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Identification of Types of Natural Environments in Teaching Social Studies in Primary Schools Tambach Division of Keiyo North Sub-County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya

Cherop Salina Jepkemboi

Faculty, Department of Education and Human Resource Management,
Kisii University, Eldoret Campus, Eldoret, Kenya

Situma Julia

Faculty, Department of Education and Human Resource Management,
Kisii University, Eldoret Campus, Eldoret, Kenya

Abstract

The present teaching and learning recognizes the use of natural environment as a resource by teacher's. This has ascertained that there will be much time retention of knowledge by the learners as compared to the use of other medium of instruction. This paper assesses the types of natural environment in teaching social studies in Kenyan primary schools. This study employed a survey research design. Simple random sampling was used to select the social studies teachers and the schools to participate in the study. The sample was drawn from primary schools in Tambach division of Keiyo North sub-county, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya .The sample population was seventy two (72) comprising of forty eight (48) social studies teachers and twenty four head teachers from the respective 24 selected schools .The data collection instruments used were questionnaires and observation schedule used by the researcher .The collected data was quantitatively analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented using tables. From the findings of the study, it was clear that most of the teachers use the types of natural environments to teach social studies in Kenya as a resource. From the observation it was also clear that the schools have adequate natural environment which were accessible and available for use by the social studies teachers. These are classrooms, playfields, catchment areas and water sources. However there were factors influencing the use of natural environment in the teaching of the subject which were less finds in schools ,large class enrolment ,scarcity of purchased aids and few incompetent social studies teachers .Teachers are the backbone of educational institutions and the future of the nation lied on them .Therefore to improve the quality of education there is dire need to spend on the teacher training towards the use of the cheap accessible and available natural resource .

Keywords: *Types of natural environment, social studies, teachers, primary schools, Kenya*

1. Introduction

The natural environmental education Act of 1990 called attention to how the natural environment could be included in the curriculum in every education level .Over two decades ,the united states Environmental Agency (USEA) and various other public and private organizations have produced numerous resources for incorporating environmental education schools' curriculum .The united kingdom environmental education became directly linked to the school grounds when learning through landscape .This had enabled schools to use their grounds for outdoor learning in all skills and for teaching social studies .According to (Lienbormn & Hoody,1998), learners better observe and retain knowledge taught by use of immediate environment with the help of the five common senses .

The positive education impacts are especially strong when outdoor activities are an integral part of the structured curriculum. Learning experiences that involve the learner's activities, participating in concrete materials are retained longer than in abstract experiences (Mcluhan, 1994). Instructional materials add elements of reality by providing primary resources to learning, Alaka et al (2000) stipulates that, the use of types of natural resources both in teaching and learning enhance change for desired social and behavioural change in learners.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The essential work of the teacher in teaching is to be prepared in imparting knowledge required to the learner in the easy and correct way. Teachers are always accused of using lecturer method even in learners of younger age when teaching

(Nacico-Brown et al). There is also an observation from (Callahan & Clark,1990) that teachers dwell in a lot of explanation and demonstration that the profession is made up of perpetuating verbalism in schools .When Geography ,History and Civic (GHC) was generally Social Studies in primary school it has become so involving especially with the items of instruction, many social studies teachers used pictures in pupils text books or purchased learning aids which are also inadequate to the learners .The focus of the study therefore was to investigate the types of natural environment that can be used in the teaching of social studies .This natural environment can make learning more interesting and improve concept retention for a longer period of them by the learner. Therefore social studies teachers should use the natural environment for imparting knowledge in teaching Social Studies subject .

2. Method and Materials

The study was carried out in Tambach division of Elgeyo Marakwet county of Kenya .AT the time of the study, Tambach division had fifty (50) primary schools. Social studies are offered in all schools in the division and in all Kenyan primary schools. The researcher adopted a survey research design. According to Nsubuga ,2000,p.79) a survey is important for purposes of generalizing a population which is too large to observe directly .The study was drawn from a sample population of 24 schools targeting 2 social studies teachers and the head teachers from every schools that was sampled .The schools that participated in the study and the teachers concern were selected using simple random sampling method .Data was collected from the sample population with the use of questionnaires and observation schedules .Data collected was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics such as percentages and presented using table showing frequencies and percentages .

3. Results /Findings

Different types of natural environments when teaching social studies provide motivation for further learning. The concept taught are coordinated both in time and space when teaching social studies thus promoting learner needs and life experiences. Natural environment use, in the teaching and learning of social studies allow teacher expertise with disparate subject disciplines to attract positively (Finlason 2006). Therefore, this study identified types of natural environments used in teaching social studies in primary schools. This was found to be useful to this study as there are many teaching /learning environments that would affect the teaching of social studies positively.

