

Principals' Use of School Curriculum and Promotion of Social Cohesion in Public Secondary Schools in Machakos County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate how principals' use curriculum in promoting social cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County. The study was guided by the ecological systems theory of human development and socialization. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design wherein a target population of 375 principals' and 9 Sub County Directors of Education were respondents. Further, the study used stratified proportionate sampling in selecting sample sizes for the study in which case a sample size of 113 principals and 9 Sub County Directors of education totaling to 122 respondents were surveyed. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. Quantitative data was processed and analyzed using SPSS software version 26 and presented in tables. Simple regression analysis was employed in testing hypotheses of the study for inferences. While qualitative data was transcribed into themes and presented in narratives. The findings of the study revealed that principals use of school curriculum $t(113) = 10.316; p \leq .05; \beta = .661$ was statistically significant in contributing to the promotion of social cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County. The study recommends among others that MOE makes value creating education mandatory in the school curriculum. Further principals should ensure language policy in schools is enhanced and prohibit the use of vernacular language in schools.

Background to the study.

Globally, national cohesion has been advocated by many countries as a key component in upholding the national unity (Midtboen, 2015). In America, school curriculum as a management practice has been used to assist teachers and students to live amicably and to handle conflict better hence promoting social cohesion. A study by Oder (2005) on the social cohesion role of educational organizations: Primary and secondary schools established that schools foster or retard students' tolerance, respect for diverse others and a sense of overarching community identity and values. This means that schools have a significant role of ensuring that social cohesion is achieved at all levels of learning. The current study examined how principals use formal, non-formal and informal curriculums as well as life skills in promoting cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

According to world bank (2011), Sri-Lanka has initiated measures to promote social cohesion through the school curriculum, text books, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, the organization of schools and language policy. The study concluded that, these activities promote the values and concepts of good citizenship, democracy, social tolerance and the appreciation of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in the younger generation. This implies that there are definite school related activities that promote social cohesion among learners despite their social, economic and cultural background. This study examined how school principals in Kenya use curriculum activities to ensure social cohesion among students.

In the context of Africa, curriculum in Tanzania is adaptable and sensitive to student needs, preparing students to integrate into society and compete in the global economy. In Advanced level secondary education, English is the language of instruction, while Kiswahili is taught as a topic in specific subject combinations. Kiswahili is

one of the cultural connection instruments used to promote the growth and appreciation of national unity, as well as to maintain ethics, identity, and personal integrity. These efforts are geared towards promotion of social cohesion among learners and among teachers in Tanzania.

According to Amina (2014), in a study on government community partnership in provision of education in rural Tanzania established that social cohesion remains a solution to social economic problems of the rural poor populace. The study concluded that social relations and networks between actors in a social system are a significant asset for a collective work in the school and the community hence promotion of social cohesion. The current study examined how principals use curriculum in promoting cohesion. In South Africa, according to a study by Lumadi (2020), fostering an equitable curriculum for all is essential for social cohesion. This study utilized a qualitative approach and concluded that schools were best placed to promote values, equality, justice and unity for purposes of achieving social cohesion. The current study examined how principals use formal, non-formal and informal curriculums as well as life skills in promoting cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County; and whether school curriculum trains learners on key aspects of cohesion such as values, unity, justice and service to the community. The design of the study was a descriptive survey design utilizing quantitative and qualitative approaches.

