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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOW TEACHERS INFLUENCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KISWAHILI CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IGEMBE DISTRICT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers influence the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum in Igembe District. The study was guided by two research questions and employed descriptive survey design. The sample population was 24 headteachers and 24 heads of Kiswahili department who are also Kiswahili teachers. The data was collected using questionnaires, document verification guide and interview schedule. Findings have shown that teachers' characteristics like age and gender do not influence the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum in secondary schools in Kenya. Secondly, it was found out that Kiswahili teachers are given opportunities to attend in-service courses which contributes to effective curriculum implementation. The researchers suggest that further research to be done to investigate on how students' home characteristics affect Kiswahili curriculum implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of a teacher of language is to strive to improve learners' oral and interaction skills and to equip such learners with full repertoire of language. A teacher has to consider what happens when learners try to use a language where they no longer have any control over it. Poor skills would automatically cause breakdown of understanding almost immediately, resulting into nervousness which in turn may further inhibit the ability to speak. Speaking is an integral part of listening and so the two skills need to be developed simultaneously (Gathumbi and Masembe, 2005). Kiswahili, like any other language, is dynamic and keeps growing. The more Kiswahili language grows, the more its implementation strategies become dynamic (Ministry of Education, 2002). For instance, there have been remarkable changes in the current Kiswahili curriculum which was launched in the year 2003. Kiswahili is the most international of all indigenous languages of Africa (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1995). It is the national language in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The Constitution of Kenya not only recognizes Kiswahili as a national language but it also elevates its status as official language alongside English (Republic of Kenya, 2010). It is one of the four national languages in Zaire and it is extensively used in Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Mozambique and Somalia. The objectives in secondary school Kiswahili curriculum in Kenya are to enhance what was learnt at primary level; enable the learners achieve a lasting ability to listen, speak, read and write in Kiswahili; enable them to be creative, analytical and can express themselves in Kiswahili. It is also to identify and take part in seeking for solutions in emerging issues that affect the society such as health, HIV/AIDS, gender, technological development, children's rights and labour issues. Finally, to make the learner maintain his/her environment to sustain life and meet their daily needs and for the future. The method of determining the achievement of the general objectives of education in Kenya is through the learners' performances in examinations after the four year course. Eshiwani (1993) affirms that one of the major

functions of any examinations system is to measure the output of educational system in which it operates. For a successful curriculum implementation there should be qualified teachers who are the actual implementers of curriculum. These teachers should also be well informed of the changes in Kiswahili curriculum, including the new books in the market. There should also be the right instructional materials to aid implementation and time allocated for a particular curriculum should be sufficient. Students should embrace use of Kiswahili in their day to day activities. The language policy in schools should be able to accommodate Kiswahili so as to give it equal opportunity with other languages. Despite the effort made by the Government of Kenya to improve Kiswahili, the performance has been deteriorating over the years. According to the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) grading system, grade A (12 points) is the maximum attainable performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE), grade E (1 point) is the poorest, grade C+ (7 points) is considered the average performance. At the provincial level, the trend of Kiswahili performance in Eastern Province registered a drop from the mean of 5.22 in 2005 to 4.53 in 2008. According to the Kenya National Examinations Council, the trend of students' performance in Kiswahili in Igembe District has been below average (KNEC 2009).

Table 1. Kiswahili performances in Igembe District 2004 – 2008

Year	Mean	Grade	Maximum attainable performance	
			Mean score	Grade
2004	4.34	D	12	A
2005	5.29	C-	12	A
2006	5.22	C-	12	A
2007	5.17	C-	12	A
2008	5.09	C-	12	A

Source: DEO Igembe District, 2010

Table 1 presents the data on Kiswahili performance in Igembe District. From the data it is evidence that the performance of Kiswahili

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in the district has been deteriorating for the last five years. This kind of a situation threatens the success of the Kiswahili curriculum in the district.

