

Effectiveness of Community Based Learning: A Review of its Application in the Kenyan Situation

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Abstract: With the ever-changing world, most systems of education around the world ended up focusing more on classroom learning. They avoided Community-based learning models and approaches that used to be there before, especially in the African community setting. Many institutions in Kenya have adopted the Community-based learning in fostering high-quality learning to the students. According to government directive in the post-Covid 19 era, there is a need for Community-based learning enhancement to make sure learners acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies while they are at home. The community-based programs help learners to develop personal skills, strengths, interests and increase awareness of how it can be used to benefit students learning and planning for their future. This study sought to determine the effectiveness of community-based learning while reviewing its application in the Kenyan situation. The objectives of the study were to determine the effect of community-based learning on learners' self-awareness; examine the effect of community-based learning on learners' interpersonal skills; investigate the effect of community-based learning on learners' volunteerism and to establish the effect of community-based learning on learners' academic development. To collect data, the researcher relied on past studies and also evidence from countries that had implemented community-based learning. A desk review was adopted. Purposive sampling was used to select the articles. The study involved a review of more than 20 articles touching on community-based learning and education without specifying the education level to which the studies were done or sector. The review has shown that, indeed, community-based learning can be effective if appropriate interventions enable students and the community to progress. This article used survey information to provide a qualitative assessment of the effect of community-based learning crossways several fields such as academic, communication, and skills of critical thinking. However, not all courses can be taught in a community education setting. Still, the knowledge gained from that setting is applied to specific courses like environmental and health associated ones. Discussions and findings provide new perspectives on developing relevant community-based programs. This paper looks at the community-based learning effectiveness and its application in the Kenyan education situation.

Key Words: Education, Effectiveness, Community-Based Learning,

I. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of new formal education, most education systems worldwide focused more on classroom learning. They avoided Community-based learning models and approaches that used to be there before, especially in the African community setting. It has resulted in challenges of the

production of graduates who do not meet proper job skills and competencies to enable them to translate their learned skills into practice. This situation has not only been recorded in Kenya but other countries as well. For instance, in Egypt, Megahed, Purinton, El-Shimi, Skaggs, and Amer (2018) found that students graduated with academic knowledge and skills that do not interconnect with the current real-life concerns or employment from universities there. This was partly blamed with the lack of civic engagement lessons being undertaken by Egyptian students while in secondary schools. This challenge has made several nations (starting with the United States of America to rethink ways of linking activities of learning in classrooms with a variety of learning experiences available in the contemporary society (Owens & Wang, 1996). This created a rising consent that alteration was required in the education systems, not only in revolutionizing what is taught but also in how and where it is taught. With this in mind, the concept of CBL was introduced in the United States of America under the National and Community Service Trust Act (1993). In Kenya, due to curriculum reform, community-based learning has been adopted in the current 2-6-3-3-3 form of education (famously known as competency-based curriculum). At first, it is important to look at various definitions that have been put forward by different agencies and scholars concerning CBL.

Community-Based Learning definition

Hutter (2008) defined CBL as a method of teaching that enhances learning by involving learners in important services to their institutions and contemporary society. It is also "a course-based, educational experience in which learners participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflects on the service activities in a way to gain more understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility." Further, Osman & Castle (2006) defined community-based learning as a method of experimental learning where learners receive credit academically for addressing the Community and human wants. Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011) defined community-based learning as a learning and teaching approach that tried to incorporate the service of communities with an academic core curriculum. From the Egyptian perspective, Megahead et al. (2018) defined it as learning pedagogics that coalesces academic study with community service. In Kenya, KICD defined Community-based learning

as an experiential learning technique that incorporates learning in a classroom and community service to enable students to reflect, experience, and learn from the Community. Therefore, community-based learning is a learning approach that coalesces effective services in a community with reflection and instruction to enhance the learning familiarity, strengthen community participation, and instruction on civic responsibilities. It is therefore expected that teachers and other stakeholders involved in it are better prepared with skills and competencies on its implementation, an issue that this paper will deal with it in the latter stages. Further, the above definition suggests that students have to be involved in the Community-based learning, whereby they apply their experience on the academic areas into practical activities in the Community for personal and academic development.