The social studies teachers view on the types of natural environment in teaching social studies in primary schools were as shown in table below: -

Types of school Environments	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Pathways	19	39.6	17	35.4	2	4.2	8	16.7	2	4.2
Play structured areas	6	12.5	27	56.3	5	10.4	9	18.8	1	2.1
School gardens /farms	18	37.5	16	33.3	6	12.5	5	10.4	3	6.3
Sand spaces	4	8.3	17	35.4	8	16.7	15	31.3	4	8.3
Aquatic areas	8	16.7	17	35.4	7	14.6	7	14.6	9	18.8
Seating areas various sizes	9	18.8	23	47.9	3	6.3	11	22.9	2	4.2
Fields	22	45.8	22	45.8	0	0.00	3	6.3	1	2.1
Dramatic play areas	7	14.6	13	27.1	5	10.4	16	33.3	7	14.6
Covered pavilions /porches	1	2.1	4	8.3	11	22.9	17	35.4	15	31.3
Music play areas	3	6.3	14	29.2	4	8.3	20	41.7	7	14.6
Wet lands	6	12.5	14	29.2	4	8.3	14	29.2	10	20.8
Bare ground with herbs and shrubs	18	37.5	12	25.0	4	8.3	11	22.9	3	6.3
School yard habitats	12	25.0	20	41.7	5	10.4	5	10.4	3	6.3
Forest	13	27.1	21	43.8	5	10.4	4	8.3	5	10.4

Table 1: Types of Natural Environments

The types of natural environment are pathways, play structured areas, schools garden /farms, sand spaces, aquatic areas, fields, wetlands, bare ground with herbs and scrubs, school yard habitats and forests.

Table 1: Indicated that thirty-six representing 70% of teachers agreed that pathways were the types of natural environment, used teaching social studies, while 10 (20%) disagreed.

Thirty three (66%) of teachers agreed that play structured areas were the types of natural environment ,used in teaching the subject while 10 (20.9%) disagreed with the statement .Thirty four (70.5%) of teachers agreed that school garden /farm was the type of natural environment used in teaching social studies while only 8(16.9%) over agreed .Twenty five (52.1%) of teachers agreed that aquatic areas was the type of natural environment used in teaching social studies in primary schools in Kenya while only 16(33%) disagreed with the others. Thirty-two (66.7%) of teachers agreed that seating areas of various sizes were the types of natural used in teaching social studies in primary schools.

Forty-four (91.6%) also agreed that fields were the type of natural environment being used while 4(8.4%) disagreed.

Thirty (62.5%) agreed that bare ground with herbs and shrubs were the type of natural environment used to teach social studies subject and only 14(29.2%) disagreed. The school yard habitats were also agreed to be the type of natural environment being used in teaching social studies by thirty-two (66.7%) teachers while only 8(16.7%) were not using this type. All the other fields in the table followed the same trend indicating that many of this type were being used by many social studies teachers and only a few types that the teachers were using them partially. Other findings reveals that natural environment that are found around and without the school compound are used as resources for teaching social studies.

3.1.1. Availability of Types of Natural Environment

The head teachers identified the types of natural environment as summaries in the table 2 below: -

Natural environment availability	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	16	66.7	66.7
No	8	33.3	33.3
Total	24	100.0	100

Table 2: Availability of Natural Environment

Most of the schools 16(66.7%) had the different types of natural environments and that only 8(33.3%) do not have the types of environments. The study showed that most of the schools had different types of natural environments, enhancing the teaching of the subject

3.1.2. Condition of Available Natural Environments

An observation schedule was used to establish the conditions of natural environments in the school and the results were summarized as shown in table 3 below: -

Types of Natural environment	Condition				Availability			
	Conductive		Un conducive		Adequate		Inadequate	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Classrooms	24	96.0	1	4.0	21	84.0	4	16.0
Playfields	19	76.0	6	24.0	19	76.0	6	24.0
Water source	25	100.0	0	0.00	22	88.0	3	12.0
Natural environment	25	100.0	0	0.00	25	100.0	0	0.00
Built environment	14	56.0	11	44.0	12	48.0	13	52.0
Green house	5	20.0	20	80.0	3	12.0	22	88.0
School garden	19	76.0	6	24.0	18	72.0	7	28.0
Agro forest	13	52.0	12	48.0	12	48.0	13	52.0
School yard improvement	24	96.0	1	4.0	19	76.0	6	24.0

Table 3: Condition of Availability of Natural Environment

The conditions of natural environment were observed to be conducive in 24 (96%) of the classrooms, playfields and all water sources. The school garden was found to be conducive.

In 19(76%) of the schools while the agro-forest in the same percentage of schools was found to be adequate for use.

The school yard improvement was also found to be conducive, available and adequate in 19(76%) of the schools which were under study. According to the observation study, it indicated that the types of natural environment used in teaching and learning social studies were available, conducive and adequate for use in the primary schools in Kenya. Plates of photos were also taken to show the condition of types of natural environment being conducive and available for use in the primary schools.

