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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECT OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NANDI EAST DISTRICT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Life Skills Education is a curriculum innovation that was introduced into the school curriculum by the Kenya Institute of Education in 2009. The study sought to determine teachers' Professional Development Opportunities that affect the implementation of Life Skills Education curriculum in their schools. The study employed descriptive survey design. The research sample consisted of 5 Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, 27 head teachers and 54 teachers teaching Life Skills Education. The total sample size therefore consisted of 86 respondents. The study employed stratified and simple random sampling techniques to obtain the sample size. Questionnaires were used to collect data relevant for the study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The study findings showed that majority (74.1%) of the teachers in primary schools had never attended any seminars on Life Skills Education and therefore could be lacking adequate professional development skills to enhance effective implementation of Life Skills Education curriculum. The findings of this study will aid educationists and curriculum developers to establish barriers and develop possible measures to be undertaken during formative stages of curriculum implementation of Life Skills Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Before a new curriculum is implemented, it is necessary to ensure that all stakeholders such as teachers, field officers, head teacher and parents are properly prepared for the changes (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE], 2009). According to Garret (1999), teachers are the key contributors to enhanced quality of classroom experience. It is essential that teachers are prepared during the try-out and preparation be intensified and extended during implementation. Oluoch (1982) posits that the teachers have to internalize the philosophy behind the new ideas, materials and teaching methodology advocated in the new curriculum. This enables the teachers gain understanding and acceptance of the new curriculum. It is necessary to give teachers skills, knowledge and attitudes through specially designed education programmes. These programmes include in-service courses to help acquaint serving teachers with the requirements of the new curriculum. Curriculum implementation requires more and relevant teacher education programmes in form of pre-service and in-service education, since no factor affects curriculum change so deeply as the energy, capacities and morale of teachers; either by reason of

their insufficient basic education or because no significant re-training has taken place (Hawes, 1972). Such programmes are meant to equip teachers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes requisite for effective implementation of the curriculum.

According to Otunga *et al.* (2011), teachers cannot work alone in the class or instructional situations; they need the support staff in preparing the necessary tools and resource materials for instruction. Taba (1962) also stresses that effective curriculum change involves a large amount of training because new skills need to be learned, cognitive perspective must be acquired, new modes of thinking need to be initiated and most curriculum decisions, no matter their scope, require application of theoretical principles and technical know-how. Teachers also require professional competencies ranging from the techniques for diagnosing learners' needs in the classroom to formulating ideas. Training is also needed to develop capacity to apply psychological and social principles in which curriculum making is based. Lao (2000), Muhiddin (1969) and Kafu (2001) argue that teacher education should produce a pragmatic and creative teacher with capacity and ability to efficiently manage the challenges of education in the 21st century. The creativity and ability of the teacher will make him or her to more effectively teach the new content in the syllabus.

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Taba (1962) asserts that an innovation depends essentially on human qualities; hence, teachers must have the enthusiasm and skills necessary to understand the process of implementation. To meet these expectations, teachers need skills and knowledge as well as support from the Ministry of Education and other education partners. Publishers also need to produce timely and relevant reference materials to guarantee quality education for the learners. The increase in the number of properly trained members of the populace will fast track the move towards the achievement of MDGs such as EFA, and Developing Regional and Global Partnerships for Development (Mbiti, 1974).

The availability and quality of resource material and facilities also have a great influence on curriculum implementation (Whitaker, 1993). Kadzamira (2006) says that the challenge faced by primary school systems in Malawi, especially in the rural areas, is mainly lack of facilities such as staffrooms, classrooms, teaching and learning materials. Lowe (2008) also observes that there are insufficient text books in schools in Zomba District in Malawi. Mahlangu (2001) identifies management of curriculum implementation (by innovators of the curriculum) as an important condition for a curriculum to be effectively implemented. A successful implementation of a curriculum requires that innovators become more concerned with the difficult task of maintenance of the curriculum, rather than just introducing it in the schools. The study that informs the writing of this article investigated the extent of professional development opportunities offered to teachers of LSE in Nandi East District.

Statement of the Problem

It has become increasingly clear that prioritization of academic knowledge without acquisition of psychosocial skills is an inadequate way of preparing learners for the complex challenges of the in contemporary world. There is need for learners to be enabled to develop positive values, attitudes, skills and healthy behaviour in order to effectively deal with challenges of everyday life. Statistics at the DEO's office in Nandi East District indicate that many schools in the District are yet to implement the LSE programme despite its introduction by the MOE in 2009 (DEO's Office, 2011). This prompted the author to investigate professional development opportunities for teachers, in order to ascertain their influence on the implementation of LSE curriculum.

The results of the study can be used by educationists and curriculum developers in designing and developing of possible measures to be under taken during the formative stages of curriculum implementation of LSE and other curriculum innovations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design is a plan and the procedure for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2006). The study employed descriptive survey design. The design generally entails describing the state of affairs as it exists. It involves the description, recording, analysis and interpretation of conditions as they exist (Kombo and Tromp,

2006). For the purpose of the study design resulted in formulation of important principles of knowledge and solutions to implementation of LSE curriculum in the District.

