

Relationship Between Selected Life Skills Education Management on the Performance of Learners in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in Narok South Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to assess the effects of two aspects of life skills education management on performance of learners in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in Narok South Sub County. The study sought to establish the relationship between the learner's self-esteem and the effects of the management of emotions by learners on academic performance in KCPE in Narok South Sub County. Survey research design was used in this study. The target population of the study constituted 240 public primary schools with a teachers' population of 1525 teachers. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents for the study that comprised of 72 head teachers, 137 teachers to make a total of 209 respondents. A questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. Face validity was determined through the use of professionals in the area while reliability was assessed using cronbach's alpha index and was found to be 0.95. Pearson r was used to analyze the data. Based on the findings, it was established that there was a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and emotional management and learner's academic performance in KCPE in Narok South Sub County. The study recommended that schools that sought to improve academic performance must not only insist on learners being taught the examinable subjects but should also consider life skills as a mandatory teaching subject. The results of the study are expected to be of great significance to the policy makers in education in regard to life skills education.

Key words: Life skills, Self-esteem, Emotions, Management

1. Introduction

According to MOE (2008), the school is an appropriate place for the introduction of Life Skills Education because of the role it has as a socializing agent to young people, access to children and adolescents on a large scale, experienced teachers are in place and the high credibility it has with parents and community members. Self-esteem and motions are part of the ingredients that form Life Skill Education (LSE). Life Skills Education (LSE) is relevant to the daily needs of young people when it is part of the school curriculum. LSK helps to prevent school dropout, indiscipline and adolescent pregnancies (UNAIDS, 2003). A part from the impact on the child health, there may be other benefits for the school as an institution. For example, evaluative studies of Life Skills programmes suggest that the methods used can help to improve teacher and student relationship and there are indications that Life Skills lessons are associated with fewer reports on classroom behavior problems (MOE, 2008). Though LSE is part of the primary schools curriculum, it is not actively taught like other examinable subjects. It is a passive curriculum that is left to the different primary schools to take initiatives to teach it to the best of their abilities depending on the need. In Narok South Sub-County primary schools, LSE is not given emphasis during teaching and it is not taken seriously.

2. Background to the Study

Following the study of different Life Skills programs, the World Health Organization identified five basic areas of Life Skills that are relevant across cultures (UNESCO, 2005). These are decision making, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, communication and interpersonal relations. There are many different reasons why Life Skills Education started in different countries in the world. According to Baylies and Bujra (2000) the idea of teaching Life Skills to individuals has its roots in North America. Life skills education initiatives followed a series of international efforts to improve the quality of basic education. These initiatives have been recognized by a number of agencies of international development as skills or competencies that can enable children adapt and cope with the challenges of each day. International development agencies have acknowledged the importance of life skills for some time. Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love (UNESCO, 2001). The Ottawa Charter also clearly explains health in the context of the categorization of life skills for knowing and living with one self, life skills for knowing and living with others and life skills for decision-making.

The 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) took this vision further and included life skills among essential learning tools for survival, capacity development and quality of life (UNESCO, 2005). At this conference, the representatives of different countries raised concerns about the relevance of education and particularly raised the need to focus on appropriate life skills for all learners from all parts of the world. The 2000 Dakar World Education Conference also 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 goals 3 and 6 of the six Educations for All (EFA) goals (UNESCO, 2005).

Many countries Such As Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa are now considering the development of Life Skills Education in response to the need to reform traditional education systems which appear to be out of step with the realities of modern social and economic life. According to WHO wide-ranging application of Life Skills Education in primary prevention of

violence in schools and student dropout has resulted to better foundation for learning. Life skills are widely understood as psychosocial competencies which encompass a person's ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behaviour as s/he interacts with others, his/her culture and environment (Kratli & Dyer, 2006). In this context Early Childhood Counts explains children's optimal development as: The child's ability to acquire culturally relevant skills and behaviors which allow the child to function effectively in his/her current context as well as to adapt successfully when the context changes, and/ or to bring about change (Kratli & Dyer, 2006). That is why the Life Skills approach is referred to as an approach that "develops skills in adolescents, both to build the needed competencies for human development and to adopt positive behaviors that enable them to deal effectively with the demands and challenges in life. This primary school curriculum comprised four core subjects namely; English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). There were another eight subjects which were taught and were on the time table but were not examinable in the Primary Leaving Examination. This made a total of 12 subjects taught in the primary school. In this curricular reform, the approach to life skills remained infusion of life skills in the different subjects.