According to many scholars, the concept of Community-based learning has been embraced at different levels. Celio et al. (2011) discovered that it had become widespread in the United States, with more than 75.0% of public schools (elementary and high schools). Colleges and universities embraced service-based learning as part of their curriculum. In Zambia, Kalemba (2013) discovered that this approach was being used to target orphan and vulnerable children who did not get the opportunity to study in normal schools. In Egypt, as part of ensuring the graduates were employable and contributed to community development, private and public universities had embraced service-learning (Megahed et al., 2018). In Nigeria, through adopting the CBE approach, learners are sent for clinical rotations to the community healthcare to unload tertiary healthcare. In Uganda, the quality and consistency of learning and teaching in Community based education is reinforced through the adoption of CBC and developing standards for community sites. Stellenbosch University in South Africa, learners, are provided with an optional year-long wide-ranging rural involvement experience. In Kenya, Pacho (2019) noted that although the country has significant strides in actualizing the Community-based learning method, its adoption and utilization can enrich the learning experience and strengthen local community participation in the gap between theory practice.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were;

- i. To determine the effect of community-based learning on learners’ self-awareness
- ii. To examine the effect of community-based learning on learners’ interpersonal skills
- iii. To investigate the effect of community-based learning on learners’ volunteerism
- iv. To establish the effect of community-based learning on learners’ academic development

Aspects of Community Based Learning

CBL is substantiated mainly on experimental learning; a pedagogic philosophy connects theory to practice to enhance

the learning experience (Megahead et al., 2018). Community-based learning incorporates volunteerism, experiential learning, and problem-based service-learning, across a range of disciplines (Carlisle, Gourd, Rajkhan & Nitta, 2014). Barret (2012) indicates that through CBL, learners gain a more understanding of the course content through incorporating theory with practical. In contrast, societies gain access to resources, volunteers, wide-ranging research, and academic expertise housed in several disciplinary departments. Through community-based learning, teachers aim to assist learners in developing a sensation of civic responsibility, personal and academic skills (Ibrahim, 2010). Pacho (2019) indicated that CBL is based on the principle of mutuality, and so it comprises a balanced emphasis on both learning and addressing real wants in society. Berryman and Bailey identified six characteristics that can be applied to CBL. It includes:

- Apprenticeship is a way of life and might not be renowned as an effort of teaching.
- The job to be done should be a driving force.
- There is a temporary ordering of acquiring skills from easy to more complex.
- Bodily performance and embodied knowledge and skills should be visible.
- Performance standards and competence evaluation are inherent and often internalized by the learner.
- Instructors and teaching should be invisible.

According to KICD, involving learners in community service is a form of experimental education that allows learners to employ their knowledge and skills acquired in a different setting. Teachers, therefore, help learners in analyzing what they have learned by taking part in this activity and how it can be applied to their development personally and academically. The table below presents the differences that exist between traditional (conservative learning and CBL).

Table 1: Differences between Traditional Learning and CBL

	Traditional Learning	CBL
Location	Classroom	Community, classroom
Teacher	Teacher	Facilitator or preceptor, teacher, students
Learning	Writing Examinations Passive Authoritarian Structured Compartmentalized Cognitive Short term	Writing Examinations Active Shared responsibility Reflective Integrative, expansive Affective and cognitive Long term and short term
Reasoning	Deductive	Inductive
Evaluation	Teacher	Facilitator or preceptor, teacher, self-assessment by learners

Source: Mueller (n.d).

