

Teachers' Perspective Towards Their Involvement in Selection and Organization of Learning Experiences and Implementation of Secondary School Curriculum in Kenya

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Abstract

Teacher empowerment has been the subject of considerable educational research in recent years, but the capacity of teachers in curriculum development especially in selection and organization of learning experiences has received limited empirical attention. The purpose of this study was to establish teachers' perspective towards their involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey research design and was conducted in Meru and Nairobi Counties. The target population was 3146 teachers comprising of 1781 males and 1365 females. Stratified random sampling was used to draw the participating schools and teachers. A sample of 342 teachers participated in the study. Questionnaires for teachers and an interview guide for principals were employed in data collection. The collected data was analyzed by use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study findings established that there was a statically significant relationship between teachers' perspective towards their involvement in selection and organisation of learning experiences and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. However due to the top- down model of curriculum development followed by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), curriculum development process is largely centrally-controlled and the experiences and talents of teachers are untapped and under-utilized during curriculum development process. The study recommends that teachers should be involved in the planning and development of the curriculum in all stages for effective implementation. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should widen the scope of its recruitments and lay better strategies to involve teachers in the curriculum development process. This can be done by redefining the curriculum development unit at KICD as an extension of the school system, thus providing more teachers to serve in it for a period of time. Also, curriculum development should be decentralized to local levels for easier participation from schools, sub-counties, counties and finally the national level taking into considerations all relevant contributions by various stake-holders. Studies on curriculum models followed by KICD should be conducted with a view to proposing alternative models that would enable more teachers and other stakeholders to participate fully in curriculum development process.

Keywords: Teacher Perspectives, Learning Experiences, Curriculum Implementation, Secondary School Curriculum

1.1 Introduction

Learning experiences are those processes that the learners undergo by way of interacting with and reacting to the external conditions in the environment in which they learn (Okunloye, 2014). It is in the course of interaction between the learner and those external conditions in their learning environment that they acquire or develop knowledge, understanding and skills, cultivate attitudes and develop other capabilities or relatively permanent behavioural change (Okunloye, 2014). Taba (1962) observe that learning experiences are mental operations that students employ in learning the content. She further argues that both the content and the learning experience are in constant interaction during the actual learning act as one cannot deal with the content without having a learning experience. For Okunloye (2014), learning experiences may be mental, involving thinking process and development of an understanding of some concepts, theories or state of affairs of a given subject matter or content underpinning (or structure). It is this close affinity between learning experiences and subject matter or content that tends to confuse students of curriculum development to view learning experiences as another nomenclature for content whereas they are different (Okunloye, 2014).

According to Munazza (2004), learning opportunities, learning activities, learning experiences, teaching- learning strategies and methods are terms frequently used interchangeably to explain what the teacher does to facilitate the learning within a student (how a teacher imparts content and provides opportunities for learners to acquire that content). By means of instruction and learning actions, a learning opportunity is created for the pupil also to be personally and actively involved with a view to deriving the most meaningful experience from this involvement (Carl, 2009). Besides objectives, and content, the curriculum also includes general suggestions as to the kind of instructional strategies suitable to achieve the objectives, leaving specifics to the teacher. Since curriculum activity is presented by and through methodology, teaching methods constitute a significant part of the instructional process.

Okunloye (2014) argues that certain non-negotiable criteria must be met during the selection of learning experiences; which includes; validity, comprehensiveness, appropriateness, continuity and cumulation, balance and learnability. He further points out that what is selected and organised should be consistent with other stages of curriculum development. Providing a rational balanced variety of learning experiences not only increases the capacity to learn and motivation for learning but it is one way of dealing with the problem of individual differences and heterogeneity. Learning experiences should be organised in such a way that they follow a sequence of which makes continuous and accumulative learning possible (Taba, 1962).