The study targeted all the 5 QASOs, all the 95 head teachers and all the 741 teachers in public primary schools in the district (DEO's office, January, 2012 statistics). The District was stratified into five zones: Ol'Lessos, Koilot, Nandi Hills, Chebarus and Mogobich zones. After stratification, proportional allocation was used to determine the number of schools obtained in each stratum. Schools were selected in each zone by simple random sampling technique. Head teachers of every sampled school were purposively sampled to participate in the study. The teachers were stratified into two: upper primary and lower primary teachers. In each stratum one teacher was selected by simple random sampling technique. The total sample size was 86 respondents. The table below shows the distribution of respondents as sampled from the various zones and strata.

The research instruments that were used in the study were questionnaires and interview schedules developed by the researcher. The collected data was then organized, coded and entered into the SPSS computer package for analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which involved the use of frequencies and percentages. Data obtained from interview schedules were analyzed qualitatively by discussing the emerging themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of seminars on Life Skills Education they had attended. The results were as presented in Figure 1 below.

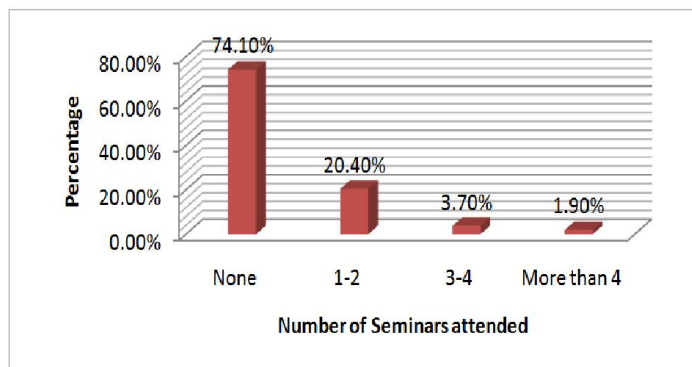


Figure 1. Seminars attended on Life Skills Education

The results in Figure 1 indicate that 40(74.1%) teachers had never attended any seminars on Life Skills Education, 11(20.4%) teachers had attended 1-2 seminars on Life Skills Education, 2(3.7%) teachers had attended 3-4 seminars on Life Skills Education while 1(1.9%) teachers had attended over 4 seminars on Life Skills Education. The study findings suggest that majority (74.1%) of the teachers in primary schools had never attended any seminars on Life Skills Education and therefore could be lacking adequate professional development skills necessary to enhance effective implementation of LSE curriculum.

Table 1. Sample Population

Division	Zone	Schools	Head teachers	Teachers	QASOs	Total Respondents
Ol'lessoss	Koilot	5	5	10	1	16
	Ollessos	6	6	12	1	19
Nandihills	Nandihills	5	5	10	1	16
	Chebarus	6	6	12	1	19
	Mogobich	5	5	10	1	16
Total		27	27	54	5	86

In addition, the participants were requested to rate the kind of training on Life Skills Education that they have received. The results were as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Adequacy of Kind of Training on Life Skills Education

Adequacy	Frequency	Percent
i. Very adequate	2	3.7
ii. Adequate	11	20.4
iii. Inadequate	23	42.6
iv. Very inadequate	18	33.3
Total	54	100.0

The findings in Table 2 show that 23(42.6%) teachers indicated that the kind of training on Life Skills Education they had had was inadequate, 18(33.3%) teachers cited that the kind of training on Life Skills Education they had received was very inadequate, 11(20.4%) teachers indicated that the training they had received was adequate while 2(3.7%) teachers said that the training was very adequate. It emerged that majority (75.9%) of the teachers in primary schools in Nandi East District had received inadequate and very inadequate training in Life Skills Education. This implied that teachers in primary schools did not have adequate training on Life Skills Education and they therefore found its implementation a challenge to them.

Furthermore, the participants were asked to rate their level of knowledge and skills on the teaching of Life Skills Education. Their responses were as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Level of Knowledge and Skills on the Teaching of Life Skills Education

Adequacy	Frequency	Percent
i. Very adequate	3	5.6
ii. Adequate	24	44.4
iii. Inadequate	20	37.0
iv. Very inadequate	7	13.0
Total	54	100.0

From the results in Table 3, 24(44.4%) teachers indicated that their level of knowledge and skills in the teaching of Life Skills Education was adequate, 20(37.0%) teachers said that their level of knowledge and skills was inadequate, 7(13.0%) teachers indicated that their level of knowledge and skills was very inadequate while 3(5.6%) teachers confessed that their level of knowledge and skills on the teaching of Life Skills Education was very adequate. It emerged from the study that most teachers (50.0%) had inadequate knowledge and skills in the teaching of Life Skills Education, a situation which could hamper effective implementation of LSE curriculum in primary schools. According to Oluoch (2002), teachers need to clearly understand the objectives of the new innovation and the means of achieving them.

This implies that teachers need to undergo training on Life Skills Education in order to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for the teaching of Life Skills Education.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Teachers in primary schools in Nandi East District have never attended any seminars on Life Skills Education and therefore could be lacking adequate professional development skills to enhance effective implementation of LSE curriculum. Furthermore, most teachers have inadequate and very inadequate training in Life Skills Education, a situation that could be hampering the proper implementation of the Life Skills Education curriculum in the area. As such, there is need for funds to be provided for teachers to attend training and seminars on Life Skills education and therefore equip themselves with the necessary professional skills for the teaching of life skills education.

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