In Nigeria, a study by Dunu (2018) on promoting national cohesion through education and culture: Implication for sustainable development established that cohesion is promoted as an anchor of peace and reconstructive education which provides prerequisite values and necessary attitudes that are needed for harmonious co-existence. Furthermore, in the school system, there are official clubs and organizations in existence. Learners who appreciate and participate in these clubs gain experience in working with others outside the individual organizations working and competing with outside groups with less friction. To attain a genuine and lasting national cohesion, the study concluded that peace and reconstructive education must be inculcated in the school curriculum at both primary, secondary and tertiary levels in the education system. This implies that values are an important component in the school system and in the absence of the values could promote anarchy in school. The current study examined how principals use formal, non-formal and informal curriculums as well as life skills in promoting cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

In Kenya there are various characteristics of social cohesive curriculum. These are as follows: National goals and priorities are reflected directly in curriculum; the curriculum is child centered; the curriculum is inclusive in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability; Information Technology is integrated to the curriculum; the curriculum is delivered in a number of different modes, for example distance education. Additionally, cohesive curriculum should have elements that enhance peaceful social co-existence, contribute to economic development and stop social vices such as corruption, tribalism and insecurity in order to bring unity and cohesiveness (KICD, 2016).

The national goals of education in Kenya provide the curriculum developers with the general intended outcomes of education. All the eight goals provide opportunities for fostering national cohesion and integration. These are: Foster nationalism, patriotism, and promote national unity (Goal 1); Promote social, economic, technological and industrial needs for national development (Goal 2); Promote individual development and self-fulfillment (Goal 3); Promote sound moral and religious values (Goal 4); Promote social equality and responsibility (Goal 5); Promote respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied cultures (Goal 6); Promote international consciousness and foster positive attitudes towards other nations (Goal 7) and lastly goal number 8 which is to promote positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection (KIE, 2002).

These goals have been achieved over the years through the creation of the national secondary schools, national anthem and use of one language of instruction and communication in schools in Kenya. This is to ensure that all members of school community irrespective of their ethnicity are comfortable at school and that learners and teachers from different communities should learn and teach in the same schools as one body. However, due to the dynamic nature of Kenya, with 42 tribes of different languages, there are certain circumstances and safety concerns that make students and teachers seek transfers hence the need for this study to establish such factors in public secondary schools in Machakos. The current study examined principals' management practices in promoting social cohesion in public secondary schools.

Mwanzia et al (2015) in a study on the relevance of the school curriculum in promoting national cohesion in Machakos County that comprised a sample size of 48 teachers and 8 sub-County quality assurance and standards officers and anchored on descriptive survey design established that secondary school curriculum content gave the students little opportunity to critically reflect on issues related to national cohesion which was attributed to lack of practical skills.

A study by Njeng'ere (2014) on the role of the curriculum in fostering national cohesion and integration: Opportunities and challenges and using library based research at KICD utilized both printed and electronic documents to explore the extent to which the current curriculum in Kenya is designed to foster cohesion and integration. The study established that secondary school syllabuses provide opportunity for fostering national cohesion and integration through the mainstreaming of the following cross cutting issues namely: Gender responsiveness, child and human rights, social responsibility, Integrity, Moral values, rights and responsibilities of citizens. The current study examined how principals use formal, non-formal and informal curriculums as well as life skills in promoting cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

Objective of the Study

The study was guided by the following objective.

To establish the influence of principals' use of curriculum in promoting social cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses was tested.

Ho1: There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' use of school curriculum and promotion of social cohesion.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the ecological systems theory of human development and socialization by Bronfenbrenner (1992). The ecological systems theory lays stress on the quality and context of the child's immediate environment. According to this theory, the home, peers, the kids in the court yard, class mates at school, and close relations influence student behaviour, interaction and relationship and therefore have a bearing on an individual decision to promote cohesion. The theory was relevant to this study because it highlights the influence of multiple factors in shaping the course of development within a given community hence promotion of cohesion. The theory also emphasis on the wider condition that surround learning, an intricate balance mechanism of the learning process itself and the role played by various actors; namely friends, parents, teaching staff, the larger community and the societal blue print, for instance religious, economic and educational values which are key to cohesion.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized descriptive survey design. According to Orodho (2012), descriptive survey design is used to collect in-depth information and enabled the researcher to study the relationships that exist, practices that prevail, beliefs and attitudes held and trends that are developing in regard to promotion of cohesion. The sample size comprised of 113 principals' and 9 Sub County directors of education, totaling to 122 respondents. The study used questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis to collect data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study sought to establish how principals use school curriculum in the promotion of social cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos county. In this regard, the study explored various aspects on school curriculum through which principals could use to promote social cohesion such as use of teaching methods,