Statement of the problem

Kiswahili is the national and one of the official languages in Kenya. Its role in unifying the nation has made it qualify as a compulsory and examinable subject in 8-4-4 system of education. However, the trend of Kiswahili performance in Igembe District has been below average since the year 2004 to 2008. On average the subject has not exceeded a mean grade of C- for the last five years. These results are an indicator that something is affecting Kiswahili curriculum. The government has put a lot of effort aimed at improving student's performance. There have been various workshops attended by teachers on implementation of the new Kiswahili curriculum. Seminars have been conducted at district and divisional levels besides instructional materials being provided to schools. Despite all these substantial efforts by the government to improve Kiswahili performance, the results in Igembe District have been below average (see Table 1). It is evident that there exists a gap. To fill this gap, this study investigated how teachers influence the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum in Igembe District.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were:

- i) To determine how teacher characteristics (age, teaching experience and gender) influence the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum in public secondary schools in Igembe District.
- ii) To assess the influence of in-service training programmes offered to Kiswahili teachers on the implementation of the Kiswahili curriculum in public secondary schools in Igembe District.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i) How do teacher characteristics such as age, teaching experience and gender influence the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum in public secondary schools in Igembe District?
- ii) What is the influence of in-service training programmes offered to Kiswahili teachers on the implementation of the Kiswahili curriculum in public secondary schools in Igembe District?

Review of Related Literature

Professional and expertise levels of Kiswahili teachers in public secondary schools

According to UNESCO (1980) the role of teachers in the process of curriculum implementation is the ability to understand the curriculum and its implications to the teaching and learning situations. This implies that teacher preparedness is a vital component for effective curriculum implementation as they are professionals capable of making rational decisions. Teaching involves human interactions where teachers have to make decisions which touch on the welfare of other people. It is also assumed that teachers as professionals use specialized knowledge and skills on behalf of other people. Hence, for a teacher to perform his/her duties competently, he/she must be capable of using a body of specialized knowledge, making rational professional decisions and making decisions on behalf of others (Shiundu and Omulando, 1992). Secondary school teachers in Kenya are mainly prepared in the universities and diploma colleges where they are trained on both professional and academic disciplines and awarded a degree or a diploma certificate. Universities are the major producers of Kiswahili teachers in Kenya. At the moment, there are 22 public universities, 9 constituent colleges and 31 private universities in Kenya (Commission for University Education, 2013). Each university is meant to excel and expand in a given direction in order to

create at this level, centres of excellence that complement one another in the formation of an effective national institution which is usually measured by the performance of its product (Republic of Kenya, 1999). In this case, teachers in most of our universities have not been able to achieve this goal due to various challenges which our Universities experience for instance the rapid expansion of enrolments which has outstripped the available resources including human resource (KIE, 2005), hence giving out products with limitations as far as performance is concerned. According to Okumbe (2001), the professional role of a teacher is a demanding one and stretches from classroom teaching or curriculum implementation, processing of examinations and pedagogical material preparation and evaluation to modeling the behaviour of the students and acting as role model to the society. The Kenya Institute of Education (2007) points out that teacher should be able to put into operation the syllabus content given the specific subject objectives. In their report the Kenya Institute of Education (2004) on survey carried out during the monitoring of the implementation of the Kiswahili curriculum, it was observed that some teachers indicated in the questionnaires that certain topics like *matumizi ya lugha* (language use) and *sarufi* (grammar) were difficult to achieve their objectives because of mother tongue influences and inadequate time allocation.

