

Head Teachers Capacity Building and Availability of the Required Learning Resources for Effective Social Studies Syllabus Change-- A Case of Nakuru County Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Primary School Social Studies syllabus in Kenya has had a number of changes in the recent past. Within the same period, a steady decline in the subject's national mean grade at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education done at the end of primary school education has been observed. The main purpose of this study was to find out whether head teachers were inducted on the changes in Social Studies syllabus that took place in 2009 and 2011 respectively. This was in addition to finding out their opinion on the availability of the Social Studies learning resources. The study which adopted a survey approach and used descriptive data analysis found that only 42.2 percent of the head teachers had attended capacity building on the syllabus change that was to be effected in January 2009. Another 34.4 percent of them attended capacity building on the 2011 Social Studies syllabus change. As a result, the respondents expressed an urgent need for capacity building for all the areas of Social Studies curriculum ranging from subject content (67.7%) to preparation of Schemes of work (50.5 %). Further, only slightly above half of the respondents were comfortable with the Social Studies teaching learning resources available in their schools. The study thus recommends an urgent review of the current policy on teacher's capacity building and provision of the learning resources in Kenyan primary schools with the aim of improving curriculum delivery.

Keyword: Social Studies, Syllabus Change, Capacity building, learning resources

1. INTRODUCTION

Primary school Social Studies syllabus is one of the primary school courses under the 8-4-4 system of education that was introduced in Kenya after the recommendations of the Presidential Working Party on the Second University of 1981 (Ministry of Education, 2010). The main aim of the subject is to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, desired attitudes and values essential in preparing them to live as expected of them in the physical and social environment in which they grow (Kenya Institute of Education, 2009) These essential skills that primary school Social Studies curriculum is expected to impart are those that assist in productive problem solving, decision making, assessing issues and making balanced value judgment(Kenya Institute of Education, 2010a) . However, since the curriculum was reviewed in 2002, new development that had emerged had not been addressed by the curriculum (Kenya Institute of Education, 2010b). These included launching of the Kenya Vision 2030 in 2008, the promulgation of the

Constitution of Kenya and the East African Protocol (Ministry of Education 2012). Issues pertaining to these developments needed to be addressed by the curriculum.

Thus, despite the rationalization of the whole primary school curriculum in 2003, evaluation of the curriculum between 2004 and 2006 recommended further revision of the primary school Social Studies curriculum (Kenya Institute of Education, 2009). The result was a revision of the Social Studies primary school syllabus in 2009 that addressed issues of curriculum overload and unclear objectives. This was closely followed by yet some more changes in 2011 when amendments of the 2009 Primary school syllabus were made. This was necessitated by the promulgation of the constitution of Kenya of 2010 and the amendments were therefore meant to make the content relevant and meaningful to the learners (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Such frequent changes in the curriculum are likely to have a toll on the teachers if not effectively managed. To prevent this, teachers need to be promptly provided with the necessary capacity building that provides the required information to be able to plan for implementation of the changes well before the due date of implementation. Fullan (2007) is of the opinion that curriculum change process must provide the teachers with clear specific details about what is required if effective implementation of intended change is to occur. Further Ornstein and Hunkins (1998) emphasize the importance of scheduling the accessibility of in- service training which must reach those involved in curriculum implementation. Head teachers being the supervisors of curriculum implementation in their schools are particularly in need of regular induction training especially whenever curriculum changes occur. It is out of this realization that Kenya Institute of Education recommended a study on the relationship between management courses for head teachers and curriculum implementation (Kenya Institute of Education, 2010).

Induction training on curriculum change should go hand in hand with provision of well-designed textbooks for effective implementation of the new curriculum in schools. Abagi and Odipo (1997) asserts that textbooks as inputs in education play a crucial role in the determination of education outcomes. This is perhaps because they offer a systematic plan for the curriculum, learning materials that engages and motivates the learner as well as exercises that enhance and sustain important knowledge skills (Ross 2010). Several studies have affirmed the importance of textbooks in enhancing achievement, after finding a positive correlation between access to textbooks and other learning resources on one hand and academic achievement on the other (Uwezo,2011, Thuku and Hungi 2005,)

In view of the above, the study aimed to establish whether the head teachers who are in charge of curriculum implementation in their respective primary schools received timely induction on the Social Studies syllabus change whenever it occurred. In addition the study aimed at finding out who was in charge of the said head teacher's capacity building.

