

The main coping Strategies being Applied by teachers and school Managers to Implement Life Skills Education in Trans- Nzoia West District, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The gist of this study was to investigate the coping strategies applied by teachers and school managers to implement life skill education in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District, Kenya. This study used Social Learning Theory or Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Albert Bandura (1986), which explains that children learn to behave through both formal instruction (for example how parents, teachers and other authorities and what role-models tell them to behave) as well as observation) amongst others. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. From the target population of 1800 students, 150 teachers and 37 principals in 37 public secondary schools in the district, stratified random sampling technique was adopted to draw 15 principals, 30 teachers and 180 students yielding 225 subjects. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and students while interview schedules were used to collect data from the principals. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically. The main findings were that: the teachers and school managers were not well prepared to implement lifeskills education because of the fact that not only were the teachers not specifically trained to handle LSE, but they also claimed that since LSE is not examinable subject, it was also an added burden in the context of the high student-teacher ratio due to inadequate teaching force. In addition, although instructional resources are fairly available in most schools visited, they were grossly inadequate. While the attitude towards LSE education was positive amongst students, the teachers had negative attitude. It was evident that teachers and school managers had adopted various largely appropriate and participatory coping strategies including discussion, debates, brain-storming, case studies and storytelling amongst students and teachers to implement the LSE curriculum. What remains to be established is the extent of effectiveness of the applied strategies in meeting the objectives of LSE curriculum. It is thus recommended that relevant Government Ministries and semi autonomous Agencies (SAGAs) should fast track staff development initiatives through in-service training to equip teachers and school managers with relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the implementation of LSE curriculum not only in the study locale but in other counties experiencing similar constraints in the country.[374 words].

Keywords: Life skills education, Implementation, level of preparedness, teachers, school managers, Secondary schools, Coping strategies, Trans-Nzoia West District, Kenya.

Introduction

Background to the Study

The trajectory of studies and emerging academic discourse on the topic of on Life Skills Education globally, regionally, nationally and locally indicate that there is as yet no consensus on the conceptualization of the term life skills education (Abobo & Orodho,2014; Cronin,1996; Parson,et.al.,1988; Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu & Nthinguri, 2013; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO,2012;UNICEF,1999,2002; UNESCO,2012; WHO,1997), and this makes the implementation of the education component rather complex. Contributing to this debate, Cronin (1996) defines Life Skills as those skills or tasks that contribute to the successful, independent functioning of a person in adulthood. A study by Abobo and Orodho (2014) contends that these skills may generally be grouped in five broad clusters: self-care and domestic living, recreation and leisure, communication and social skills, vocational skills, and other skills vital for community participation. The WHO (1997) defines Life Skills, as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable persons to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Based on this definition, a working definition was formed for South East Asia Region (SEAR) countries on Life Skills as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable them to deal effectively with the demands and challenges within the family, community and cultural context (WHO, 2001). According to UNICEF (2002) definition of life skills, Life Skills include cognitive skills, practical skills, person's positive behaviour that enable persons to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life Skills are psycho-social skills including problem-solving and critical thinking skills, personal skills such as self-awareness, and interpersonal skills. Possessing life skills means having qualities such as high self-

esteem, sociability, tolerance, action competencies to generate change, capabilities to have the freedom to decide what to do and who to be (UNCEF, 1999).

Notwithstanding the lack of consensus on the concept of life skills, a critical examination of the Education for All (EFA) goal three (3) stresses the need to ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults should be met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills (Republic of Kenya,2012). Coincidentally, the Republic of Kenya in collaboration during the end of decade evaluation (EDA) of the achievement of EFA goals in 2012 conceded that this goal remains a difficult area to conceptualize and measure due to the complex nature of life skills and lifelong learning and the fact that quantitative benchmarks for these programmes are not yet well defined nationally and internationally (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). As a consequence of this complex scenario, while assessing the achievement of EFA in Kenya, the evaluating team focused on three life skills areas, namely: HIV and AIDS Education, Peace Education, and Technical Industrial and Vocational Education and Training (TIVET). In making this focus, Republic of Kenya/UNESCO (2012) justified the narrow focus on the grounds that the three areas were critical in enhancing the socio-economic development of the country in the wake of rising HIV infections, recent challenges to social cohesion, and high unemployment rate. The team went further to lament that in the absence of policy frameworks, and elaborate curricular and programmes that addresses life skills issues holistically, a shared understanding of this concept across formal, non-formal and informal education in Kenya is lacking(Abobo & Orodho,2014) . A more recent study by Abobo and Orodho (2014) on the level of preparedness of teachers and school managers in implementing life skills education in secondary schools in Tran-Nzoia District, Kenya, has established that schools in the study locale are generally ill-prepared to effectively implement the curriculum. It is against this backdrop that this study made a renewed attempt to further examine the main coping strategies being applied by teachers and school managers to implement life skills education in trans- Nzoia west district, Kenya.

