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The State of Availability of Resources for Life Skills Curriculum Implementation in Public Primary Schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

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Abstract:

The government of Kenya recognizes the value of education and training of its citizens to equip learners with understanding and knowledge for informed decision making on good choices concerning their lives and the Kenyan society. Life Skills Education (LSE) curriculum was introduced in the year 2009. After assessing the existing curriculum, it was realized that there was need to address the challenges of daily lives, especially among the youth. The study sought to gauge the preparedness of public primary schools to effectively implement the Life Skills Education (LSE) curriculum in Eldoret Municipality. Based on the study, this paper assesses the availability of resources in the implementation of Life Skills Education in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. Out of the total 42 public primary schools in Eldoret municipality, 13 were selected through simple random sampling. A sample size of 13 head teachers was thus purposively selected. Thirty-nine LSE teachers, 3 from each school, were also purposively selected. 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. Stratified method was used to divide the pupils according to their gender and then simple random sampling used to select 5 girls and 5 boys from each class from each school giving a total of 20 pupils per school. The sample size therefore comprised 299 respondents. 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 interview schedules was analysed qualitatively. The study established that the LSE course books to student ratio in most schools was 1: over 5. This implied that there was a high student to text book ratio. These findings show that schools need to invest more in the acquisition of life skills education teaching and learning materials. The findings could benefit the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development in detecting problems, identifying strengths and modifying the LSE curriculum.

Keywords: Availability, resources, life skills curriculum implementation, public primary schools, Eldoret municipality, Kenya

1. Introduction

Life Skills Education is designed to develop skills in order to lessen violent behaviour, increase pro-social behaviour and decrease negative, self-destructive behaviour, increase the ability to plan ahead and choose effective solutions to problems, improve self-image, self-awareness, social and emotional adjustment, increase acquisition of knowledge, improve classroom behaviour among learners, foster self-control and the ability to handle interpersonal conflicts, and to help people cope with anxiety. It also leads to improved constructive conflict resolution with peers, impulse control and popularity. Research studies have also shown that sex education based on life skills is more effective in bringing about changes in adolescent contraceptive use, delay in sexual debut, delay in the onset of alcohol and marijuana use and in developing attitudes and behaviour necessary for preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS (Devine & Jensen, 2003). This review shows that life skills education can help learners to develop social, cognitive and emotional coping skills.

Children in South Africa, including those in biological families, reconstituted families, foster-homes, safe-houses and street children, are at risk because of inadequate opportunities for harmonious socialisation in their communities (Richter, Brookes, Shisana, Simbayi & Desmond, 2004). They are not adequately guided towards positive self-concept formation or the full realization of their potential. Consequently, they grow towards irresponsible and unfulfilled adulthood where they may never succeed in building and maintaining good relationships (Prinsloo, 2007).

Such children often develop little respect for their own dignity, suffer from negative self-concept, reject or rebel against accept authority and show little respect for the value of others or for their lives and possessions. In adulthood, they adopt anti-social behaviour and often lapse into criminal activities (Prinsloo, 2007). The lack of emotional coping skills in society is the largest direct contributor to the trend of violent crimes, rape and murder reported daily in South African (Pretoria News, 2006).

Causative factors that put so many of the country's children at risk are numerous. The decadence of a materialistic and secularised world where values and norms deteriorate increasingly and adults strive in a self-centred way to achieve material gain and personal gratification contribute to the problem (Prinsloo, 2007). In South African, economic circumstances, arising from over-population and unplanned urbanisation, have also contributed to unemployment and aggravated poverty, thus intensifying problems of rapid moral decline. Disintegrated families, single parenthood and child-headed households predispose younger people to more stress and poverty. As a result, child abuse and neglect have been on the rise (Beckmann, as cited in Le Roux, 1994). Because authority structures are often weak, children never learn the value of discipline and self-discipline and they lack support towards achieving responsible adulthood.

This situation calls for urgent interventions. The Department of Education has therefore sought to intervene through the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education and in particular through the Life Orientation (LO) learning area, which was introduced to make a difference in the lives of a new generation of learners. The development of LO programmes has brought educators and educational planners to the realization that the only hope of reaching children at risk lies in a holistic support system. Extensive research from South Africa and countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and Europe highlight the need for orientation programmes that prepare learners adequately for the complex and dynamic life in the 21st century. These should include religious programmes, socialising programmes, self-development programmes and life and survival skills training (Pretorius, 1998; Engelbrecht, 1998; Le Roux, 1994; Mwamwenda, 2004; Eggen & Kauchak, 1997; Department of Education, 1992; National Educational Policy Investigation, 1993; Republic of South Africa, 2000).