In-service of secondary school teachers

In-servicing of teachers is continuously updating teachers with skills to promote efficiency in performance. Bishop (1995) recommends that a more conventional way of introducing teachers to new ideas, techniques and methodologies in education is through in-service courses ranging from a few days to several weeks. Some common forms of in-service programmes include short courses, seminars, workshop and conferences. The teacher is the 'adopting unit' and the king post in implementation of curriculum innovations (Bishops, 1995). New educational programmes cannot be implemented without providing proper training for teachers which enable them look at a particular curriculum development effort as their own and not something being imposed from outside (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2004). Teachers have sometimes been seen as opposers of change. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2004), teachers are reluctant to get involved with changes in the system. Teachers are conformist in nature (Freidenberg, 1965). Further, Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) asserts that many teachers tend to disregard available evidence regarding new curricular or pedagogical practice if it challenges their understanding and outlook, they feel left 'holding the bag' when there is no continued support for the new curriculum (Bishop, 1995). Hugh (1982) says that the tried and tested way of introducing new curricula is by offering a series of specially organized programmes for teachers. He maintains that when teachers are offered this opportunity they are thus in-serviced and the extent of such in-servicing varies greatly from one day, one evening, one weekend or one week to longer residential courses depending on manpower and finance limitations. Omas (2007) conducted a study on effectiveness of implementation of the revised secondary school Kiswahili curriculum in Kajiado District and found out that some teachers had attended few in-service courses. However, the courses had not helped them since the facilitators were not Kiswahili specialist and did not provide them with specific information that could assist them in teaching Kiswahili. Mokamba (2007) carried a study on implementation of Kiswahili curriculum reforms in Ngong Division and found that very few teachers had an opportunity for in-service trainings which were not adequate to prepare them to handle the Kiswahili curriculum reforms. As already discussed teachers play a pivotal role in the implementation of curriculum and thorough preparation and equipping them with skills, knowledge and necessary competencies is paramount.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study used descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey research design was used for its appropriateness in making reality known through collecting detailed factual information that describes

existing phenomena at a given moment in time (Vyhmeister, 2001). This research design sought to obtain information by asking respondents questions about their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours or values. The responses can be given either orally or in writing (Vyhmeister, 2001). This design was appropriate in this study because it enabled the researchers to collect detailed data from the respondents, through the use of questionnaires, interviews and document analysis.

Target population

There are 24 public secondary schools in Igembe District (Education Office, Igembe District, 2010) and all were included in the study. The study targeted 24 headteachers and 24 heads of department who are also Kiswahili teachers.

Sample size and sampling procedure

Sampling makes it possible to draw valid inferences or generalizations on the basis of careful observation of variables with a relatively small proportion of the population (Best and Khan, 2008). In this study all schools in the district were included. This implies that all headteachers and all heads of Kiswahili departments were included in the study.

Research instruments

The data was collected using questionnaires, interview guide and document verifications. Questionnaires were designed for heads of departments and students. The questionnaire for the heads of departments comprised five sections A through E. Section A elicited the background information of the teacher; section B sought information on the in-service training. Section C elicited information on the coverage of the syllabus, section D addressed the instructional materials and finally section E sought information on the involvement of the headteacher in Kiswahili curriculum implementation. One interview guide was developed for the headteachers. It contained fifteen items that elicited information on the involvement of the headteachers in enhancing the implementation of the Kiswahili curriculum. The major documents which included the schemes of work, the lesson plan, the lesson notes and the record of work covered were checked and verified. The document verification instrument elicited data about the availability of the document, the approval and updating of the document and the maintenance of the same.

Reliability of the instruments

The researcher established the reliability of the research instruments before their actual administration. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), reliability is a measure of the degree to which the instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. The researcher tested the reliability of the research instrument by carrying out a pre-test study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The researchers used split half method to determine the reliability of the research instrument. Nachmians and Nachmians (1996) points out that the split half method can be used in determining the internal consistency during the pre-test. The items were divided randomly into two halves and marked with even and odd numbers. Then the scores were tabulated. The results from one half were compared with the results of the other half. From the reliability of half the test, the half correction of the whole test was then estimated using the Spearman Brown prophecy formula that is the reliability coefficient (re) for the full test was given by the formula as:

$$Re = \frac{2r}{1+r}$$

Where Re = reliability of the original test

r = reliability of co-efficient resulting from correlating the scores of the odd items with the score of the even items. A correlation coefficient of 0.73 was realised and hence the instrument was deemed suitable for the study.

Validity of the of the instruments

Before administering research instruments the researchers established their validity. Bussières (1996) states that the validity is concerned with the extent to which a technique actually measures what it is intended to measure. Secondly, the researcher adopted the content validity procedure to determine the validity of the instruments. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), content validity is a measure of the degree to which data collected using a particular instrument represents a specific domain of content of a particular concept. They further state that the usual procedure in assessing content validity of a measure is the use professionals or experts in particular field. In this regard the researchers checked whether research questions were adequately represented in the research instruments.