Educational institutions (primary, secondary, colleges, and universities) might involve in community-based learning differently due to different institutional visions, traditions, goals, and mission (Jacoby, 1996). Various institutions embraced service learning as a belief, several as part of their religious mission. Other institutions embrace service-learning as part of assurance to citizenship, participatory democracy, and civic responsibility. Others grounded their service-learning programs in partnerships in Community (Jacoby, 1996). Irrespective of how educational institutions incorporate Community based learning, service learning must do the following (Eyler & Giles, 1999):

- Should be connected to programs and course learning outcomes and promotes teaching and learning
- Should be experimental
- Allows learners to participate in activities that address Community and human wants through structured opportunities for learner development and learning.
- Providing time for guiding reflection in media, discussion, or writing.
- Developing a sense of civic engagement, caring, social responsibility, and awareness globally.
- Involving activities that have meaning to the participants and promote deeper understanding.
- Addressing issues identified by the Community and requires problem-solving
- Promotes cooperative team work and learning
- Embraces the reciprocity concept between the learner, an individual, or a company being served

Service-learning might be a separate course in the college curriculum or incorporated through several courses. In Kenya, according to KICD (2017), CBL covers factors of financial literacy, citizenship, communication skills, research, entrepreneurship, and life skills.

III. THEORY SUPPORTING COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING

Community-based learning, as seen from the above information, is that it is grounded on experiential learning. Hence David Kolb's (1984) experimental learning theory is mainly used as a theoretic basis for analyzing and designing CBL programs. Kolb's (1981) learning theory implies that efficient and effective learning happens when learners can complete real experience cycle, philosophical observation, non-concrete conceptualization, and dynamic experimentation. Traditional learning approaches focus only on the abstract conceptualization (theorizing) factors of the model, deprived of placing the philosophy within the setting (Barret, 2012). Hence, traditional teaching methods hinder the possibility for learners to learn from experience and apply the philosophy into practice. Experience from immediate concrete (affective) is based on reflection and observations. The learner uses observation to create opinion and an idea; 'theory' where new implications for action are figured out. The implications

or hypotheses serve as guidance in acting to build new experiences (Kolb, 1981).

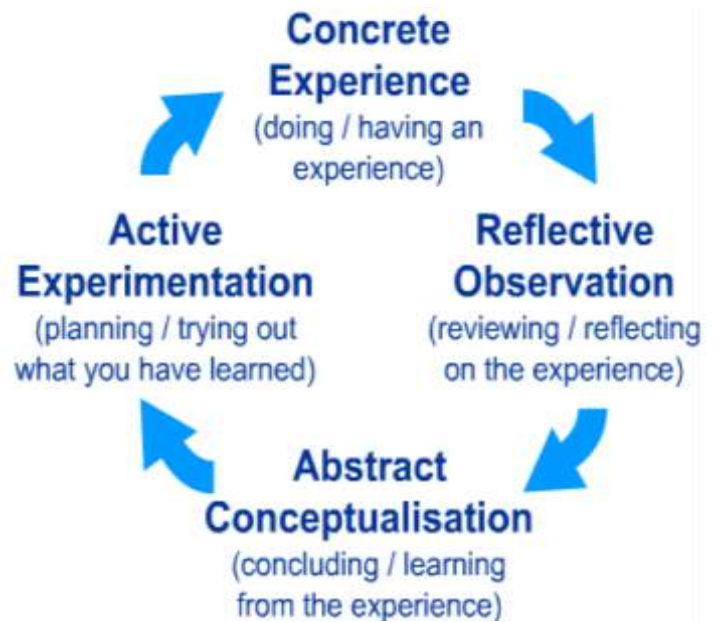


Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

Source: Kolb (1981)

The following interpretation can be made concerning the above model

1. Concrete experience is doing something for an individual in a social state.
2. Reflective observation is analyzing and observing. (What happened? What did we hear, smell, feel, think, see as we helped other individuals?)
3. Abstract conceptualization is forming explanations or theories for why events happened. (How does lesson experiences fit to what students have learned in class? What can students learn from the experience?)
4. Active experimentation is taking further action. (How does understanding and experience of students impact their future actions?)
5. Given Kolb's theory experimental learning, CBL offers a real experience that, paired with a critical synthesis of how the service links to key course ideas, can stimulate theoretical growth and learning among students in various institutions of learning.