The State of the Art Review

Literature is prolific on issues related to the topic on lifestyles that range from conceptualization difficulties, low preparedness to implement the curriculum and challenges facing the life skills curriculum. Those studies related to implementation of the curriculum have traversed a wide range of areas including teacher training, attitudes of the teacher and learner and availability and/or adequacy of instructional resources, especially with regard to implementation Life Skills Education (Abobo & Orodho, 2014; Bizimana & Orodho, 2014; Bunyi, 2000; Jansen, 2008; Krilik, 2008; Orodho, 2013; Orodho, Waweru, Getange & Miriti, 2013; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). In reviewing literature along these lines, it is instructive to be cognizant of the genesis of life skills education in Kenya to help understand the issues related to its implementation (Abobo & Orodho, 2014).

At the national podium, the Government of the Republic of Kenya introduced the teaching of Life Skills Education as non-examinable subject in secondary schools in 2008 with the intention to empower students with psychosocial competencies that would help them make informed decisions, solve problems, think creatively and critically, communicate effectively, build health relationships, empathize with those in need and manage their life in a healthy and productive manner including the fight against HIV and AIDS infections(Republic of Kenya,2012a,2012b) . It is a comprehensive behaviour change approach that concentrates on the development of the psychosocial skills needed for life. The course goes beyond providing information to the development of the whole individual. One of the benefits of Life Skills Education is that the topics covered are adaptable to many different contexts (Republic of Kenya, 2008; KIE, 2008).

There is also a rapidly growing body of literature which touché on factors that influence curriculum implementation (Abobo & Orodho, 2014; Bizimana & Orodho, 2014; Oluoch, 1982; Shiundu & Omulando; Orodho, 2014). According to Ampofo and Orodho (2014) one of the factors in curriculum implementation is the pre -service and in-service training of teachers, pre-service is the training of teachers on a certain curriculum before they start teaching while in-service is the training of teachers on how to implement a certain curriculum while they are already in the field. Given their vital role in curriculum implementation, teachers need appropriate relevant training to be able to handle a new programme including life skills education (Ampofo & Orodho, 2014). This study therefore, sought to find out if training of teachers affects the coping strategies being applied by teachers and school managers to implement life skills education in trans- Nzoia west district, Kenya.

The type and nature of students also play a crucial role in the successful implementation of a curriculum innovation. Just as teachers, students must accept a curriculum for it to be effective (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993; Orodho, 2013). It is when students react to the experiences they encounter in the curriculum with the cooperation, that a successful implementation of a curriculum can be achieved at classroom level. If these students see little relevance in the curriculum activities taught, they are not going to be motivated to participate to learn (Orodho, 2013). It is the teacher who finally decides the arrangement of learning experiences and the methods of content presentation and he/she does most of the evaluation (Ampofo & Orodho, 2014). It is the

teacher therefore, who initiates, develops and directs students' learning. Therefore, a teacher who has a positive attitude towards Life Skills education and uses appropriate instructional strategies is likely to influence the students develop the same attitude (Oluoch, 1982; Omulando and Shiundu, 1992). This study therefore, sought to find out if students' and teachers' attitude affect the coping strategies used to implement the curriculum.

The life skills education syllabus and the Teachers' Guide suggest that teachers use participatory teaching and learning methods in which learners identify their own problems, discuss solutions, plan and carry out effective action programmed (Abobo & Orodho,2014; Republic of Kenya, 2006). The participatory teaching and learning methods assume that learning is best achieved by requiring learners to be actively involved during lessons. The participatory teaching and learning methods recommended for the teaching of life skills education include teaching strategies such as case studies, brainstorming, field visits, panel discussions, story-telling, songs group discussion, debate, posters, role-play, games, projects, poetry-recitals and drama. This study therefore, sought to analyze on teaching strategies and if they affect the implementation of life skills education in secondary schools.

Literature on the teaching of life skills education suggest that the subject is different from other subjects in that it is particularly concerned with teaching of values. Values are however not learned as other curriculum subjects. Values are better taught by living them. The question which the subject raises is whether values can be taught, and if so, whether it should be the role of schools to effectively teach them. In answering this question, Bunyi (2000) asserts that aspects of values are not found in books or documents but learned through social interactions in day-to-day life, hence they should be practiced. Students need to be aware of and fully understand the fact that classes on life skills education are different from other subjects in the school curriculum. Krilik (2008) argues that "values are learned as they do not pass from parents to children in the form of DNA". Students learn values through observing and imitating their teachers' behaviors (Jansen, 2008). Teachers thus need to be role-models of good behavior if they wish their students to develop the desired values. Thus having a subject like life skills education which teaches students what is wrong or right may not be a guarantee that the children are going to behave accordingly. This study therefore, sought to investigate challenges affecting the implementation of life skills education in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District.