Lunenburg (2011) argues that teachers can control learning experiences through the manipulation of environment which results in stimulating situations sufficient to evoke the kind of learning outcome desired. Research studies (Chaote, 1987, Malebye, 1999) show that classroom teachers make the decisions concerning each lesson, the time allotment for each concept and task and the instructional placing for each skill area (KICD, 2014). According to Bude (2000), classroom teachers could contribute in providing information on students' abilities and level of development; suggesting activities and resources that are feasible and locally available. For Munazza (2004), teachers understand the nature of learning, pose challenging tasks, encourage students to articulate their ideas, set goals for instruction, create appropriate contexts and pose problems that have relevance and meaning to their learners. Firmly situated in their classrooms, teachers are in a position to subject curriculum to periodic questioning, criticism or review. They have the potential to create an overall approach to curriculum development rather than follow a prescribed course of action (Wasil, 2014). Teachers should be well informed so that they can be able to include out-of-school experiences that constitute more learning opportunities into present formal education agenda (Sharma, 1990). These activities show clearly that teachers need to participate in curriculum construction in order to effectively plan and organize classroom activities

However, in Kenya, curriculum development is top-down where KICD is the only institution charged with the responsibility of developing the curriculum through curriculum development panels (KICD, 2014; Abiero, 2009; Obai, 1999; Asiachi & Okech 1992; Oluoch, 1982). Teachers are then supplied with curriculum packages consisting of comprehensive syllabuses, curriculum support materials, teaching suggestions, and even tests for students and for teachers' self-evaluation. Teachers' role becomes that of a consumer rather than a producer (Mosothwane, 2012). Only during the implementation stage are majority of teachers actually involved with their role being confined to the implementation of the new curriculum in exactly the same way in which the designers intended it to be. This approach makes teachers tend to think that their role is only in the classroom: to implement what they have received from the central office with many of the teachers following the externally planned syllabus to the letter without appropriately relating it to the local situation (Shiundu & Omulando; 1992). Sometimes, other than providing feedback during the initial testing, many teachers have little to do with the development of the goals of education and the broad content of the curriculum or course objectives (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992; Obai, 1999; Okda, 2005). This kind of prescriptive approach can develop what Okda (2005) calls pedagogical dogmatism. Being excluded from curriculum development decisions may lead to lack of ownership and commitment necessary for the success of the new curriculum. It may result to and/or misinterpretation of an innovative features (Okada, 2005) thereby hindering the attainment of educational objectives. When the plan becomes external to the planner, teachers lose control of the curricula and pedagogical skills to large publishing houses and many teachers are de-skilled by such a curriculum. There was need therefore to investigate teachers' perspectives towards their involvement in selection and organisation of learning experiences and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Kenya curriculum development process is highly centralised with Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) being the main government agency charged with the responsibility of developing the curriculum through the course and subjects panels. The teacher enters the process of curriculum development at a much later stage, during the national implementation. The basic component of the curriculum, the syllabus, is designed elsewhere and given to those for whom it is intended. The task of the teacher is to find out how to use the new curriculum as effectively as possible as there is no opportunity for teachers to consider alternatives. Such a scenario may hinder the attainment of national goals of education as teachers' interpretation of the new curriculum may not be well articulated with the curriculum as imaged at the policy and programmatic levels. Studies show that there exist a considerable gap between the prescribed curriculum and actual classroom practice. It was against this background that this study sought to establish the relationship between teachers' perspective towards the selection and organisation of learning experiences and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya.

1.3 Study Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' perspective towards their involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya.

1.4 Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The research was conducted in Meru and Nairobi Counties, Kenya. The target population for this study was 3146 secondary school teachers comprising of 1781 males and 1365 females drawn from 351 secondary schools in Nairobi and Meru Counties. The study employed stratified random sampling procedures to select a representative sample of 342 teachers who proportionately included 194 males and 148 females. Interview guide for principals and questionnaire for teachers were utilized in data collection. This study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics in data analysis. Descriptive statistics involved calculation of means, frequency counts and percentages. For inferential statistics, chi square was used to test the hypotheses and was computed and tested for significance at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. Qualitative data was organized and presented in narrative and discussion form.