use of school subjects and use of co-curricular activities as analyzed hereunder. The principals were asked to rate the extent to which listed teaching methods were being used in schools to promote social cohesion on a scale range between 1 and 5 where 1= very great extent, 2= great extent, 3 = moderate extent, 4 = low extent and 5 = no extent at all. The listed teaching methods were: lecture method, demonstration, discussion, narration, dramatization, role playing and field trips. Analysis of how each of these methods promotes social cohesion is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teaching methods and promotion of social cohesion as reported by the principals

N =113	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev
Lecture method	14.9	28.9	29.8	21.1	5.3	2.73	1.115
Demonstration	23.7	35.1	32.5	7.9	.9	2.27	.943
Discussion	30.7	43	15.8	8.8	1.8	2.08	.988
Narration	10.5	24.6	41.2	18.4	5.3	2.83	1.021
Dramatization	15.8	25.4	28.1	28.9	1.8	2.75	1.094
Role playing	16.7	26.3	27.2	22.8	7.0	2.77	1.183
Field trip	9.6	26.3	26.3	26.3	11.4	3.04	1.174
Teaching methods						2.64	.653

From Table 1, it can be observed that about 44 percent of the respondents were of the view that lecture method promotes social cohesion to a great extent, while about 30 percent of them were of the view that it promoted social cohesion to a moderate extent and about 26 percent of the principals held the view that lecture method promoted social cohesion to a low extent (Mean =2.73, SD=1.11). With regard to the use of demonstration method, about 58 percent of the principals were of the view that the method promoted social cohesion to a large extent, 33 percent to a moderate extent and about 8 percent to a low extent (Mean =2.27; SD=.943).

On the use of discussion method, majority of the principals (74%) held that it promoted social cohesion to a large extent, 16 percent were of the view that discussion method promoted social cohesion to a moderate extent while about 10 percent held that discussion method promoted social cohesion to a low extent (Mean =2.08; SD= .988). On the use of narration, 34 percent of the principals held the view that it promoted social cohesion to a large extent, 41 percent to a moderate extent while 24 percent were of the view that narration promoted social cohesion to a low extent (Mean =2.83; SD=1.02).

Regarding the use of Dramatization method, 41 percent of the principals were of the view that it promoted social cohesion to a large extent, while 31 percent held that it promoted social cohesion to a low extent and 28 percent were of the view that it promoted to a moderate extent (Mean =2.75; SD =1.09). As for the use of role play as a teaching method, 43 percent of the principals held that it promotes social cohesion to a large extent, 27 percent to a moderate extent and 30 percent to a low extent (Mean = 2.77; SD=1.18). Finally, on field trips, 36 percent of the principals were of the view that it promoted social cohesion to a great extent, 26 percent to a moderate extent while 38 percent held that field trips as a teaching method promoted social cohesion to a low extent (Mean= 3.04, SD=1.17). Overall, the listed teaching methods contributed to the promotion of social cohesion to a moderate extent (Mean = 2.64, SD=.65). However, it should be noted that discussion method

(mean =2.08) and demonstration method (mean 2.27) contributed to the promotion of social cohesion to a great extent.