Teacher Training

There are many factors that affect the implementation of a school curriculum. According to Oluoch (1982) and Shiundu and Omulando (1992) and Orodho (2013) concur that, one of the factors in curriculum implementation is the pre -service and in-service training of teachers, pre-service is the training of teachers on a certain curriculum before they start teaching while in-service is the training of teachers on how to implement a certain curriculum while they are already in the field. Given their vital role in curriculum implementation, teachers need appropriate relevant training to be able to handle a new programme including life skills education. Curriculum specialists must utilize the saying that "No education is better than its teachers". It is the teacher who translates the broad general goals into instructional objectives.

Teachers are an important resource in the teaching and learning process and their training and utilization therefore requires critical consideration. The current government programmes for teacher education aim at providing qualified teachers and are, therefore, central to ensuring the provision of quality education. Current teacher training programmes cater for the production of teachers for pre-primary, primary, secondary, special, vocational and technical education. The objectives of teacher education programmes aim at developing communication skills, professional attitudes and values that equip teachers with the knowledge and ability to identify and develop the educational needs of the child (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2013).

Attitudes towards Teaching of Life Skills in Schools

The other factor that affects the implementation of any curriculum is attitude. Thurstone (1931) defines attitude as the effect for or against a psychological object. Thurstone proposes that there is need to test people's attitude, these can be accomplished by assessing people's opinions and beliefs which he considers to be verbal expressions of attitudes. In proposes that there is need to test people's attitude, this can be accomplished by assessing people's opinions and beliefs which he considers to be verbal expressions of attitudes. In the implementation of a school curriculum, the teacher's attitude is very important. This is because teaching is an art guided by educational values, personal needs and by a variety of beliefs or generalizations that the teacher holds to be true. The students also play a crucial role in the successful implementation of a curriculum innovation. Just as teachers, students must accept a curriculum for it to be effective (Orodho, Waweru, Getange & Miriti, 2013). It is when students react to the experiences they encounter in the curriculum with the cooperation, that a successful implementation of a curriculum can be achieved at classroom level. If these students see little relevance in the curriculum activities taught, they are not going to be motivated to participate to learn.

Githinji (2007), on her study, on perceptions of primary school teachers and pupils on adequacy of HIV/AIDS life skills education in Nairobi and Thika Districts, found that there were inadequate teaching, insufficient knowledge and lack of enough life skills education to both teachers and pupils. The study also found that teachers found it difficult to explain and teach some of the ways in which AIDS is spread. They felt that some of HIV/AIDS life skills education teachers lacked training and adequate time, cultural differences, resistance from parents, and lack of support from the administration were other problems that teachers contend with.

Prinsloo (2007), in South Africa found that lack of commitment by some principals to make the programmed a success at the school level is a challenge facing the implementation of the life skills education. Some principals indicated that it was difficult for them to support the implementation of life skills education because many learners in their schools are “careless, irresponsible and have no vision or mission in life.” The principals felt that there was little impact of life skills education could make on the learners even if the principals provided some support for the teaching of the subject in their schools. The principals’ excuse for their lack of commitment to make life skills programmed a success in their schools may be considered as a negative attitude; they were blaming learners for their problems in their schools.

The successful making an implementation of a curriculum depends on the teacher’s attitude towards work. In this study teacher’s positive attitude means ‘teacher’s beliefs and interest towards teaching given the conditions of his or her work. (Jansen, 2002). The feeling that a teacher has about his or her work shapes his / her ability in implementing a curriculum policy. Kadzamira (2006), a study notes that low salaries and coupled with other poor working conditions in Malawi cause widespread teacher discontent so teaching is regarded as “employment of last resort.” Teachers’ discontent with their career may affect the implementation of any curriculum including life skills education. Teacher’s positive attitude towards implementing a curriculum depends on teacher’s content knowledge of the curriculum. Teachers should understand the goals and content of syllabus well in order to implement it effectively. Teachers who are supposed to implement a new curriculum sometimes cannot even identify its main features. The problem is likely to be encountered when teachers are required to change their educational approaches to teach this new curriculum (Pratt, 1980). Mahlangu, (2001) raises a concern about introducing a curriculum to teachers and leaving them to implement without further guidance.