1.5 Results and Discussion

The study sought to establish whether there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perspectives towards their involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. Respondents were requested to rate the extent to which they were involved in selection and organization of learning experiences during curriculum development process. The information was analysed by determining the mean of six items on a 5 – point Likert scale where: To a greater extent = 5, Some extent = 4, Undecided = 3, To a little extent = 2, Not at all = 1. However, the ranges of the mean scores were interpreted as follows: To a greater extent = 4.2 – 5.0; Some extent = 3.4 – 4.2, Moderate extent = 2.6 – 3.4, To a Small Extent = 1.8 – 2.6 and Not at All = 1.0 – 1.8. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Perspective towards Selection and Organization of Learning Experiences

	N	M	SD
Gave information on learners needs, ability and maturity levels for proper organization of learning activities	272	2.57	1.58
Selected and organized learning skills, attitudes and values during curriculum development	272	2.28	1.52
Selected teaching – learning strategies for the selected subject content during curriculum making /revision	272	2.42	1.58
Gave views on learning strategies for various learning activities	272	2.42	1.54
Assessed the relevance of selected learning experiences during curriculum making/revision	272	2.42	1.51
Involved in modification of learning experiences to fit the local situation in schools	272	2.68	1.61
Overall mean	272	2.47	1.37

Key N=Sample size, M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Findings in Table 1 show that the overall mean was of 2.47 out of the maximum score of 5 points. This indicated that teachers were involved in selection and organization of learning experiences to a small extent. A similar trend was identified for other items examined in this section as teachers indicated they had participated in the modification of learning experiences to fit the local situation to a small extent ($M=2.68$). Teachers also indicated that they participated in the selection and organization of learning skills, attitudes and values to a small extent during curriculum development ($M=2.28$). This suggests that teachers did not fully participate in the selection and organization of learning experiences. Similar findings were obtained from the interview with Principals. Principals' descriptions are given in Excerpt 1

Excerpt 1	
Researcher:	How are teachers engaged in the selection and organization of learning experiences?
Respondent 1:	They are not involved at national level but at the classroom level, it is a daily activity
Respondent 2:	Few teachers participate in sharing of information about learners needs for proper organization of learning activities at KICD Even those who participate as subject panellists do not represent teachers in their schools. They give their own personal opinions because we don't see them gathering information from fellow teachers. Infarct, they are hardly known as subject panellists beyond their principals' offices
Respondent 4:	Teachers are involved in the modification of learning experiences to fit the local situation in schools and in selecting applicable teaching strategies when handling their lessons. They are not involved outside their classrooms.

The information gathered from the principals show that teachers select and organise curriculum experiences at the school level when they create enabling environment for their learners to interact with curriculum content through selection and modification of learning experiences and teaching strategies. Research studies show that classroom teachers make the decisions concerning each lesson, the time allotment for each

concept and task and the instructional placing for each skill area (Chaote, 1987, Malebye, 1999). However, teachers were not involved in the selection and organization of curriculum content outside their classrooms. The findings also concur with KICD (2014) evaluation report that observed that many of the subject panellists (teachers) bring on board personal views and opinions when called upon to develop the curricula as they rarely gather views of other teachers before attending KICD panel meetings

The researcher also sought information from the teachers on the extent to which they agreed there was a relationship between teacher participation in selection and organization of learning experiences and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum. The information was analyzed by determining the mean and of eight items on 5 point Likert Scale where: Strongly Agree =5, Agree= 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree= 2 and Strongly Disagree= 1. However, the ranges of the mean scores in this study were interpreted as follows: Strongly Agree =4.2 – 5.0; Agree =3.4 – 4.2, Moderately Agree = 2.6 – 3.4, Disagree = 1.8 – 2.6 and Strongly Disagree = 1.0 – 1.8. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Involvement in Selection and Organization of Learning Experiences and Curriculum Implementation