The study further delved to establish the views of principals on how particular school subjects contributed to the promotion of social cohesion. The views were collected on a scale range of 1-5 where 1= very great extent, 2= great extent, 3= moderate extent, 4= low extent and 5 = low extent. Analysis of the listed subjects and the extent of their contribution to the promotion of social cohesion is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Responses of principals on use of school subjects in the promotion of social cohesion

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev
Religious Education	48.2	35.1	8.8	4.4	3.5	1.80	1.015
English Literature	39.5	41.2	14.9	1.8	2.6	1.87	.917
History and Government	29.8	44.7	15.8	8.8	.9	2.06	.943
Geography	18.4	37.7	30.7	12.3	.9	2.39	.956
Kiswahili	43.9	39.5	10.5	2.6	3.5	1.82	.971
Music	28.1	31.6	16.7	11.4	12.3	2.48	1.339
Life-skills	29.8	23.7	28.1	11.4	7.0	2.42	1.226
School subjects overall mean						2.122	.756

As can be observed from Table 2, nearly 83 percent of the principals were of the view that religious education promotes social cohesion to a great extent, about 9 percent held to a moderate extent while about 8 percent were of the view that religious education promoted social education to a low extent. On the other hand, about 81 percent of the principals were of the view that English literature promoted social cohesion to a large extent, 15 percent of them held to a moderate extent while 4 percent were that it promoted social cohesion to a low extent. Regarding history and government, about 74 percent of the principals held the view that the subject promotes social cohesion to a large extent, 16 percent to a moderate extent while 9 percent were of the view that it promoted to a low extent.

With regard to the subject of Geography, about 56 percent held that it promoted social cohesion to a large extent, 31 percent to a moderate extent and 13 percent to a low extent. On the use of Kiswahili, about 83 percent of the principals were of the opinion that it promoted social cohesion to a large extent, 11 percent to a moderate extent and 6 percent to a low extent. Regarding music, about 60 percent of principals opined that the subject contributed towards social cohesion to a large extent, 17 percent to a moderate extent and about 23 percent to a low extent. Finally, on the subject of life skills, about 53 percent of the principals held the view that it contributed to social cohesion to a great extent, 28 percent to a moderate extent and 19 percent to a low extent.

Overall, school subjects contributed to the promotion of social cohesion in schools to a great extent (mean = 2.12; SD =.76). The relative contribution per subject to the promotion of social cohesion as established from the study in order of extent is: Religious education (mean = 1.80); Kiswahili (Mean= 1.82); English Literature (mean =1.87); History and government (Mean =2.06); Geography (mean =2.39); Life skills and Music with

means of 2.42 and 2.48 respectively. Most of the respondents felt that religious education promoted social cohesion more than other subjects because of the moral teachings. Kiswahili on the other hand was touted as a common language spoken by all thus enhancing unity among the speakers.

However, in order to find the relationship between principals use of school curriculum and promotion of social cohesion as espoused in the hypothesis, it was necessary to conduct a simple regression analysis to establish the effect of this relationship as analyzed in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.698 ^a	.487	.483	.55401
a. Predictors: (Constant), SCOLCURR_COH				

Regression results in Table 3 indicate the goodness of fit for the regression between principals use of curriculum and the promotion of social cohesion was satisfactory in the linear regression, considering that the regression coefficient was different from zero. Besides, the regression coefficient of .698 implies that the relationship between principals use of curriculum and social cohesion was strong and positive. An R square of 0.487 in the model, indicates that 48.7 % of the variances in social cohesion among public secondary schools in Machakos County can be explained by the variances in use of school curriculum by principals.

In order to ascertain whether the model depicted in Table 3 could be used to predict the dependent variable on the basis of the independent variable, an ANOVA table was generated and presented as shown in Table 4.

Table 4.: ANOVA school curriculum and social cohesion

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.661	1	32.661	106.414	.000 ^b
	Residual	34.376	112	.307		
	Total	67.037	113			
a. Dependent Variable: SOCOHSION						
b. Predictors: (Constant), SCOLCURR_COH						

Table 4.shows that the overall prediction model was statistically significant; $F(1,112) = 106.414$; $P \leq .05$. This implies that principals use of school curriculum had a statistically and significant relationship with the promotion of social cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos county. In order to check the contribution of the independent variable (school curriculum) in terms of predicting the outcome variable (social cohesion), analysis was done using the unstandardized coefficients.

Table 5 displays the regression coefficients of the independent variable (school curriculum).