Availability of Teaching/ Learning Resources

KIE (2008) assert that resources are valuable possessions used to enhance the teaching/learning process. They may be tangible or intangible, human or non human. In Life Skills Education tangible resources include: material equipment, media and books among others. Intangible resources include time, human skills, energy and knowledge. Resources help in increasing learner’s attention span thus making teaching/learning more effective. They make it easy for the students to acquire concepts and skills which enable them to relate to the world around them.

The teacher should determine the best resources for a particular lesson and the resource should be used in the most natural and logical manner known to reinforce a particular learning activity. However, they should compliment teaching and learning and not replace the teacher. Some resources can be bought or sourced from the environment, locally made, borrowed or shared at departmental inter-school levels. The importance of teaching/learning resources is as follows: they make the learning of Life Skills Education interesting, real and enjoyable, they encourage students to retain knowledge, life skills and attitudes learnt, they appeal to some senses such as sight, touch, smell, among others, they make it possible for students understand abstract ideas, and clarify concepts and ideas, and finally they provide stimulus variation in the teaching learning process thus making the lesson captivating (KIE, 2008).

A study by Orodho (2013) conducted in public secondary schools in Kenya demonstrated most schools do not have adequate and appropriate instructional resources that facilitate effective instruction for effective implementation of curriculum. In a similar study by Birimana and Orodho(2013,2014) on teaching and learning resource availability and teachers effective classroom management and content delivery in secondary schools in Huye District, in Rwanda, reached a verdict that most of the schools in the study locale had inadequate instructional resources hence compromising the quality of education through poor curriculum implementation strategies. They suggested that teaching and learning resources should be equitably distributed in schools. Birimana and Orodho (2014) argue that besides using teaching materials, teachers must ensure that a variety of the same are available in class for effective teaching and learning. The materials and equipment presented in the classroom situation should be chosen to provide many and varied opportunities for students to acquire the learning they need. This ensures that students are offered many opportunities to practice and master Life Skills Education through a variety of materials, and hence lead into successful implementation of life skills education.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the rationale for the introduction of life skills education in terms of equipping the students with psychosocial competencies that would make them make informed decisions, solve emerging problems, think creatively, and manage their lives amongst others, there are challenges and problems that have beleaguered the education in its attempts to actualize the life skills education in secondary schools. These challenges may reduce the possibilities of life skills education achieving the objectives for its implementation, for example, students may not acquire skills required to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life. This study therefore imperative that schools put in place coping strategies that militate against these problems. Therefore the major problematique of this problem was to address the critical question of to what extent schools have put in place coping strategies to deal with problems related to implementation of life-skills education in their respective secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District.

The Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies currently applied to implement Life Skills Education in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District. The study had two fold objectives, namely:

- i) Examine strategies used to teach life skills in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District.
- ii) Find out teachers' and students suggestions on best ways of implementation of Life Skills Education in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District.

Theoretical Framework

This study used Social Learning Theory or Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Albert Bandura (1986). This theory explains that children learn to behave through both formal instruction (for example how parents, teachers and other authorities and role-models tell them to behave) as well as observation, and for example, as they see adults and peers behaving). The children's behavior is reinforced or modified by consequences of their actions and responses of others to their behaviors. Students learn to behave, through observation and social interaction, rather than just verbal instruction. Similarly students taught skills through process of instruction, rehearsal, and feedback rather than just instruction. Bandura also stressed that self-efficacy, defined as confidence in one's abilities to perform appropriate behavior, is important to learning and maintaining behaviors.

In the school situation for example, social cognitive theory contends that teachers teaching life skills education need to create an appropriate environment where skills teaching need to replicate the natural process by which students learn positive behavior through role-modeling, observation and social interaction. Teachers' reinforcement is important in the teaching/ learning of life skills education and shaping students' behavior. Positive reinforcements by teachers are applied for behaviour skills that need to be adjusted to build more positive actions of students. Teachers are important role-models, standard setters and source of influence so that they need appropriate training to be able to handle life skills education, they also need positive attitude towards life skills education so that they make students develop similar attitudes towards the subject, teachers need to use teaching and learning materials which can effectively implement life skills education and finally use participatory methods in which students identify their own problems, discuss solutions, plan and carry out effective action

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study used a descriptive survey research design. The purpose of descriptive survey is basically to observe, describe and document aspects of a situation as they naturally occur hence the choice for the study. According to Orodho (2009a), a descriptive survey is, a process of collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject. It was on the basis of these characteristics of descriptive survey research design that the coping strategies in the implementation of life skills education in secondary schools were investigated. It involved direct observation where the required behaviour was observed in a particular setting. The independent variables of the study were: teaching methods, teacher training, teachers' attitudes and students' attitude. The dependent variable for the study was the coping strategy in the implementation of Life Skills in secondary schools.