Empirical Studies on Community Based Learning

Various empirical investigations have been done concerning CBL approaches in educational settings. In the United States of America, Carlisle, Gourd, Rajkhan, and Nitta (2014) piloted the Community Based Learning Impact Scale (CBLIS) as an instrument that tested the effect of CBL at one of three liberal arts campuses for a major University whereas assessing the effects of CBL experiences on learners. A community-based impact survey was developed to measure Community-based learning impact on student learning at the University.

The sample comprised undergraduate and graduate students who took part in courses designated as community-based learning courses (CBL) in 2011 and 2012. The research found out that CBLs adoption had a significant positive impact on students learning experiences; hence they recommended its adoption across most university courses. Celio et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of sixty-two kinds of research involving 11,837 learners showed that, contrasted to controls, learners participating in S.L. programs revealed meaning fulgains in five outcome fields. The fields include social skills, self-attitudes, performance academically, civic engagement, and school and learning. Mean influences ranged from 0.27 to 0.43. The findings reinforced the opinions and views of educators who posit that S.L. programs can benefit learners at different educational levels in various ways. These multiple benefits include such areas as enhanced self-efficacy and self-esteem, more positive attitudes toward school and education, an increase in positive attitudes and behaviors related to community involvement, and gains in social skills relating to leadership and empathy. The relatively high mean impact of academic performance (E.S. = 0.435) is probably the most significant finding for educators and advocates of S.L. programs.

Amalba conducted another research, van Mook, Mogre, and Scherpbier (2016), investigate learners' perception of the usefulness of COBES and its potential impact on the choice of professional speciality and preparedness to work in remote areas. A mixed form cross-sectional study design using semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions were used for health facility staff, faculty, and students and members in a community. Almost 45 percent of the learners showed that COBES would have an impact on their choice of profession speciality. This means that the implementation of service-learning may influence learner career speciality in the future as it exposes them to the real situation of their theoretical knowledge they gained in the classroom. Other students believed that COBES could impact them in choosing to practice in a remote area. Exposure to different kinds of disease conditions among different population groups might impact their professional choice (they were undertaking medical-related courses). This approach, if implemented, could prove to be beneficial to Kenya, where the concentration of the majority of medical workers is in urban areas. Still, their exposure to CBL during their training period could result in their decision to work in rural areas in the future. Ibrahim (2010) utilized survey data intending to provide a qualitative assessment of the influence of community-based learning through various domains such as communication, academics, critical thinking and interpersonal skills, citizenship locally and globally, and development of intra-personal. Differences in year in-school, gender, and age in learner perceptions of the importance of community-based learning are also analyzed and reported. Research results showed that community-based learning students worked toward showing that teachers in most of the departments were aware of the community-based learning

pedagogics and offered such opportunities to their learners and that Community-based learning was appropriate pedagogics to use in most kind of classes. Learners and teachers attempted to choose valuable opportunities that offered real, authentic contributions to the contemporary societies served. Students' perceptions of the effect of community-based learning indicated that learners are aware of the importance of academics, interpersonal, intra-personal, and societal significance of community-based learning. Most learners seem to go beyond the surface, obvious gains of community-based learning and talk about deeper, more modest gains such as self-examination, reflection on one's values, and finding meaning in an individual life. Learners value Community-based learning and the effect it potentially has on all domains of their functioning.