Secondly due the recognition of the importance of learning resources in curriculum implementation, the study purposed to find out the opinion of the head teachers on the adequacy of key Social Studies learning resources in their schools. Since a change in the syllabus in most cases necessitate the revision of learning resources especially text books, the study aimed at finding the efficiency of the text book publishers in coming up with the required learning resources as the situation dictated. This was to be achieved through seeking the opinion of the head teachers on the availability of the key Social Studies learning resources in the market.

2. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design which Shaghnessy, Zechmeister and Jeane (2011) posit is an excellent method of describing people's attitudes and opinions was adopted in this study. The design was in addition used because of its ease in using questionnaires as data collecting instrument. A sample of 108 head teachers out of a target population of 987 head teachers in Nakuru County was selected using simple random sampling. Head teachers questionnaire was used as the main method of collecting data followed by descriptive data analysis. The data obtained after analysis was descriptively presented with the aid of tables.

The study adopts the theory on advanced by Lovell and Wiles (1983) which suggest that change incorporate five processes that include leadership, communication, release of human potential, problem solving and evaluation. Since change comes as a result of new knowledge, people need to be made aware of this new knowledge. However, for them to see the need for change, they must understand the change and how it works (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1998). It is for this reason that communication is a very important component of the change process. It is only after people are convinced on the need for change that release of human potential and subsequent problem solving mechanism would efficiently take place for effective change to occur. Communication of curriculum change is normally done through capacity building training starting with supervisors of curriculum implementation before engaging the teachers who are in direct contact with the learners.

3. RESULTS

Below are the results of investigating on the research questions below

- i) What percentage of primary school head teachers were inducted on the changes in the 2009 and 2011 Social Studies syllabus respectively?
- ii) Which areas of Social Studies syllabus was induction courses most needed?
- iii) To what extent are the head teachers satisfied with the Social Studies learning resources availability in their respective schools?
- iv) What is the head teachers experience on the availability of the key Social Studies learning resources in the market?

3.1 *Capacity Building on 2009 and 2010 Social Studies Syllabus Change*

Only 46.2 percent of the 108 head teachers surveyed had been inducted on the 2009 changes in the Social Studies syllabus. Further Out of those who had attended induction training, only 7.2 percent attended the training in 2008 in readiness for implementation of the changes scheduled for implementation in January 2009. This means only about 7 percent of the head teachers

received timely induction on the 2009 syllabus change. 42.2 percent of the Social Studies induction seminars and workshops were organized by textbook publishers.

The scenario was even worse on the 2011 Social Studies amendment of the 2009 syllabus. Though 94 percent of the head teachers were aware of the amendment, only 35.4 percent of them had attended Social Studies induction training on the same. Of concern was the finding that 15.7 percent of the head teachers had no copies of the circular that detailed the 2011 Social Studies syllabus amendment in their schools four years after it had been released. Social Studies teachers in such schools therefore most likely relied on textbooks alone if available as a source of information on the syllabus change, which is inadequate for effective implementation of the syllabus change. Again, only 5.8 of those who were lucky to have been inducted got it timely in 2010 before implementation of the changes in January 2011. As with the induction of the 2009 syllabus change, textbook publishers played a substantial role by organizing 42.2 percent of the training workshop and seminars. Text book publishers' interest in inducting teachers on the syllabus change was mainly to market their text books that were in line with the changes in the syllabus and not really to equip the teachers with skills needed to implement the changes.