Data collection procedures

The researchers visited the schools identified where rapport was established with the headteachers and Kiswahili teachers. Through the permission and assistance of the school administration, the researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the teachers. The teachers were issued with questionnaires and were given one week to fill in the questionnaires independently. Document verifications and interviews to the headteachers were conducted on the same day the questionnaires were administered for each school.

Data analysis techniques

After collecting data items from the field using the questionnaires, interview schedules and document verification guide, data were arranged and recorded according to particular research questions. Qualitative data were edited to identify any items that may have been wrongly responded to. Quantitative data were coded by use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. The findings were then presented in tables, percentages, frequency distribution and statistical averages. Statistical data in tables were supplemented with explanations before inferences and conclusions are made.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, out of the 24 questionnaires issued to the heads of departments, 20 (83.3%) were returned. These questionnaires return rates were deemed adequate for the study. All the headteachers participated in the interview.

Demographic data of heads of department

To establish the demographic information of the heads of Kiswahili department, they were asked to indicate their gender. Data revealed that 12 (60%) were male while 8 (40%) were females. The data shows that most of the heads of departments in the schools were males. They were further asked to indicate their professional qualifications. The data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of heads of department by professional qualifications

Professional qualifications	F	%
Diploma in Education	2	10.0
Graduate	12	60.0
Approved Teacher	4	20.0
Masters	2	10.0
Total	20	100.0

Data in Table 2 indicates that the majority of the heads of department were graduates. The data further indicated that all the respondents were qualified as Kiswahili teachers hence could provide reliable information on the implementation of Kiswahili in schools. The respondents were further asked to indicate their teaching experience in Kiswahili and the findings are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Experience in teaching Kiswahili

Experience	F	%
1 - 5 years	4	20.0
6 - 10 years	2	10.0
11 - 15 years	4	20.0
16 - 20 years	2	10.0
21 - 25 years	4	20.0
26 years and above	4	20.0
Total	20	100.0

The findings from Table 3 reveal that the respondents had adequate teaching experience which puts them in a position to implement Kiswahili curriculum. Data shows that most of the teachers have taught Kiswahili for a considerable number of years hence had adequate information on the implementation of the subject in secondary schools. They were also asked to state the number of subjects each was teaching. The findings revealed that a majority of teachers were teaching two subjects.

When teachers were asked to indicate their weekly current load, they responded as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4. Teachers' weekly teaching load

Number of Lessons	F	%
22 lessons	4	20.0
23 lessons	2	10.0
25 lessons	4	20.0
28 lessons	8	40.0
29 lessons	2	10.0
Total	20	100.0

Table 4 show that most of the teachers had 28 lessons per week whereas 50% of the teachers had 25 lessons and below. This workload is not heavy to deter a teacher from doing adequate preparations before teaching.

Influence of teachers characteristics on the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum

Data on the demographic information of the teachers indicated that curriculum implementation was not influenced by gender. This is because Kiswahili curriculum had been implemented in the same way in all the secondary schools hence gender did not influence Kiswahili curriculum implementation. The findings further revealed that all teachers were qualified as Kiswahili teachers. These findings agree with Omao (2007) who in his study concluded that Kiswahili should be taught by trained Kiswahili teachers. The findings are also in line with UNESCO (1980) which noted that the role of teachers in the process of curriculum implementation is the ability to understand the curriculum and its implications to the teaching and learning situations. Since Kiswahili teachers are at the centre of curriculum implementation their preparedness is a vital component for effective curriculum implementation. Heads of Kiswahili department were also found to have had adequate teaching experience which puts them in a position to be able to implement Kiswahili curriculum in the secondary schools. It was revealed that most of the teachers had been teaching Kiswahili for a considerable number of years and hence had adequate information on the implementation of the subject in the schools. These findings therefore indicate that teacher characteristics do not influence Kiswahili curriculum implementation. The findings further concur with Shiundu and Omulando (1992) who state that for the teacher to be able to perform his/her duties competently; he/she must be capable of using a body of specialized knowledge, making rational professional decisions and making the decisions on behalf of others. The headteachers were asked to indicate whether they were familiar with Kiswahili curriculum content. Out of the 24 headteachers, 17 (81.0%) reported that they were familiar while 4 (19%) indicated that they were not familiar. Data indicated that most of the headteachers were familiar with the Kiswahili curriculum content. This implies that headteachers could facilitate more the implementation of the subject if they are familiar with the content rather than when they were not familiar.