In Egypt, Megahed et al. (2018) adapted and employed quantitative tools developed by the Centre for Service & Learning at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) upon their grant of permission to examine CBL role in promoting student engagement and civic responsibilities. A total of 114 learners completed the CMG surveys in two rounds of collection of data. The findings of their research revealed the learners' civic-mindedness level at the selected University and indicate how several learner experiences on campus contribute to the learner CMG overall average score. It means that CBL implementation increased students' civic responsibilities awareness hence resulted in their improved academic scores. Talib, Baingana, Sagay, van Schalkwyk, Mehtsun, and Kiguli-Malwadde (2013) examined how community-based education (CBE) was evolving at Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI) institutions to attain these objectives and goals. They applied information from the first two years of site visits and surveys to characterize the efforts of community-based education crossways the MEPI network and offer comprehensive descriptions of three community-based education models amongst the MEPI programs. It was noted that there was a widespread investment in community-based education, with significant diversity in the objectives, characteristics, and goals of training activities among MEPI institutions. Three examples explain how institutions are reinforced and evaluated in different models of community-based education to attain MEPI objectives and goals. They found the diversity of CBE implementation among MEPI schools in Africa. In Uganda, to year-long rotations providing comprehensive training in rural health at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. The University of Jos model in Nigeria was yet a different approach to CBE, showing how CBE can support the decentralization of clinical training. The above research studies were conducted among Uganda, South Africa, and Nigerian universities. Still, research needs to be undertaken in Kenya to see whether the CBE models are effective or similar to three nations.

In South Africa, Khabanyane and Alexander (2013) tried to encapsulate the learners' reflections on the learning content

they have grasped, the skills they gained through the interventions, and the observations they reported in their journals. The interdisciplinary research reports on the results of a service-learning element to teach postgraduate students, attached to the Department of Comparative Education and Education Management, to execute particular skills (management tasks) by implementing structured interventions at their selective institutions. Class presentations, reflective journals on students' observations, experiences, and actions revealed important parallels between the implemented service-learning curricular (management tasks) and the respective 'involved' school communities. They contended that an understanding and applying service-learning is disadvantageous in transforming institution communities and evaluating teachers and teams of school administration to think differently about supporting teaching and learning. Service-learning is pedagogics of engagement that might provoke reflective processes whereby teachers, through knowledge and skills acquisition and resources, might ease implementing realistic community-engagement initiatives. While analyzing the state of CBL implementation in sub-Saharan African countries, Pacho (2019) observed that pedagogically, many teaching and learning experiences in Africa had been predominantly of a 'banking' nature, in which accumulation and reproduction of ideas have been emphasized. Pacho called a paradigm shift to more active and innovative approaches to good education, helping learners develop their full potentials and actively and responsibly in their local and global communities. This was to happen through the adoption of CBL, which can help transform education in Africa.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The CBL program has different advantages (benefits) to various stakeholders associated with it. The beneficiaries of the Community-based learning are listed below:

Students – they are the main beneficiaries of the Community-based learning approaches. At first, the CBL offers opportunities for learners to achieve their professional, curriculum, and personal goals (Barret, 2012). According to Barret, it positively impacts personal learner development, such as spiritual growth, moral development, personal identity, and a sense of personal efficacy. Moreover, in research done by Vanderbilt University in 2001, CBL had positively impacted the development of an interpersonal, capability to work best with other individuals, and skills of leadership and communication. Moreover, the same research discovered that teachers and students reported that service-learning positively impacts learners' academic learning. Besides, CBL positively impacts the sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills. Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011) indicated that CBL had become a popular teaching method from primary institutions to universities. Despite the increased presence of CBL in the current world of education, they noted that it was still unclear what results of learners are linked with CBL programs and what aspects are

linked to more efficient programs. This calls for more research to be undertaken to verify this argument.

Instructors/teachers – considering the lessons are being undertaken outside the normal classrooms, CBL reduces teacher workload associated with normal classroom teaching and learning. According to a research done by Hoebeke, McCullough, Cagle, and Clair (2009), despite at times teachers not being at the field with learners directly controlling the learning activities, the substantial instructor time commitment is needed to read learners journals, facilitating reflection sessions, planning the assignment, and obtaining community partners. For university lecturers, who have linked activities of service-learning in their curriculums with research and service interests, research has revealed an increase in commitment to continue in its use.