3.2 Areas which Require Induction Training

Social Studies content/subject matter, its assessment and teaching methods were the main areas that head teachers felt their Social Studies teachers needed most as shown in table 1

Table 1. Areas which Require Induction Training according to the Head Teachers

	Most needed	Needed	Somehow needed	Least needed	Not needed at all
1. Social Studies content/subject matter	67.7%	16.1%	6.5%	3.2%	6.5%
3. Teaching methods in Social studies	58.1%	19.4%	11.8%	3.2%	7.5%
4. Teaching learning resources in social studies	51.6%	29.0%	11.8%	4.3%	3.2%
5. Teaching learning activities in Social Studies	52.2%	22.8%	13.0%	8.7%	3.3%
6. Assessment methods in social studies	61.1%	15.6%	12.2%	4.4%	6.7%
7. Schemes of work preparation in social studies	50.5%	16.1%	12.9%	6.5%	14.0%

3.3.1. Availability of Social Studies Learning Resources in the School

Availability of learning resources is important in the implementation of any curriculum. Head teachers were requested to indicate their level of satisfaction with availability of the key resources necessary for implementation of Social Studies curriculum. On average, only slightly more than half of the head teachers were satisfied with the availability of the various Social Studies resources as shown in the table 2 below.

Table 2. Availability of Social Studies Learning Resources in the School

	Most satisfied	Satisfied	Somehow satisfied	Least satisfied	Not satisfied at all
	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %
1. Copies of the new 2009 Social Studies syllabus	29.8%	23.8%	20.2%	13.1%	13.1%
2. Copies of the 2011 Social Studies syllabus amendment	31.5%	24.7%	18.0%	9.0%	16.9%
3. Social Studies reference materials for teachers such as revision textbooks	27.5%	31.9%	17.6%	17.6%	5.5%
4. Recommended Social Studies Pupils' course book containing all the changes in the syllabus	25.0%	29.5%	28.4%	11.4%	5.7%
5. Teachers Guide books on the respective Social Studies pupils books course books mentioned in 4 above	25.3%	25.3%	30.8%	14.3%	4.4%
6. Wall maps of Kenya showing the 47 Counties	25.6%	17.8%	21.1%	16.7%	18.9%
7. Copies of Atlas books that show the 47 Counties in Kenya.	33.0%	17.0%	19.3%	17.0%	13.6%

Source; Field Data 2016

It is of concern that 26.2 of the head teachers were either least satisfied or not satisfied with the availability of the Social Studies syllabus. This is an important document that all teachers are supposed to be using in implementing the curriculum. Same case applies to 25.9 percent of the head teachers who were equally least satisfied or not satisfied at all with the availability of the circular on 2011 Social Studies syllabus amendment in their schools. Updated wall maps and

atlas showing how the country was sub-divided as per the 2012 Kenya constitution were the scarcest Social Studies learning resources in the schools.

3.4. Head Teachers Experience on the Availability of Social Studies Learning Resources

Lack of satisfaction on the availability of most of the key Social Studies learning resources was perhaps as a result of the unavailability of the learning resources in the market. 55.5 and 48.9 percent of the head teachers reported that the necessary wall maps and atlases respectively were either rarely available in the market or were not available at all. This is as demonstrated in Table 2 that shows the head teachers experience in the availability of key Social studies learning resources in the market.

Table 3. Head Teachers Experience on the Availability of Social Studies Learning Resources in the Market

	Easily available	Rarely available	Not available at all
1. The new 2009 Social Studies syllabus	75.9%	14.8%	9.3%
2. 2011 Social Studies syllabus amendment circular	45.3%	47.2%	7.5%
3. Social Studies Teachers Handbook (2010) by KIE	46.2%	34.6%	19.2%
4. Recommended Social studies pupils text books with all the changes in the syllabus	50.9%	39.6%	9.5%
5. Wall maps showing Kenya divided into counties	46.2%	46.2%	7.6%
6. School atlases showing Kenya divided into counties	51.9%	40.4%	7.7%

Source; Field Data 2016

The required 2009 Social Studies syllabus in the experience of the head teachers was the most easily available among the listed necessary Social Studies learning resources with 75.9 percent of the head teachers indicating it was easily available.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

On capacity building, the findings of this survey were similar to those of the 2010 Primary School Summative Evaluation Report which indicated that continuous capacity development of teachers was not effectively planned or was absent all together (Kenya Institute of Education, 2010) For instance, the amendments of the 2009 Social Studies syllabus were to be implemented with effect from January 2011, yet the circular that detailed the amendments was dated January 10 the same year. This meant the teachers did not receive the information in time to prepare for the changes in the implementation of the changes. Results from the data analysis further suggest that capacity building in Social Studies was needed as a matter of urgency. This was because in all cases more than half of the respondents indicated the need of training in, Social Studies content/subject matter (67.7 percent), Assessment methods (61.1 percent), Teaching methods