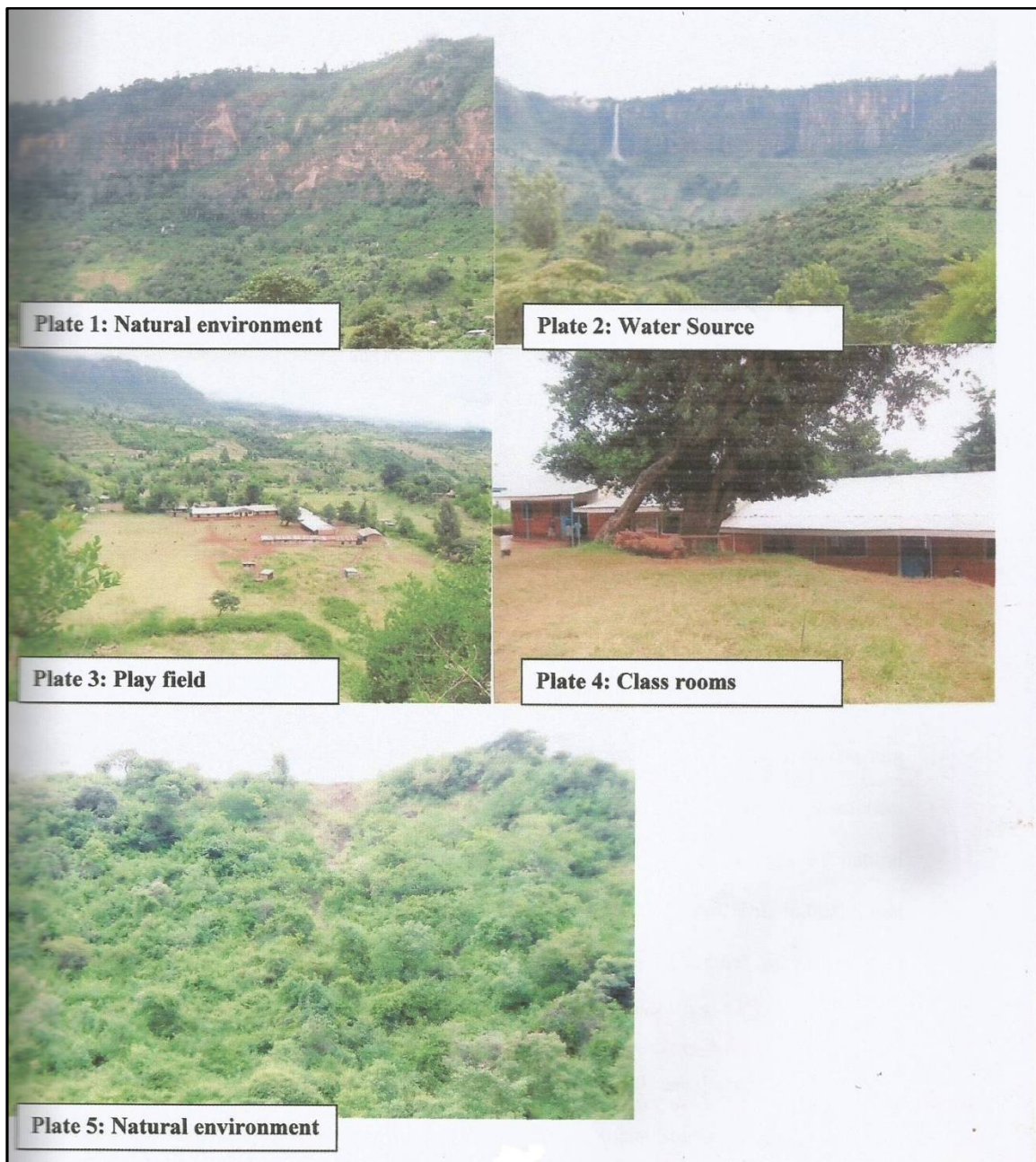


Figure 1: Photos of the natural environment used in teaching Social Studies

4. Discussion

Majority of the social studies teachers and head teachers concern from the study schools in Tambach division of Keiyo sub-county, Elgeyo Marakwet county, Kenya were positive that natural environment be used in the teaching of social studies in primary schools. Many of them stipulated that the use of the natural environment could even enhance the learners understanding of the subject. The teachers also observed that the use of natural environment in teaching social studies enhance high retention of the concept learnt for a longer period of time. They also said that the natural environment is cheap, accessible and available for use at all times by the instructors and their learners.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it is evident that most of the teachers have positively been using the natural environments in teaching the subject. However there were a sizeable number of teachers that were not using the type of environments found within and without their school compounds. The mentality may be seen to mean that they do not understand the use of natural resources and therefore need the purchased resources which may render a lot of confusion and put learners in a dilemma, while learning social studies. Lastly, the education sector or the Kenya institute of curriculum studies should incorporate different types of natural environment in the resources used for teaching and learning in primary schools in Kenya.

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