Life Orientation is the study of the self in relation to others and to society. It applies a holistic approach. It is concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners and the way in which these dimensions are interrelated and expressed in life. The focus is the development of self-in-society, and this encourages the development of balanced and confident learners who will contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life for all. Life Orientation guides and prepares learners for life and for its responsibilities and possibilities. This learning area addresses knowledge, values, attitudes and skills about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity and career choices.

LO enables learners to solve problems, to make informed decisions and choices and to take appropriate actions to enable them to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly changing society (South African Department of Education, 2003). According to KIE Teacher's Handbook (2008), the objectives of LSE in primary schools in Kenya are to appreciate self as a unique human being, develop an ability to relate amicably with others, develop an ability to make informed and rational decisions on issues affecting them, demonstrate ability to participate in community development, acquire attitudes, values and develop psychosocial competence that promote responsible living and demonstrate ability to cope with everyday challenges.

According to KIE Teacher's Handbook (2008, p. 12), LSE are classified into three broad categories; Skills of knowing and living with oneself. These are skills that enable individuals to know who they are and what they are capable of doing. They help individuals to accept themselves and build their self-esteem, self-awareness, self-control and self-confidence, thereby enabling them to cope with emotions and stress. Skills of knowing and living with others. These are skills that enable individuals to interact with other people effectively and meaningfully. They include assertiveness, empathy, effective communication and negotiation skills. Decision-making entails the ability of weighing all the available options (choices) based on adequate and correct information. At this level, creative thinking critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving and decision-making process are involved.

Assessment techniques used in Life Skills Education include oral questions and answers, observation, listening to instructions, or directions or commands or audio material. The other techniques are listening to stories and passages, listening to debates, answering oral questions, self-assessment, writing journals, writing poems or rhymes/verses, songs, stories, skits. It could also include writing letters speeches, notes and post cards. Brainstorming is also a suggested assessment technique, reviewing journals, participating in club meetings, participating in simulated interviews. Listening to debates, minimal pair practices, miming, written assignments, self-evaluation, preview journals, preview records, interviews and peer observation are other methods. Demonstration, written and oral quizzes, questionnaires, reading library books, reading poems, stories, skits and conversations are also assessment methods. Others include reading labels on diagrams, maps and objects, exhibition essays projects, quizzes and field reports.

1.1. Resource Materials and Facilities

Resource materials and facilities influence the implementation of a curriculum in that the availability and quality of resource material and facilities have a great influence on curriculum implementation (Whitaker, 1993, p. 26). Kadzamira (2006) indicates that the primary school system in Malawi faces the challenge of lack of facilities such as staffrooms, classrooms, teaching and learning materials especially the rural primary school. Lowe (2008) has also found that there are not enough text books in the schools he studied in Zomba District in Malawi.

Romiszowski (1998) says that special characteristics of some pupils will directly influence the type of materials to be chosen. For instance, it would be unrealistic to use some kind of materials for the slow learners. This is in line with the findings with teachers taking into consideration learner characteristics in selecting, developing and using language materials. A number of material selection models and approaches have stressed the importance of teachers' knowledge on learners' characteristics (Romiszowski, 1998; Katz, 1994).

Young children acquire knowledge in ways that are significantly different from the way older children learn, they learn by manipulating, exploring and experimenting with objects. They learn most exclusively by doing and through movements (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1990), creation of a sustainable learning environment helps deprived children to improve in their academic performance (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992).

The physical environment, which includes the classroom setting as well as the outdoor setting, should provide opportunities for the children to explore and learn LSE. The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (1991) states that the quality of the physical space and material provided affects the level of involvement of children and the quality of interaction between the teacher and the children. The Department of Education (2007) describes an appropriate learning environment for the learners as the one that provides time opportunities experience and respond actively to their world. It should be social in nature providing secure and stimulating climate for all children. LSE learning environment should be based on development appropriate practice. This means that a classroom should respond to the natural curiosity of young children, reaffirm a sense of self and promote positive dispositions towards learning, which makes materials an important factor in LSE curriculum implementation (Lombardi, 1992). Ralph and Kings (1997) define attitude as a mental predisposition towards people, objects, events, situations or ideas. It may be considered as a mental state of readiness to respond that is organized through experiences and will exert a directive influence or behaviour (Ralph & Kings, 1997). Therefore, teaching learning materials in LSE should assist in the development of positive attitude in learners.

1.2. 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 study, this paper, therefore, examines the state of availability of the resources needed for Life Skills Education curriculum implementation in public schools in Eldoret Municipality.

2. 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 the 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.

