

# Do Kenyan Set Book Novel *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* Advance Environmental Education?

Stephen Njangiru Magothe

Department of Literary and Communication Studies, Laikipia University P.O Box 1100, Nyahururu, Kenya

## Abstract

Environmental protection is a sensitive issue in the world today. Erratic weather changes have been witnessed in many parts world including Kenya. Indeed, scholars and critics have argued that human beings are a major contributing factor to destruction of nature through industrialization, farming activities, transport, deforestation, wildlife attacks, and destruction of wetlands, unplanned rubbish dumping and pollution. Environmental protection as a problem is real and has dire consequences such as global warming, soil erosion, floods, reduction in wetlands, drought, pollution, human wildlife conflict, diseases and illnesses, food insecurity, unsafe drinking water, desertification among other threats. In underdeveloped countries like Kenya the consequences are devastating. It's because of this global reality that the researcher sought to establish whether environmental education is advanced in *Kidagaa Kimemwozea*; a Kenyan secondary school Swahili novel set book. The objectives were: To examine the environmental themes in the *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* Swahili novel set book and to evaluate its environmental protection impact on learners. The sampled *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* novel set book was content analyzed in terms of environmental theme illustrations through ordinary words. Moreover, a questionnaire was given to randomly sampled 43 secondary school students to collect their views on how those illustrations impacted on their views on environmental protection.

**Keywords:** Environmental Education and Protection, Themes, Ordinary Text, Set Book

## 1. Introduction

Environmental education refers to the process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions. On the other hand, environmental protection refers to any activity to maintain or restore the quality of environmental media through preventing the emission of pollutants or reducing the presence of polluting substances in environmental media for the benefit of both the environment and humans. (United Nations,1997).Environmental education as noted by Kimiti et al (2013) should assist individuals in taking action in environmental protection and improvement through various activities such as tree planting, cleaning of environment, participation in national and international environmental days and the whole discourse about management of ecosystems and sustainable use of natural environments (Republic of Kenya,2014). Environmental degradation due to industrialization, farming activities, transport, deforestation, wildlife attacks, improper refuse disposal and pollution like in other parts of the world is prevalent in the Kenyan context, and the need to protect and conserve the environment for future generations from the worst calamities such as floods, expanding deserts, diseases and food insecurity (Kavila,2013).

The need to highlight environmental issues and consciousness have indeed prompted authors across the world to write. Notable examples of fiction novels are *The Monkey Wrench Gang* by Abbey Edward, *The Lake, The River, and the Other Lake*, by Amick Steve, *The Last Good Chance* By Barbash, Tom amongst many others. In Kenya, fiction novels with environmental themes are like *Terrorists of the Aberdare* and *Different Colours* by Ng'ang'a Mbugua. A thesis done by Kavila(2013) examines the novels; *Terrorists of the Aberdare* and *Different Colours* and discusses causes and effects of environmental degradation and human-wildlife conflict and proposes strategies to protect and conserve the environment for the betterment of current and future generations.. Since literature is a tool for education, Ng'ang'a Mbugua in his fictional works aims at educating his audience on environmental protection so as to reduce this imminent threat to flora and fauna that has direct dire consequences to the current and future generations. The purpose of the study was to examine the environmental themes in the *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* Swahili novel set book and to evaluate its environmental protection impact on learners. The study will be of help to students ,teachers, the public and policy makers in making the society be more responsive to environmental protection through environmental education.

### Studies on Ordinary Text Illustrations in Any Work Of Art.

Available research has it that ordinary words communicate various messages and therefore assist learners understand the content (Ombasa,2016). Novels, through ordinary text illustrations too communicate various themes to their audiences. *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* a Kiswahili category set book novel as a work of art also communicates various themes(Rono,2013).A theme on environment has also been brought out in the novel . A study done by Kimiti et al(2013) reveals that environmental education themes have been incorporated in

languages such as English and Kiswahili as well as others subjects like Social Studies, Christian religious education, Agriculture and Geography.

### Objectives of the Study

- (i) To examine the environmental education theme in *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* Swahili novel set book.
- (ii) To evaluate the environmental education impact on learners from environmental protection point of view.

### Methodology

*Kidagaa kimemwozea* set book novel was selected through purposive sampling. Environmental Illustrations and descriptions through the ordinary text were content analyzed in line with the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was designed and adapted according to the work of Denscombe (2007), and consisted of both open and closed questions. The questionnaire was administered to 43 secondary school students to collect their views on the impact of environmental education on environmental protection.

### Study Findings and Discussion

The results were categorized, presented and analyzed as follows:

- i. Environmental education themes in terms of novel's thematic and statement concepts.
- ii. Environmental education impact on learners from environmental protection point of view.