Influence of in-service programmes on Kiswahili curriculum implementation

To establish the influence of in-service training on the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum, the headteachers were asked whether they released teachers for Kiswahili in-service training programmes. In this item, all of them (100.0%) said they release teachers for Kiswahili in-service training programmes. The teachers were similarly asked whether the headteachers gave them opportunities to attend in-service training programmes whenever they were available. Their responses showed that 14 (70%) were given chances to attend in-service training. Asked to state how often their headteachers released them for in-service training, 17 (81%) said their headteachers did it yearly, while 4 (19%) said they were released when the in-service courses were organized. The data shows that teachers attended in-service courses. Participation in in-service training puts teachers in better position in the implementation Kiswahili curriculum. The heads of departments were asked whether the headteachers gave equal opportunities to every Kiswahili teacher to attend in-service training whenever it was required. Their responses showed that 16 (80%) got equal chances while 4 (20%) indicated that equal chances were not given. The heads of departments were supposed to indicate whether their headteachers made follow ups to ensure that what they had been in-serviced on was being implemented. In this item, all that is 24 (100.0%) agreed that their headteachers made follow ups to ensure that what they had been in-serviced on was being implemented in schools. In another item that sought to establish whether teachers were trained to teach all aspects of Kiswahili curriculum during their training, data indicated that 16 (80%) had not been trained in all aspects of Kiswahili curriculum. Only 4 (20%) indicated that they had been trained in all aspects of Kiswahili.

Asked to rate the adequacy of training in teaching Kiswahili they had received, they responded as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Heads of department responses on the adequacy of training

Adequacy of training	F	%
Very adequate	6	30.0
Adequate	10	50.0
Inadequate	4	20.0
Total	20	100.0

Data on the adequacy of training as presented in Table 5 show 10 (50.0%) rated it as adequate. This therefore implies that teachers were in a better position to implement Kiswahili curriculum in their schools as a result of the training that they had received. Head of departments were asked whether they had attended in-service courses on the teaching of the Kiswahili. The responses showed equal distribution among those who had attended and those who had not attended at 50% each. The in-service courses were organized by National Education Services (NES), Jicho Publishers and the Ministry of Education. The comments on the courses attended, half of the respondents indicated that they enhanced their teaching of Kiswahili while half of them indicated that trainings did not enhance the teaching of Kiswahili. Those that had benefited state that they were able to handle Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Kiswahili questions, they had learned on skills of examination setting and marking while others indicated that the trainings had enhanced their evaluation skills. The heads of department were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt the in-service training on Kiswahili curriculum had contributed to Kiswahili curriculum implementation. The data is tabulated in Table 6.

Table 6. Contribution of in-service training to curriculum implementation

Extent	F	%
Great extent	10	50.0
Minimal extent	8	40.0
Non response	2	10.0
Total	20	100.0

Data in Table 6 show that a majority of teachers' preferred in-service training programmes as they contributed to a great extent in equipping them with new skills which assist them implement Kiswahili curriculum effectively. Most teachers indicated that they can teach all aspects of Kiswahili. However, a few indicated they cannot teach all aspect of Kiswahili using the knowledge from the universities and colleges, but needed more in-service training programmes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that teacher's characteristics such as age and gender do not influence the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum. Teachers were given opportunities to attend in-service courses such as seminars and workshops. The in-service courses attended by the teachers enhanced their skills in setting exams and understanding how to tackle KCSE examination questions. Hence, in-service courses influence the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum.

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