Opinion	N	M	SD
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences may increase teachers ability to select the appropriate teaching strategies for various learning activities	272	4.51	0.70
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences may enable teachers to relate learning experiences to the social conditions of the learners	272	4.54	3.17
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences increases teachers ability to adopt teaching strategies to learners of different abilities	272	4.31	0.86
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences enables teachers to expose the learners to a range of learning techniques which foster independent and cooperative learning	272	4.22	0.91
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences may enable teachers to employ insightful learning as opposed to rote – learning	272	4.21	0.96
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences enables teachers to select appropriate learning activities for various content	272	4.28	0.90
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences increases teachers ability to make teaching – learning situations interesting to capture learners motivation	272	4.13	0.99
Teachers do not implement the curriculum effectively without their participation in the selection and organization of learning experiences	272	3.57	1.43
Overall mean	272	4.14	0.73

KEY: N=Sample Size; M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

From the findings in Table 2, the mean of teachers' responses is 4.14. This indicates that teachers moderately agreed that involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences has a significant relationship with effectiveness of curriculum implementation. The teachers also strongly agreed that involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences enabled teachers to relate learning experiences to the social conditions of the learners ($M=4.54$). Further, teachers moderately agreed that they did not implement the curriculum effectively without participation in the selection and organization of learning experiences as indicated by the item response mean of 3.57. These results therefore tend to suggest that teachers' involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences has a positive relationship with implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. This position was supported by information received from the principals as given in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2	
Researcher:	What is the relationship between teachers' participation in selection and organization of learning experiences and secondary school curriculum implementation?
Respondent 1:	Involving teachers in selection and organization of learning experiences would enable teachers to select appropriate instructional methods to effectively present content to the students.
Respondent 2:	Involving teachers in the selection and organization of curriculum learning experiences would enable them to sequence and organize learning activities for effective content delivery keeping in mind the particular students whom they are teaching
Respondent 13:	Involving teachers in the selection and organization of curriculum experiences would make them be able to use innovative ways of teaching exposing students to a variety of modern leaning techniques that encourage learners' participation and creativity

The findings show that teachers and their principals were of the opinion that involvement in selection and organisation of learning experiences has a positive effect on curriculum implementation.as it enabled them to sequence and organise learning activities and to select appropriate instructional methods for effective

implementation. Oliva (1992) notes that through curriculum development, teachers can discover new ways for providing more effective pupil learning experiences

Chi square test was carried out to establish whether there existed a statistically significant relationship between teachers' involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences and implementation of the secondary school curriculum. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Chi Square Test Results on Teacher involvement in Selection and Organization of Learning Experiences and Curriculum Implementation

Statement	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences may increase teachers ability to select the appropriate teaching strategies for various learning activities	385.65	4	.000
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences may enable teachers to relate learning experiences to the social conditions of the learners	398.06	5	.000
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences increases teachers ability to adopt teaching strategies to learners of different abilities	265.90	4	.000
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences may enable teachers to expose the learners to a range of learning techniques which foster independent and cooperative learning	257.67	4	.000
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences may enable teachers to employ insightful learning as opposed to rote – learning	230.79	4	.000
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences enables teachers to select appropriate learning activities for various content	265.98	4	.000
Involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences increases teachers ability to make teaching – learning situations interesting to capture learners motivation	213.04	4	.000
Teachers do not implement the curriculum effectively without their participation in the selection and organization of learning experiences	32.71	4	.000
Overall Chi Square	225.24	24	0.000

The findings in Table 3 show that there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' involvement in selection and organization of learning experiences and curriculum implementation [$\chi^2 (24, N=272) = 225.243, p=0.000 < 0.05$]. The study therefore rejects the null hypothesis that stated that there was no statistically significant relationship between teacher's perspectives of their involvement in selection and organization learning experiences and implementation of secondary school curriculum. Marsh (2004) observed that teaching is an art in which numerous skills are needed in terms of planning what, how and when to teach. The overall aim is to produce coherent, purposeful teaching and learning activities. It is the teacher who prepares the 'how' of teaching, designing activities that help students think about and make sense of the key principle and information of the content they are learning (Wasil, 2014). For Munazza (2004), teachers understand the nature of learning, pose challenging tasks, encourage students to articulate their ideas, set goals for instruction, create appropriate contexts and pose problems that have relevance and meaning to their learners. Involvement of teachers in the selection and organisation of learning activities will improve their skills of creating appropriate context for effective learning