Target Population and Sample Selection

The population for the study was public secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District. There are 37 secondary schools in the district. This population consisted of 37 principals, 555 teachers and 4173 students totaling to 4765. The study targeted 37 principals, 150 teachers and 1800 students. Teachers were targeted because they are perceived to be the major agents for curriculum delivery and implementation. Teachers are in direct contact with students and have the responsibility of employing the recommended teaching/learning strategies and are directly involved in the teaching of Life Skills Education. Students from form two to four were targeted in the study because they were perceived to have information on the importance of Life Skills Education and the skills that they have learnt. The researcher left out form one students because they were just reporting at the start of the study. Principals were targeted because they supervise the curriculum implementation in their secondary schools. Purposive sampling technique on the basis of type of school and boarding status was used to select 15 schools

out of 37 to form the sampling units for respondents. From these 15, 180 students, 30 teachers and 15 principals were yielding a sampled of 225 respondents for the study.

Research Instruments

The main type of instruments used in this study included questionnaires, interview schedules and Observation schedule to collect the data for the study. The questionnaires were used to collect data from students, teachers and headteachers. The instrument was chosen because the sampled respondents were considered learned and they would be able to read and understand the questionnaire items; and therefore the data required for the study were easily extracted. Likert Scale was used for the questions testing on the degree or the extent of the factor under investigation. Wiersma (1980), states that a questionnaire is a list of questions or statements to which the individual is asked to respond in writing. Orodho (2012) further clarifies that a good questionnaire should not only represent the aims of the researchers who send it out, but should also allow for the full variety of possible answers.

Interview schedules were administered to 15 principals of the sampled secondary schools to establish the challenges facing implementation of Life Skills Education in secondary schools. The researchers personally held interviews with the principals participating in the study. Interview guide was meant to provide supplementary data which would not have been captured by the questionnaires. The instrument contained questions on teachers' training on life skills education, teachers' and students attitude towards implementation of life skills education, schools' preparedness in terms of teaching/learning resources and teaching strategies used for teaching life skills education. Yin, (2003) states that interviews is one of the most important sources of data and defines the interview as a two-way conversation that gives the interviewer the opportunity to participate actively in the interview. The interview were structured and based on predetermined questions.

The lesson observation schedule was also used during the classroom teaching of Life Skills in form two and forms three to collect the primary data in four secondary schools randomly selected from the actual study sample. This enabled systematic observation of various teaching strategies, the level of availability and adequacy of the teaching/learning resources, availability of schemes of work, lesson plans, and students' participation during discussions and lesson conclusions during the lessons of life skills education in the observed classrooms in the sampled secondary schools. According to Orodho (2012), observation is one of the most important and extensively used research methods in the field of social sciences.

Piloting

Brooks (2013) and Orodho (2012) note that piloting ensures that research instruments not measure what it purports to measure but is also stable and consistent on repeated administration of the instrument. Thus, piloting enables the researcher to have meaningful observations because it helps detect deficiencies in the instruments. Through piloting, the validity and reliability of the research instrument is determined.

Validity, especially content validity, is concerned with establishing whether the instrument content is measuring what they/it is supposed to measure (Orodho, 2009b). The research instruments were enhanced through content validity of the instruments. The process involved expert judgment and appraisal by academic members of the Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies, School of Education, Kenyatta University, Kenya. The team of academicians checked for items that were vague or not necessary, weaknesses of the instruments and whether respondents understood the items.

The reliability of the instruments was tested in two identical schools that did not eventually participate in the main study by employing a split-half method. According to Orodho (2012), reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. The lesser the variations produced by an instrument on subsequent trials, the more reliable it is. The split half method involves scoring two halves usually odd and even items of a test separately for each person and then calculating the correlation coefficient for the two sets (halves) of scores. The coefficient indicates the degree to which the two halves of the test provides the same results and hence describes the internal consistency of the test. The coefficient of 0.76 for the students' questionnaires and 0.78 from the teachers' questionnaires were obtained. The researcher, therefore, concluded that the instruments were reliable for the study, since Orodho (2009b) suggest that a coefficient of .75 and above is high enough to declare the instrument reliable.

Data Collection Procedure

A permit to collect data was obtained from the National Commission for Science and Technology (NACOSTI) to allow for data collection. The researcher made appointments with principals of the sampled schools to request them for permission to carry out the study in their schools. The researcher arranged with the principals to confirm the dates for data collection and got the consent of the school administration. This was to eliminate the cases of surprising entry into schools without prior visit to clarify the intention of the visit. The instruments were administered to the respondents who were given ample time to respond to the questions. The researcher ensured confidentiality of the information given by the respondents. Confidentiality was to ensure respect for the dignity of participants in the study. They were not required to provide any identifying information such as their names, hence making responses become unanimous (Orodho, 2012).