Currently in Kenya life skill education is a standalone subject as a recent addition to the curriculum in primary and secondary schools. The teaching of life skill as a subject came after life skill education was recognized as an important tool that could bridge the gap between student's knowledge and behavior regarding HIV preventions.

After the need for the life skill education as a standalone subject had been thoroughly established, KIE supported by USAID, worked with other experts to prepare the current LSE course content. In 2008 KIE released the syllabus which defines LSE as the abilities which enable the individual to develop adaptive and positive behavior so as to deal effectively with the challenges and demands of everyday life (KIE, 2008). Course objectives range from appreciating itself to participating in community development. When the syllabus was released, KIE mandated that the course to be taught once per week in all primary and secondary classes in all parts of the country. In Narok County life skills is taught in all schools as stipulated by the ministry of education even though nationally the subject is not examined.

3. Statement of the Problem

Learners in primary schools in Kenya are expected to learn Life skills such as self-awareness, self-esteem, coping with emotion, assertiveness and management of emotions. Officially introduced in Kenya in 2008, LSE has not helped much especially in Narok South sub-county schools in controlling some of the LSE related problems. The reason for introduction of life skills education was to bridge the gap between knowledge and behaviour. However, even with life skills education in primary schools in Narok South Sub County cases of early sexual involvement leading to early pregnancies increased from 14 to 28 cases between 2010 and 2014, early marriages increased from 21 to 36, drop - out rates also slightly increased from 31 to 42 in the same period while drug and substance abuse among the youth, still persist. This is a clear indication that there is an emotional, decision making, self-esteem, and conflict management gaps that needs to be addressed in order to ensure that the learners are able to effectively deal with challenges and demands in their lives.

The constant conflict in the schools among the learners has increased from 14 to 29 cases while the conflict between learners and teacher increased from 6 to 28 cases between 2010 and 2014 (DEOs

Office, Narok South, 2015). Currently, the effectiveness of life skills education is not very clear because learners self-esteem is influenced by all the cases cited. This eventually leads to poor decision making on important academic matters among the learners which leads to poor academic performance in KCPE. Between 2010 and 2014 the highest mean score has been 249.5 in 2012 with the worst score being in 241.7 in 2013. This raises major concerns on the effect of life skills education in KCPE performance of learners in public primary schools, in Narok South Sub County.

4. Research Hypotheses

This research was guided by the following hypotheses:

1. There is no relationship between learners' self-esteem and performance of learners in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in Narok South Sub County.
2. There is no relationship between management of emotions by learners and their performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in Narok South Sub County.

5. Literature Review

Nowadays, despite the deep cultural changes and changes in lifestyle, many people lack the essential abilities to deal with their lives. Several studies have shown that many health problems and mental-emotional disorders have social and mental origins. According to Kelinke (2003) all of us are faced with challenges and problems in our lives. Kelinke further argues that individuals who react successfully to deal with these challenges have three skills: Flexibility, Foresight and reasonableness. These three are part of life skills that gives a person to exert more control on his/her life. Thus, given the increasing complexity and change in social ties and the expansion of social relations in the current era, preparing individuals especially young people to deal with difficult situations seems necessary. Chepkonga (2015) found out that training is essential. The importance and necessity of life skills training becomes known, when we understand that life skills education leads to the development of mental-social abilities. These abilities help individual to deal with the challenges and complexities of life. It also helps bring an individual to life situations to help other people, society, culture and environment. Thus, life-skills training enhance prospective values or changes attitudes, values and behavior (Naseri, 2006).

A successful life skills learning influences the feelings of a learner regarding him or her and others and reinforces mental-social abilities such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, accountability and good interpersonal relationships (Alipour & Nasab, 2015). Learning and practicing life skills leads to enhancing or changing the attitudes and values. In addition, through positive and healthy behavior, a lot of problems can be prevented. Furthermore, relying on teaching life skills methods, we can create and expand self-esteem and self-efficacy which are positive behavior in students. Another study showed that these skills significantly increased self-confidence and flexibility in communicating with others (Bob & Poisin, 2010). Likewise, Bo, Xiaoming, Bonita and Xiaoyi (2010), conducted a research on the quality of life among rural migrants to cities in China. They found out that the teaching life skills or focusing on creating efficient coping skills before emigrating improved quality of life, mental health, and self-esteem (Bo, Xiaoming, Bonita, & Xiaoyi, 2010).

