of the respondents citing that they always use them. Only 6.9% of the respondents cited that they have never used course books in the teaching of life skills education. This is possibly because textbooks were regarded to be more reliable and easily accessible. When the respondents were asked to indicate their use of other instructional resources like flipcharts, radio, video/projector, magazines and teachers' guide in the implementation of life skills education, their responses were that 29.7%, 40.6%, 57.4%, 74.2% and 73.3% respectively had never used them. These findings show that other than the course books for teaching LSE, the other instructional resources are not used or are rarely used. The findings agree with those of Adhiambo (2013) who found out that failure to use instructional resources is the greatest constraint in the implementation of life skills education. These results were

also in agreement with Mutegi (2012) in his research on school factors influencing the implementation of life skills education in which it was found that teachers did not have adequate use of teaching and learning resources to aid in the implementation of life skills education.

Finally, the study sought to establish the effect of instructional resources utilized in the implementation of life skills education. The teacher respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or not with various statements on instructional resources used in the implementation of life skills education. The responses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Effect of instructional resources used on implementation of LSE

	Agree		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%
The number of LSE textbooks positively affects the implementation of LSE	7	19.8	81	80.2
The flipcharts used in teaching LSE make teaching more effective	49	48.5	52	51.5
The content that is delivered through the radio is effective in LSE teaching	34	33.7	67	66.3
The content in the magazines for LSE enhance the teaching of LSE	28	27.7	73	72.3
The content and the language used in Teachers' Guide support effective implementation of LSE	12	11.9	89	88.1

The data in Table 5 shows that 80.2% of the respondents indicated that the number of life skills education textbooks do not positively affect the implementation of life skills education. 51.5% of the respondents indicated that flipcharts are not effective on the implementation of life skills education. 66.3% of the teacher respondents further indicated that the content delivered through radio was not an effective instructional resource on the implementation of life skills education. 72.3% of the respondents indicated that the content in the magazines used on the implementation of life skills education was not effective. On the effectiveness of the content and language of the teachers' guide used in the implementation of life skills education, only 11.9% indicated that the content and the language were supportive of the implementation of life skills education. This was further emphasized in an interview with one of the principals who responded that:

Instructional resources used in the implementation of life skills education are so limited to positively influence the implementation of life skills education in my school. (Principals' interview; 19th November 2015)

From these findings, it is evident that instructional resources for the implementation of life skills are not affecting the process since majority of the respondents rated the effect of instructional resources on implementation of life skills education very lowly. This may pose a challenge to the implementation of a program like that of life skills education. Court and Ghai (1995) argue that the distribution of resources accounts for major differences among schools in way of effectively implementing curriculum. The utilization of instructional resources is very important in the implementation of life skills education, since as Mugambi and Muthui (2013) observe, the utilization of instructional resources makes a difference on the implementation of curriculum and the achievement of learners.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that instructional resources for the implementation of life skills education in public secondary schools are mostly unavailable and the few that are available are not frequently utilized. The findings further showed that the few available and utilized instructional resources did not effectively influence the implementation of life skills education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher recommended the following:

1. The Board of Management in schools should work to ensure that teaching and learning resources for the implementation of LSE are adequately provided
2. The school administration, specifically the school principal, should encourage teachers to utilize the available resources for the implementation of LSE
3. The Ministry of Education should ensure that the content and language used in the instructional resources for the implementation of LSE support effective implementation of LSE

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