Data Analysis

The primary quantitative data collected from the field were first edited to remove glaring errors and also isolate incomplete questionnaires. Coding was done and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Computer programme version 20.0 to assist in the analysis of quantitative data (Orodho, 2009b). The data was reported in various measures of central tendencies, variability and correlations. Qualitative data from interviews and observation guidelines were analyzed thematically in line with the study objectives and reported in narratives and direct quotes

Findings and Discussions

Teacher Training and Attitudes of Life Skills Education Teachers

The first objective was to profile the training level and attitude of Life-skills education teachers in the study locale to enable the coping strategies to be well contextualized. The study found that 80% of the teacher had not attended any training related to life-skills education. Only a small proportion of the remaining 20% of the teachers had attended a related training on life skills education. According to Republic of Kenya (2004; 2012), majority of secondary school teachers are trained at public universities and diploma colleges and are required to specialize in two teaching subjects upon graduation. Currently, the class sizes in universities are too large for lecturers to pay special attention to methodology and therefore the quality of the teacher is often compromised. In addition, a lot of students take education courses for lack of alternatives. In order to improve the quality of teachers graduating out of our universities, it is imperative that the secondary school teacher undergo relevant training in their area of specialization to enable them acquire sufficient subject mastery and pedagogy..

In an interview with principals on the attendance of their teachers on training in Life Skills Education, it was found the over half of the principals interviewed indicated that teachers in their schools had not attended such trainings while about three quarters of the principals indicated that teachers in their schools had attended such trainings.

According to the principals interviewed, it was evident that:

The continuous improvement in the quality of education services for practicing teachers is currently lacking, yet should facilitate continuous skills upgrading for the teachers. They stressed that although Kenya Education Institute has been conducting some training for principals and other school managers, this has not been the case for ordinary teachers due to inadequate opportunities for in-service training. This has consequently denied most of practicing teachers the chance to enhance their skills beyond those acquired during their pre-service basic training.

The foregoing citation indicates that the current caliber of teachers' situation calls for an urgent development of a comprehensive in- service training programmes to empower teachers to deliver the changes that have been made in the existing school curricula including the introduction of Life Skills Education in schools in 2008. From the findings of the study, it is clear that most of the teachers had not attended in-service trainings on Life Skills Education.

The few teachers who had attended training on Life Skills Education were further asked to indicate the areas in which they were trained on. The following areas were mentioned:

pedagogy used and applied in teaching of the subject, effective decision in teaching of the subject, scouting for solution, interpersonal relationship, conflict resolution and negotiation management, and development of the society.

The citation is in tandem with Abobo and Orodho (2014) as well as Bizimana and Orodho (2014) who concur that teachers given their vital role in curriculum implementation, they need appropriate relevant training to be able to handle a new programme including life skills education. Recent studies by Birimana and Orodho (2014) and Orodho (2013) are in agreement regarding the need for continuous staff development in order to enhance quality of curriculum implementation.

Attitude on Implementation of Teaching Life Skills Education

Regarding the attitude of the teachers to the teaching of Life Skills, the study found that most of the teachers had negative attitude towards the teaching of Life Skills Education. This was evidenced by the fact that many of the teachers had not been trained on the Life Skills Education. Witt (2002) argue that teaching methods are influenced by the teacher's attitude towards the teacher's competence in regard to the subject matter; a teacher uses teacher centered method which allows her full control of the class. If she/he is competent, she/he allows children to learn on their own and gives help when necessary. Grogan (1993) adds that cultivation of positive attitude is of paramount importance to a school teacher.

The finding of this study echo the sentiments of Abobo and Orodho (2014) who aver that a teacher who has a positive attitude towards life skills education and uses appropriate instructional strategies is likely to influence the students develop the same attitude. The study also found that students disagreed with the statement that the

aims and objectives of teaching of Life Skills Education are irrelevant and unattainable. This is an indication that students recognized the importance of Life Skills Education in their schools. In an interview with the principals, nearly all of them were of the opinion that:

Teachers and students do not take Life Skills Education seriously since it is not examinable. It became clear from these principals that teachers and students only take examinable subjects seriously given the examination – oriented curriculum interpretation of learning in most schools in Kenya. The finding is strongly supported by an earlier study by Rooth (2005), in South Africa that life skills education is not being taken seriously because it is not examinable subject. Whitaker (1993), assert that assessment in the form of examination influences curriculum implementation due to the great value given to public examination certificates by schools, teachers and students tend to concentrate on subjects that are examinable and are thought to promote academic excellence.