(58.1 percent), Teaching learning activities in Social Studies (52.2 percent), Teaching learning resources (51.6 percent), and schemes of work preparation in Social Studies (50.5 percent). The high number of teachers in need of capacity building in Social Studies suggest that most of them are not comfortable with their Social Studies knowledge and skills they possess and hence are likely not to be effective in the implementation of the curriculum. This perhaps partly explains the decline in subject national mean score since the syllabus change.

Though primary schools received funding for the purchase of learning resources every year, only 58.4 percent of the head teachers were comfortable with the availability of Social Studies pupils' course book containing all the changes in the syllabus in their schools. The implication of this is that effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum was compromised by lack of adequate copies of the syllabus as well as pupils Social Studies course books which are key in curriculum implementation. This is because as Rose (2010) argues, availability of textbooks enables teachers to make effective use of class time by avoiding tasks such as copying text into a chalkboard, thus creating more time for pupils to spend on active learning. This is in addition to enabling them make use of a wide range of teaching strategies. These include assigning reading exercises to the whole class while providing more focused teaching to slower learners, stimulating classroom discussions about materials that have been read by learners and providing reading homework and associated questions that reinforce classroom lessons.

Of major concern was that though the required Social Studies syllabus was indicated by majority of the head teachers as the most available learning resource, only 53.6 of the head teachers were comfortable with the availability of this extremely important learn resource in their schools. This suggests most head teachers underrate the importance of the syllabus in curriculum implementation. There is a possibility therefore that many teachers use text books in their teaching with little or no reference to the syllabus. This could hamper the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum as the summative evaluation of the primary school curriculum raised concern about the quality of the recommended materials in schools. Some were found to have had factual errors, inconsistent information, inaccuracies and poor or difficult language for the learner (Kenya Institute of Education, 2010).

If the findings of this study are a reflection of a similar scenario in other areas of Kenya, this could perhaps partly explain the reason behind the declining KCPE examination candidates' performance in Social Studies from a mean of 37.46 in 2009 to a low of 32.85 in 2013 at the national level (Kenya National Examination Council, 2014). This is the period that coincides with the cited changes in the Social Studies syllabus.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn from the results of the study

1. Majority of the head teachers were not inducted on the changes in Social Studies syllabus. The few that received the required capacity building hardly got it in good time to prepare their teachers on the implementation on the changes as scheduled.
2. Although capacity building was required in all areas of the Social Studies syllabus identified by Kenya Institute of Curriculum development, Social Studies subject matter was an area identified as requiring urgent attention.

3. There was inadequate number of the essential Social Studies learning resources in the primary schools in Nakuru County that would enable effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum.
4. Except for the new 2009 Social Studies syllabus, most head teachers had a challenge in sourcing the essential Social Studies learning resources in the market.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings suggest that there is need to have a serious evaluation of the head teacher's capacity building in curriculum implantation. This should be aimed at coordinating it so that it is provided timely and to all head teachers. In addition the Ministry of Education and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should take a center role in funding capacity building on a regular basis and ensuring that the training offered of quality and based on the teachers needs. In deed the primary school summative evaluation report of 2012 by Kenya Institute of Education posited that in-service training of teachers in Kenya is hampered by inadequate time, financial and human resources. The report also mentioned about there are numerous initiatives by various players in capacity building that are uncoordinated. This was illustrated by the provision of this important service by various text book publishers who in some cases competed for teachers' attention but mainly for the purpose of marketing the books. There is also need of evaluating the adequacy and the effectiveness on the utilization of Free Education Funds earmarked for purchase of learning resources. This should be in line with government policy that promises to ensure provision of quality learning and teaching materials (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, 2012). Lack of adequate Social Studies teaching learning resources could be an indication that the schools do not receive adequate funds to purchase all the required resources or the funds are not efficiently used. Text book publishers need to ensure that their Social Studies learning resources that have been approved by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development are readily available in the market.

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