Table 5: Coefficients on use of school curriculum and social cohesion

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.648	.151		4.303	.000
	SCOLCURR_COH	.661	.064	.698	10.316	.000

a. Dependent Variable: SOCOHSION

Table 5 displays the regression coefficients of the independent variable (school curriculum). The results reveal that use school curriculum is statistically significant in explaining the promotion of social cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County; $t(113) = 10.316$; $p \leq .05$; $\beta = .661$). The unstandardized beta coefficient of .661 means that for each unit increase the use of school curriculum, social cohesion increases by .661 units which is significant as per the model. This therefore implies that principals use of school curriculum plays an important role towards the promotion of social cohesion. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between principals' use of school curriculum and promotion of social cohesion was rejected for an alternative.

Discussion

School curriculum can be defined as the totality of learning experiences provided to students in a school set-up. It refers to what goes on in school setup as learners interact with the learning environment (Adela & Valentin, 2019). As such, this study sought to establish the principals use of school curriculum and in particular the use of teaching methods, drama, music, ballgames, and school subjects towards the promotion of social cohesion in schools. Overall the findings from the study revealed that principals' use of school curriculum was statistically significant in promoting social cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County; $t(113) = 10.316$; $p \leq .05$ as shown in Table 5. Further, it was revealed that the relationship between principals use of school curriculum and promotion of social cohesion was positive and significant ($r = .698$; $p \leq .01$) implying that regular use of drama, music, ball games led to enhanced social relations hence improved friendship & tolerance among teachers and students. Arising from the results of this study also is that most principals encouraged the use of curriculum in promoting social cohesion to a great extent (mean= 2.21, SD = .813).

With regard to use of school subjects, the findings in Table 2 revealed that school subjects contributed to the promotion of social cohesion in schools to a great extent (mean = 2.12; SD =.76). The subjects of Religious education (mean = 1.80); Kiswahili (Mean= 1.82); and English Literature Some topics taught in Religious education such as love, honesty, kindness, unity of believers and a just society are important components of social cohesion in secondary schools in Kenya and that is why Religious education is rated first. In addition, Kiswahili is a national language preferred by the majority of Kenyans and it is the language that is used for interethnic communication and therefore useful for community cohesiveness. However, there was no evidence that school principals have made deliberate effort to ensure use of Kiswahili is promoted in public secondary schools. The use of Kiswahili should take a centre stage in public secondary schools because it is one of the subject that directly unifies staff and students from all parts of the country.

CONCLUSION

Findings from this study have shown that school curriculum plays an integral role towards the promotion of social cohesion. In particular, the study findings revealed that principals promoted social cohesion through various curriculum activities such as drama, music, debate and ball games. The study also found that subjects in the curriculum such as religious studies, and Kiswahili had content that can build cohesion and unity among learners and teachers however, from document analysis, it was found that principals did not have deliberate efforts of promoting Kiswahili. Similarly, values and community service was not part of the education curriculum, yet they are core aspects of cohesion. On the other hand, time spent in games, drama and music was limited. From inferential analysis, the study established that there was a positive and significant relationship between school curriculum and promotion of social cohesion by principals to inspire love, friendship, cooperation, consensus and teamwork to make a student or teacher stay in the school.

It is on this basis that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between principals' use of school curriculum and promotion of social cohesion was rejected. The study therefore concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between principals use of school curriculum and promotion of social cohesion in public secondary schools in Machakos County. This implies that school principals' use of various aspects of the formal and nonformal curriculum to build cohesiveness among learners and teachers was inadequate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the current study makes the following recommendations

Regarding principals use of school curriculum and promotion of social cohesion, this study recommends that:

- i. MOE and KICD to incorporate national values and community service in the curriculum to enhance social cohesion among teachers and among learner
- ii. Principals to enhance the teaching and speaking of Kiswahili by setting aside a Kiswahili speaking day in order to enhance unity among learners and among teachers

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