Respondents were requested to give their opinion on how to involve teachers in selection and organization of learning experiences; they gave various suggestions as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Ways of involving Teachers in Selection and Organization of Learning Experiences

Suggestion	Frequency	Percentage
Holding workshops / seminars from local to the national levels and having specialists in each subject area to facilitate the workshop. Possibly, Focused Group Discussions could be used.	160	58.82
Introduce online conferences.	36	13.24
Use questionnaires to collect ideas and relevant information from teachers.	51	18.75
Set up Sub-County or County subject panels which will work closely with National subject panels in order to ensure that all school categories are represented.	176	64.71
Teachers should be subjected to capacity building programs on matters regarding curriculum content and implementation.	123	45.22
Teachers and especially the HODs should be considered as key persons whose input is very significant in selection and organisation of learning experiences	109	40.07

From the results in Table 4, majority of the teachers (64.71%) suggested that they could be involved in selection and organization of learning experiences through setting up Sub-county and County subject panels which would work closely with national subject panels in order to ensure that all school categories are represented. 58.82% indicated that teachers could be involved by holding workshops / seminars from local to the national levels and having specialists in each subject area to facilitate such workshops while the minority (13.24%) indicated that introducing online conferences would involve teachers in selection and organization of learning experiences during curriculum development process. The findings are in agreement with a South African study by Malebye (1999) on teachers' role in curriculum development where teachers proposed workshops, conferences and formation of School Committees as avenues for involvement in curriculum development. The findings also support a study by Mosothwane (2012) on the role of senior secondary school teachers in development of mathematics curricular in Botswana which proposed the use of school based consultative curriculum committees to gather views of teachers and submit them to local curriculum committees who would then take them to regional committees, and then to national curriculum development panel. In this way, suggestions provided by teachers would be incorporated in the adopted curriculum.

The study established that there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in selection and organisation of learning experiences and implementation of secondary school curriculum. However the results from the study show that most teachers were to a small extent involved in selection and organization of learning experiences. This suggests that teachers did not fully participate in the selection and organization of learning experiences which could ultimately influence effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. Teachers strongly agreed that participation in selection and organization of learning experiences could enable them relate learning experiences to the social conditions of learners. The null hypotheses which stated that there was no statistically significant relationship between teachers perspective towards their involvement in selection and organisation of learning experiences and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya was rejected

1.6 Conclusion

This study established that there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perspective towards their involvement in selection and organisation of learning experience and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. However due to the top- down model of curriculum development followed by KICD, curriculum development process is still largely centrally-controlled and the experiences and talents of teachers are untapped and under-utilized in this vital process. This implies that curriculum development process should involve a shift of decision-making from the centre to the periphery which will cause a change in teachers' and administrators' roles, involving them in greater decision making regarding curriculum construction. Establishing school – based committees, Sub-county, County and then national committees would enable teachers to air their opinions regarding curriculum issues. This would lead to greater participation and understanding thus creating ownership of the curriculum by teachers which may lead to effective implementation of the curriculum. This would probably improve the quality of education in Kenya.

1.7 Recommendations

This study recommends that teachers should be involved in the planning and development of the curriculum in all stages. Those who make policies need to acknowledge the experience and talents of the teachers more in the curriculum development process. Furthermore, the KICD should widen the scope of its recruitments and lay better strategies to involve teachers in the curriculum development process. This can be done by redefining the curriculum development unit at KICD as an extension of the school system, thus providing more teachers to serve in it for a period of time. Also, curriculum development should be decentralized to local levels for easier participation from schools, sub-counties, counties and finally the national level taking into considerations all relevant contributions by various stake-holders. Studies on curriculum models followed by KICD should be conducted with a view to proposing alternative models that would enable more teachers and other stakeholders to participate fully in curriculum development process. Research should be conducted on other factors impeding effective implementation of both primary and secondary school curriculum such as the lack of infrastructure, low morale of teachers and students with a view to correcting the situation.

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