On the other hand, Alipour and Nasab (2015) studied the impact of life skills Training on assertiveness, self-esteem and accountability of pre-university students in Tehran and revealed that life skills training had positive influence on self-expression, and self-esteem of the students and significantly increased these variables. The results of the study showed that life skills education had effects on self-esteem and self-expression of students, and had increased significantly each of these variables. Victori, Karina and Rainer (2009), in their research regarding the impact of life skills education programs to prevent misuse of drugs concluded that life skills have a positive impact on reducing drug and alcohol use among students and enhances their self-esteem. Zaharakar et al. (2010) investigated the efficacy of problem-solving skills training on the self-efficacy of high school female students. It was not clear whether this was as a result of life skill education. The current study therefore sought to establish the link between life skills and self-esteem among the learners and how it relates to academics performance.

The ability to self-regulate is what enables children to stay on task during academics tasks and to persevere on difficult tasks in the face of frustration. It has been argued that self-regulation is as important for academic success as intelligence is (Blair, 2002). In this study focus was on self-control as a factor hence it is not clear whether this is as a result of life skills education or not. Hence this study sought to consider self-control in the perspective of life skills education. Life skill learning is meant to enhance behavioral change among the learners and hence this will influence the learners' decisions, learners' self-esteem, emotional control and management and ability to manage conflict. These factors are assumed to have a direct effect on the performance of the learners in public primary school (Naghsh, et al, 2010). A number of rigorous studies have examined the relationship between children's self-control and academic outcomes. In a hallmark study of emotional control, children were presented with a marshmallow and then given a choice: they could either eat one marshmallow right away or wait a few minutes and receive a second marshmallow (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The number of seconds that children were able to wait served as an indicator of self-control. When these children were tracked years later, their ability to wait for the second marshmallow (their level of self-control) was related to a wide range of outcomes in adolescence, including higher levels of academic and social competence, greater verbal fluency, being more rational and playful, and being better able to deal with frustration and stress and they also had higher SAT scores (Blair & Razza, 2007). This series of studies suggests that self-control as measured by the "marshmallow test" was highly predictive of positive outcomes across academic and social-emotional domains in adolescence. Conversely, children who showed poor self-control during the marshmallow test – that is, children who ate the marshmallows almost right away rather than waiting to receive a second marshmallow exhibited poorer outcomes in adolescence. This is an indication that there is a problem with self-control among many adolescent learners and this study seeks to establish whether life skill education helps in instilling attributes of self-control among the learners.

Children who were better able to sustain attention – to push the button when they were supposed to – and who were less impulsive – to refrain from pushing the button when they were not supposed to – scored higher on assessments of reading, math, and language abilities. Their teachers also rated them higher than their peers on social competence and lower on behavioral problems. Finally, researchers found that higher teacher ratings of effort control (which included inhibitory control, attention, approach, and anger) in preschool was related to higher math and language skills in

kindergarten (Blair & Razza, 2007). These last two studies followed children over time and suggest that higher levels of self-control predict more positive outcomes at a later time. Most of these reports have been conducted in different countries with different education systems and it is not therefore very clear whether the same applies to Kenya and particularly in Narok County. This study seeks to establish whether the self-control could be attributed to life skills education in primary schools.

Similarly, children rated by parents as having higher levels of emotional regulation scored higher on assessments of math and literacy, even after controlling for IQ (Graziano, Reavis, Keane, & Calkins, 2007). Finally, researchers found that higher teacher ratings of effortful control (which included inhibitory control, attention, approach, and anger) in preschool was related to higher math and language skills in kindergarten (Blair & Razza, 2007). Similarly, children rated by parents as having higher levels of emotional regulation scored higher on assessments of math and literacy, even after controlling for IQ (Graziano, Reavis, Keane, & Calkins, 2007). Another study found that higher self-reports of self-regulation (which included suppression of aggression, impulse control, consideration of others, and responsibility) in sixth grade were associated with higher levels of academic achievement. Emotional regulation is also linked to many aspects of social functioning, including behavior problems, internalizing behavior, socially appropriate behavior, and prosocial skills (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). Despite, most of these findings indicating a positive link between various factors and performance of learners but the key driver of these behavior has not been highlighted in the studies.

6. Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design which was found appropriate because it helped to collect data within a short period of time in a vast research area (Bryman, 2004). The target population of the study constituted 240 public primary schools, with 1525 teachers and 240 head teachers in Narok South Sub County (Narok South Education Office, 2014). Simple random sampling was used to select a sample of 72 head teachers out of 240 and 137 teachers out of the 458 teachers from the 72 sampled schools. Table 1 shows the target population, sampling techniques and sample size.

Table 1
The sample

Target Population	Sampling methods	Sample Size.
Head Teachers	Purposive	72
Teachers	Simple random	137
Total		209

A questionnaire was used for the collection of data from head teachers and teachers as it was found appropriate with the large number of respondents involved (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). Data was analyzed using Pearson r while interpretation of results were based on α (.05), 154 degrees of freedom (df), p , r -values and r -critical (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). Results from the r -tests were presented using Tables.

7. Validity and Reliability

While validity of the questionnaire items was ascertained by other experts checking the items, reliability was checked by subjecting the items to a Chronbach's alpha index with the help of SPSS software and was found to be .95. Orodho (2005) and Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006) note that an alpha index of above .70 is good enough for questionnaire items in research.

8. Presentation of Data Analysis and Interpretation for Each Hypothesis

A total of 209 questionnaires were administered to the respondents and a total of 154 (73.3%) were collected and used for the analysis. Headings in this section are based on the research hypotheses. Descriptive analysis (means and standard deviations) of the study variables as shown in Table 2 was used during computation for the establishment of relationships using Pearson r with the help of SPSS.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviations of the Study Variables

Variables	M	SD
Learners self esteem	3.35	.967
learners management of emotions	3.20	.500
Performance of learners	2.97	.567

8.1 Learners Self Esteem on their Academic Performance

Hypothesis 1

To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the learner's self-esteem on the Academic performance of learners, the mean and standard deviations were computed. To test this relationship, items' mean (3.35) and standard deviation (.967) that collected data on learners' self-esteem and those for academic performance (M = 2.97, SD = .567) (see Table 2) were subjected to a Pearson r test with the help of SPSS software. The results of the computation were presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson's Correlation Analysis of the Effect of Learners Self Esteem and Academic Performance

Variables		Learners self esteem	Performance in K C P E
Learners self esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	.286
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	154	153
Performance in K C P E	Pearson Correlation	.286	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	153	153

$p < .05$ (2-tailed); $df = 153$; critical $r = .166$; $\alpha = 0.05$.

With a df of 153, critical $r = .166$ at an alpha level of 0.05. Results in Table 3 indicate that the analysis yielded an r of .286 which was greater than .166. This correlation between the two variables was weak but statistically significant and can be reported as $r(153) = .286, p < .05$ on performance. This result led to the rejection of null hypothesis 1 (see Section 4). This therefore indicates that teaching life skills education in primary schools enhances the learner's self-esteem which has a positive effect on the academic performance of the learners.

8.2 Learners Management of Emotions and Academic Performance

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 (see Section 4) sought to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the learner's management of emotions and their academic performance in KCPE in Narok South Sub County. To test this relationship, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was computed between learners management of emotions ($M = 3.20, SD = .500$) and performance of learners ($M = 2.97, SD = .567$) (see Table 2).

Table 4

Pearson's Correlation Analysis of the effect of Learner's Management of Emotions and Performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education

Variables		Learners Management of Emotions	Performance of Learners in KCPE
Learners management of emotions	Pearson Correlation	1	.643
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	154	153
Performance of learners Kenya Certificate of Primary	Pearson Correlation	.643	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	153	153

$p < .05$ (2-tailed); $df = 153$; critical $r = .166$; $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results for this computation were presented in Table 4. With a df of 153, critical $r = .166$ at an alpha level of 0.05. The analysis yielded an r of .643 which was greater than .166 (see Table 4). This led to the rejection of null hypothesis 2. This indicates that teaching life skills education with its aspect of management of emotions in public primary schools enhances the learner's academic performance.