3. Results and Discussion

The study sought to assess the availability of resources in the implementation of Life Skills Education in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. To achieve this objective, teachers were asked specific questions on the availability of resources in the implementation of LSE. Teachers were first asked to indicate whether or not their schools had life skills course books. The results were as presented in Table 1.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	89.2
No	4	10.8
Total	37	100.0

Table 1: Availability of LSE Course Books in Schools

The findings in Table 1 show that 33(89.2%) teachers indicated that their schools had Life skills course books while 4(10.8%) teachers cited that their schools did not have LSE course books. The study findings further indicated that majority (89.2%) of the public primary schools in Eldoret municipality had LSE course books. This concurred with the views of Shiundu and Omulando (1992), who contend that the school is the most crucial consideration in effecting a curriculum change and it must be ready in terms of infrastructure and resources. This includes classrooms, workshops, libraries, text books among others. The teaching of LSE largely depends on the availability of these resources in the schools.

Teachers were further asked to indicate the ratio of course books to students in their respective schools. The results were as presented in Table 2.

Ratio	Frequency	Percentage
1:3	2	5.4
1:4	3	8.1
1:5	5	13.5
1:over 5	27	73.0
Total	37	100.0

Table 2: LSE Course Books against Students

The research results in Table 2 show that 27(73.0%) teachers indicated that the text books to student ratio was 1: over 5 in their schools, 5(13.5%) teachers indicated that the text book to student ratio was 1:5, 3(8.1%) teachers indicated that the text book to student ratio was 1:4 while 2(5.4%) teachers indicated that the text book to student ratio was 1:3. The findings therefore showed that the LSE course books to student ratio in most schools was 1: over 5. This implies that there are high students to textbook ratio in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. This finding reiterated those of Lowe (2008) in Malawi that there are high pupils to LSE textbook ratio in schools. Lack of learning resources, especially text-books, affected the successful implementation of a Life Skills Education curriculum in Malawi. Moreover, teachers were asked to indicate whether or not their schools had teaching guides for LSE. The results were as presented in Table 3.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	34	91.8
No	3	8.1
Total	37	100.0

Table 3: Presence of LSE Teachers' Guide Books in Schools

The findings in the table above show that 34(91.8%) teachers stated that LSE teachers' guide books were available in their schools while 3(8.1%) teachers indicated that LSE guide books were not available in their schools. This shows that majority (91.8%) of public primary schools in Eldoret municipality had LSE teachers' guide books.

Further, the respondents were asked to indicate the number of teachers teaching Life Skills Education in their schools. The results were as presented in Table 4 below.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
One	13	35.1
Two	15	40.5
Three	5	13.5
Four	4	10.8
Total	37	100.0

Table 4: Number of LSE Teachers per School

The above table shows that 15(40.5%) teachers indicated that they had two LSE teachers, 13(35.1%) had one LSE teachers in their schools, 5(13.5%) teachers indicated their schools had three LSE teachers while 4(10.8%) teachers cited that their schools had four LSE teachers. These findings showed that schools in Eldoret municipality lacked adequate staff to teach LSE and this could hinder the effective implementation of Life Skills Education in public primary schools. Furthermore, the respondents were requested to whether they had teaching aids for teaching life skills education in their schools. The results were as summarized in Table 5 below

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	35	94.6
No	2	5.4
Total	37	100.0

Table 5: Presence of LSE Teaching Aids in Schools

The results in Table 5 indicate that 35(94.6%) teachers said their schools had LSE teaching aids while 2(5.4%) teachers cited that their schools did not have teaching aids. The study findings showed that majority (94.6%) of the teachers believed that their schools had LSE teaching aids. This implies that most primary schools in Eldoret municipality had LSE teaching aids an indication that most teachers use teaching aids while teaching LSE. These materials create a conducive environment for teaching and learning of Life Skills Education. These findings concurred with those of Shiundu and Omulando (1992) who argue that teachers require resource materials and facilities to teach effectively and that these materials build teachers' confidence as they create conducive teaching/learning environment but on the other hand, lack of resource materials and facilities frustrate teachers and diminishes their motivation.

Lastly, teachers were requested to indicate the teaching aids mostly used in their schools in teaching life skills education. The results were as presented in Table 6.

Teaching aids	Frequencies	Percentages
Charts	13	35.1
Audio materials	7	18.9
Real things	9	24.3
Pictures	6	16.2
None	2	5.4
Total	37	100.0

Table 6: Teaching Aids Used for Teaching LSE

From the results in Table 6, it was found out that 13(35.1%) teachers indicated that they mostly used charts in teaching LSE, 9(24.3%) teachers indicated that they used real things in teaching LSE, 7(18.9%) teachers used audio materials in teaching LSE, 6(16.2%) teachers used pictures in teaching LSE while on one hand 2(5.4%) teachers did not engage the use of any teaching aid while teaching LSE.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Most primary schools in Eldoret municipality have LSE course books. The available books are inadequate to cater for the needs of the students as there was a high students' to text book ratio in most schools. For effective learning of LSE, schools need to procure more teaching and learning materials such as course books, charts, pictures and real objects as a high student to text book ratio renders the teaching of LSE hard to teachers.

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