Institutions – there are also benefits that institutions accrue from starting CBL programs. According to Mueller (2017), CBL revitalizes the institutional philosophy by rising learners' involvement in their learning, invigorating departments, and allows departmental teaching staff to network service projects with research interests. CBL also offers to learn about contemporary society that eases the transfer of knowledge and skills and modification to the practical surrounding because of the mentoring surrounding formed amongst staff, learners, school, administration, and the broader society (Hoebeke et al., 2009).

Community – the society to which experiential learning takes place also stands to benefit. According to Mueller (2017), community benefits include increasing learners' awareness of community social and economic wants and concern in working in community sceneries in the future. One research established that learners in a nursing research program establish collaborations with society organizations to help develop research proposals that result in the submission of funding (Rash, 2005).

Community-based Learning challenges

Despite its significant benefits to various stakeholders in improving learning outcomes, CBL adoption has also faced criticism and challenges from various fronts in application and practice. It was noted by Owens and Wang (1996) that from a philosophical perception, most of the teachers still maintained the oldest epitome of education, in which it aims to convey to learners the content of knowledge and skill owned by the instructor. In such an epitome, there is no need for input from learners about what is to be studied, how, when, or where. The teacher maintains control in directing education, and learners are tested to determine whether they remember what they were taught. In the new epitome, teachers must function more in the mentorship and coach role, of which many could be against it. Another research by Barret (2012) discovered that the implementation of CBL resulted in more work for educators with no additional compensation being provided by their institutions. Other challenges associated with the CBL were; lack of confidence in utilizing a new pedagogy by

instructors or students. There's risk linked with loss of control, which is possible in a classroom setting, and uncertainty about integrating into the course. This problem was seen in Kenya by KICD (2019) during the early stages of piloting the CBC curriculum. Other challenges are that CBL takes time away from covering course content. There is a growing fear that it might negatively influence tenure because of time away from research and negatively affect the evaluation of courses (Barret, 2012).

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article has looked at the effectiveness of a community-based learning model towards addressing the education quality goals associated with the production of half-baked graduates. They fail to meet the demands of the job market and also societal expectations. As per many scholars who have been consulted in this investigation, the world is now shifting towards Community -based learning, but the significant difference has been seen in adoption between developed and developing nations. A review of studies has shown that this method has received significant support in both basic and higher education levels in the United States of America but less in sub-Saharan Africa countries, including Kenya. The review of research studies has shown that the CBL has been popular among medical schools in the west. Still, its application and use in Kenyan medical schools remain an area that has not yet been researched to check its suitability and effectiveness. With the new challenges brought in by climate change, technological change, and also global pandemics, nations have no other options but to embrace experiential learning to ensure the goals of education are attained. For instance, the National Goals of Education of Kenya No. 5 seeks to promote social equity and responsibility. This goal can only be achieved through Community- based learning, which is yet to take root in an education setting.

Nevertheless, the concept has been embraced in the Kenyan new curriculum, but its implementation begins at senior school level (upper secondary school level and tertiary levels) in selected subjects; life skills education, engineering, career technology studies, pure and applied sciences. Therefore, the ministry of education, colleges, and universities must develop an experiential learning model that will ensure the gains (benefits) associated with using this method are attained in Kenya to ensure the goals of Vision 2030 are attained. The local Community has a pressing need to which experiential learning if properly implemented, would address their needs. As KICD (2017) curriculum guideline projects, through adoption and utilization of this method, learners work on real-life issues that make academic learning relevant. It concurrently enriches their analytical capability, professionalism development, social skills, self-efficacy, civic and ethical responsibility. The Kenya Vision 2030 places great emphasis on the interconnection between education and the labor market, the need of creating entrepreneurial skills and competencies, and the need of strengthening partnerships with the private sector and all this would be realized when the

whole of education system adopt Community based learning that has been proven to be effective from the empirical studies that have reviewed in this paper.

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