9. Discussions

Gori (2015) notes that academic performance has several factors. In this study those that were considered include self esteem and management of emotions. The first hypothesis which stated that there is no relationship between learner's self-esteem and academic performance of the learners was rejected meaning that there is a relationship between learner's academic performance and the learner's self-esteem. The results further indicates that majority of the respondents agreed that learners with self-esteem are likely to make an informed decision and hence improve their

performance in KCPE. This indicates that learners self-esteem helps them to concentrate on academics thus improved performance. It was also agreed by most of the respondents that life skills significantly increased self-confidence and flexibility in communicating with others hence improvement on performance of the learners. It was further noted that most of the respondents agreed that teaching life skills has helped learners from disadvantaged families to accept their background and agreed to the statement that life skill education boosts learners' self-esteem. This indicates that life school education enhances a learner self-esteem which eventually leads to better performance among the learners in KCPE exams.

The study also sought to establish the relationship between learner's management of emotions and their academic performance. Based on the results the null hypothesis was rejected meaning that there was a relationship between learner's management of emotions and their academic performance. The analysis also showed that life skills education has helped in bringing about change in behavior. This came from most of the respondents who indicated that life skills education is important in emotional management among the learners because it brings about change in behavior which influences the learner's emotions. It was also noted that most of the respondents agreed that life skill education enables pupils to appreciate themselves the way they are hence they are in a position to manage their emotions. When a person accepts who he / she is, then they can manage their emotions well.

Effective emotional management aspects of social functioning, including behavior problems, internalizing behavior (shyness, loneliness), socially appropriate behavior, and pro-social skills are also managed within the individual. The study further noted that management of emotions by learners affects performance. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement by indicating that life skills education has helped learners to cope with stress and improve their skills for managing personal feelings. Majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that learners who manage their emotions avoid irresponsible behavior indicating that teaching life skills to the learners helps them shape their emotions and hence this influences their performance. It was noted that learners who are able to manage their emotions are likely to perform well in KCPE.

10. Conclusions

The study aimed at establishing the effect of learner's self-esteem and management of emotions as aspects of life skills education in relation to performance of learners in KCPE exams in Narok south sub-county in Kenya. The study concluded that teaching life skills education has an effect on the learner's self-esteem, in the sense that, if the learners understand themselves they will be able to improve their academic performance. This could be achieved through increased self-confidence and flexibility in communicating with others. Self-confidence also enhances confidence among the learners and this helps to improve their performance.

The study also revealed that teaching learner's life skills education in public primary schools improves their performance as they are able to manage their emotions. When a learner is able to manage his or her emotion then he/she can be able to relate with others well and cope with stress and improve their skills for managing personal feelings. When a learner has these characteristics his /her performance is likely to improve. Finally, the study concluded that teaching life skills to learners in public primary schools improves their ability to manage conflicts and this enhances their performance.

11. Recommendations

Based on the findings and the study variables, the following recommendations were made.

- i. It is recommended that academic performance can be achieved by enhancing learner's self-esteem and this could only be achieved through teaching life skill education. Schools should ensure that teaching life skills education is mandatory as provided by the ministry of education so as to shape the self-esteem of the pupils.

- ii. It was recommended that the teaching of life skills with its aspects of self esteem and management of emotions as a subject should be examined at KCPE level so that the schools can ensure that the syllabus is covered fully for the benefit of all learners.
- iii. Life skills education with all its aspects should be taught in teachers training colleges in order to equip the teachers for effective teaching of the subject in primary schools.

12. Areas for Further Research

From the study it is suggested that since life skills seems to be critical in the performance of the learners, a study covering other areas of entire Narok County should be done to establish whether the results can be similar in enhancing performance. It was also suggested that a study should be done to examine whether parents have a role to play in the teaching of life skills education (self esteem and emotional management) in an informal manner and to what extent it enhances academic achievement. Finally there is need to conduct more research on the aspects of life skills education like decision making, empathy, coping with stress, problem solving, effective communication and interpersonal relationships, that were not captured in this study and check their effects on academic performance of learners in primary schools in Narok South Sub-County.

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