It was further found that teachers and students had conflicting attitude towards the subject in the sense that: Teachers had negative attitude towards the subject thus affecting its implementation in the curriculum. To the contrary, students’ attitude, it was found that students take the teachings of life skills education positively especially those on how to manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner including the fight against HIV and AIDS and students are receptive as they participate by asking questions. The overall picture emerging is that while teachers have negative attitudes towards the teaching of life skills, the students on the other half have positive attitude towards learning LSE. The most plausible explanation is that teachers are over worked and do not see the need to exert additional energy on subjects that area not counting towards their workload. This finding is in line with Bizimana and Orodho (2014) and Orodho, Waweru, Getange and Miriti (2013) that stressed those teachers overload is making them develop negative attitude towards the teaching profession.

Copping Strategies used to teach Life-skills Education

Teachers and headteachers were requested to indicate the coping strategies they use to teach life-skills education in their respective schools. The results in Table 1 summarize the strategies used and hence the ranking of the strategy in decreasing order of magnitude.

Table 1: Copping Strategies used to teach Life-skills Education

Strategy used to teach life-skills	frequency	rank
Discussion method with students and teachers	96	1
Debates on relevant topics	78	2
Storytelling with learners	53	5
Case studies on how to solve problems	67	4
Brain-storming with learners and other staff	73	3
Songs and dances on topical issues	49	6

The results carried in Table 1 indicates that the most frequently coping strategy used to teach life skills education in most of the schools sampled was discussion with students. It is therefore evident that discussion on relevant topics with students was very effective in teaching life skills, having been ranked first overall. The second most commonly used coping strategy was organizing debates on relevant topics. The third and fourth commonly used coping strategies were brain-storming with students and teachers as well as case studies on how to solve similar problems. The strategies that ranked last were storytelling with learners and songs and dances on topical issues, which were ranked fifth and last, respectively.

The teacher respondents were further probed to give other strategies they use in improving the teaching of Life Skills Education. The following strategies were mentioned:

drawing and paintings, experience sharing, using charts and pictures, workshops and seminars and use of reference books, through resource persons, use of peer counselor and youth groups, reading out stories and relating to student experience, dramatization use of guidance and counseling sessions and co-curricular activities. The findings are in line with those of Kieff et al., (2000) who aver that a class is equipped with materials that suggest activities and provide the materials needed for activities invented or initiated by students. It can be said that even though the resources for teaching Life Skills Education were available in most of the schools studied, they were not adequate. From the findings of the study, it can be said that even though the resources were available in most schools studied, some schools had none of the resources. This disproportional distribution of resources was also established by Orodho (2014) study on public secondary schools in Mandera County, Kenya.

Suggested Strategies to teach Life skills Education

The following were the suggestions made by students, teachers and principals on the ways teachers can improve teaching of life skills education in secondary schools:

- i) It was suggested that teachers should promote interaction among the students and between students and teachers. This is to create conducive environment for teaching and learning of Life Skills Education being that it

is a skills acquired through interaction.

- ii) That guidance and counseling teachers should always be ready to help students on the issues affecting them. This is perceived to have an impact of building the ground for the acceptance of teaching Life Skills Education in schools.
- iii) Teachers should come up with charts, pictures and video to ensure that particular life skills are clearly illustrated. This is perceived to be an effective strategy for teaching Life Skills Education among students.
- iv) Teachers should be willing to attend training on life skills education. Through this training, their knowledge on Life Skills Education will be improved thus enhancing their efficiency in the teaching of skills to students.
- v) Teachers should apply various teaching strategies to ensure that teaching of Life Skills Education achieves its goals. Different strategies will enhance learning among students.
- vi) It was finally recommended that teachers should change their attitude towards the teaching of Life Skills Education in secondary schools. By viewing the teaching of life skills education positively, teachers will be motivated to impart Life Skills into students.

The following were the suggestions made by students, teachers and principals on the ways students can improve teaching of life skills education in secondary schools:

- i) It was suggested that students should take the teachings on Life Skills Education seriously like any other examinable subject offered by the curriculum. By this, Life Skills Education will also become valued like any other examinable subjects.
- ii) Students should interact with others to gain the life experiences which are very critical in the learning of Life Skills Education. This is perceived to enhance the achievement of the goals for the introduction of the teaching of Life Skills Education in the curriculum.
- iii) Students should develop positive attitude towards the teaching of Life Skills Education. This will enhance learning of Life Skills Education as the students will be ready to cooperate during the lessons.
- iv) Students should practice what they have learnt in real-life situation. This will help in the achievement of the objectives of the introduction of the teaching of Life Skills Education into the school curriculum.

The following were the suggestions made by students, teachers and principals on the ways schools can improve teaching of life skills education in secondary schools:

- i) It was suggested that schools should ensure that the resources required for the teaching and learning of Life Skills Education are available. This will improve the learning of Life Skills Education among students and ease the implementation for the teachers.
- ii) The schools should organize sessions with different schools where students are to come together and interact as they are being taught.
- iii) Schools should ensure that the learning environment is favourable for the learning and application of learnt Life Skills Education. This will enhance teaching and learning of Life Skills Education.

The following were the suggestions made by students, teachers and principals on the ways the Government can improve teaching of life skills education in secondary schools:

- i) That the Ministry of Education should ensure that the teaching of Life Skills Education is allocated separate time in the school timetables. This is to ensure that it is also taught as any other examinable subject.
- ii) Teachers should be trained on Life Skills Education. This is to equip them with knowledge to enhance its effectiveness in schools thus the achievement of the goals for its introduction into the curriculum.
- iii) That the Ministry of Education should examine students on Life Skills Education. This will ensure that the teachings are taken seriously thus improving knowledge on Life Skills Education among students in school and out of schools.
- iv) The government through the Ministry of Education should organize for short-term courses for teachers to improve their skills in teaching of Life Skills Education in secondary schools.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The thrust of this study was to examine the coping strategies applied by teachers and school managers in implementing life skills education in the study locale. The teachers and headteachers were ill-prepared to implement the life-skills curriculum in their respective schools since most of them were not specifically trained to handle the curriculum. Regarding teachers' and students attitudes towards teaching of Life Skills Education in secondary schools, it is evident that teachers have negative attitude towards the teaching of Life Skills Education due to several factors including the fact that: most of them have not been trained on Life Skills Education, life skills education is not an examinable subject and the curriculum is an added burden given that they are already overloaded with the traditional examinable subjects. Students are perceived to have positive attitudes towards the teaching of Life Skills Education as evidenced by their participation through asking questions and discussions during the teaching of life skills education in secondary schools. On the level of availability and adequacy of resources for teaching and learning of Life Skills Education, the study concluded that although most of the secondary schools studied had resources such as: charts and pictures, magazines, newsletters, pamphlets and video-tapes, the said resources were grossly inadequate. The coping strategies used

included in decreasing order of magnitude were: discussion on relevant topics with students, organization of debates on relevant topics, brain-storming with students and teachers, case studies on how to solve similar problems, storytelling with learners and songs and dances on topical issues. The cumulative evidence has revealed that most are devising appropriate and certainly commendable coping strategies to deal challenges related to implementation of life-skills curriculum in their respective schools. What remains to be gauged is the extent to which these strategies are affective in meeting the goals of life-skills education against the background that the curriculum is as yet non-examinable and teachers are not specifically trained in the subject.

From the findings and conclusions made, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since most of the teachers were not trained, it was recommended that teachers should be trained on Life Skills Education in teacher training colleges. Teachers in the field should also attend in-service training on Life Skills Education, seminars and workshops where they can get acquainted with the relevant knowledge and skills which are necessary for their roles as mentors to students.
2. Given that most of the teachers had negative attitude towards life skills education, it was recommended that teachers should be encouraged change their attitude towards the teaching of Life skills Education in secondary schools. By viewing the teaching of life skills education positively, teachers will be motivated to impart life skills into students. Teachers' negative attitude towards Life Skills Education should be considered before allocating Life Skills Education to teachers. There is need to review the tradition of schools of teachers taking up the teaching of Life Skills Education because they are C.R.E and Biology teachers and are expected to teach it. It should be assigned to teachers who have some interest in the subject.
3. Life Skills Education should be examinable so that students and teachers take it seriously like other examinable subjects in the school curriculum. By making it examinable, the teachers and students would put more mental energy in LSE.
4. The study finally concluded that different strategies such as having discussions on relevant topics, having debates on relevant topics, having story telling sessions on different topics, use of case studies on how to solve particular problems, having sessions for questions and answers and the use of songs and dances on relevant themes were inadequately used in the teaching of Life Skills Education in most secondary schools studied in Trans-Nzoia West District.
5. Though Life Skills Education is being implemented in most secondary schools studied, It was generally concluded that effective implementation is hampered by several school factors in Trans-Nzoia West District and therefore, making it difficult for teachers to deliver the relevant content appropriately. Teachers should come up with strategies which they view to be effective in the teaching and learning of Life Skills in schools. Teachers should change their classroom activities to be more participatory. Teachers should come with a forum where teachers share how they approach the teaching of life skill should be created, and class of teachers who demonstrate the best practice in the teaching of the subject could be visited by other teachers.

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