#### Environmental Education Themes in Terms of Novel's Thematic and Statement Concepts.

The study aimed at examining the environmental education theme in *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* Swahili novel set book. In the literary sense, themes in a novel can be viewed in terms of thematic and statement concepts. Thematic concept is what readers think the work is about while thematic statement is what the work says about the subject (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Thematic concept was brought out by student respondents, who when asked what they thought 'environment' meant, they responded as summarized in the table(2) below:

**Table (1) students age distribution**

Age	Number	percentage
Age:(16-17)	2	4.6%
Age: (18-21)	41	95.3%

Majority of student respondents (95.3%) were above 18 years of age and were considered to be mature. Their responses therefore were well informed in light of the research problem.

**Table (2) students perception on 'environment'**

Number of student respondents	'environment' Perception	Percentage
31	Human environment	72.09%
10	Natural environment	23.26%
02	Both natural and human environment	4.65%

Natural environment refers to natural world of land, water, air, plants and animals that exist around us. It forms the basis of our existence and development (Kavila,2013) while human environment as per the dictionary meaning is the place in which people live and work as well as all physical conditions that affect them.

A critical look at the above results shows that majority of student respondents (72.09%) thought 'environment' in terms of the human environment (All conditions that live with and affect people). 10 respondents (23.26%) thought 'environment' in terms of natural environment (The natural world of land, water, air, plants and animals that exist around us) whereas only 2 (4.65%) respondents thought 'environment' in terms of both human and natural environments. Inference made therefore is that majority of student respondents thought of the human environment as compared to the few who thought of the natural environment. This suggests that the strategies used to teach environmental education in the curriculum are wanting. Study done by Kimiti et al(2013) suggested that the lecture, question and answer and other teacher centered methods were commonly used in Kenyan schools; methods that are inappropriate because they do not promote students understanding.

On the other hand, *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* Swahili novel set book was content analyzed in terms of thematic statement; what the novel says about the natural environment subject. It was indeed found that the novel had many episodes of natural environment descriptions ranging from vegetation, land, grasslands, rivers, lakes and forests. Environmental degradation challenges such as pollution, overgrazing, unsafe drinking water and soil erosion are also discussed in the novel. An example is when the writer brings out the episode of a young boy by the name DJ and other boys looking after herds of cattle on a piece of land with pasture near river Kiberenge, ultimately, bringing about severe overgrazing. There are many other vivid examples of environmental degradation descriptions in the work. The novel also brings out the human environment concept

through various examples of interactions between human characters and their immediate natural environment..

### **Education Impact on Learners From Environmental Protection Point of View**

The study also aimed at evaluating the environmental education impact on learners from environmental protection point of view. When asked what they thought of after reading various descriptions on environment, 38 students(88.37%) thought that environment must be protected, 5 students(11.63%) were of the view that environmental descriptions were merely for the continuation of the plot story in the novel. A critical look at these results suggests that majority of students recognize the importance of environmental protection in the society. This suggests that environmental education were indeed integrated in the Kenyan formal curriculum(Kimiti et al, 2013). The students had therefore learned environmental issues from other subjects in the curriculum as opposed to the *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* Swahili novel set book.

### **Conclusion**

Findings from this research as reported and discussed seems to suggest that environmental education have been advanced in the *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* Swahili novel set book. Indeed, environmental education though from other subjects in the curriculum, has impacted positively on the student's attitudes towards environmental protection.

### **References**

- Abbey, E.(1975). *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Amick, S.(2005). *The Lake, The River, and the Other Lake*. New York : Pantheon.
- Barbash, T(2002). *The Last Good Chance*. New York: Picador USA.
- Denscombe (2007) *The Good Research Guide For Small-Scale Research Project*.Mc Graw Hill.
- Kavila, F.S.(2013) *The Theme Of Environmental Conservation In different Colours and Terrorists Of The Aberdare By Ng'ang'a Mbugua*. A masters of arts Research Project .Unpublished. University of Nairobi.
- Kimiti et al(2013) The Need to Integrate Themes of Environmental Education in the School Curriculum in Kenya: Journal of Progressive Education and Development.Vol.2, No.1
- Ombasa,A.E.(2016) Gender Disparity: Do Textbook Illustrations Reinforce It? A Case Study Of The Kenyan Secondary School Textbook- Chemchemi Za Kiswahili, Kidato Cha Nne. Indo-African Journal of Educational Research Vol.4, No.1(online) Available: [http://iajer.rstpublishers.com/full\\_view\\_62.jws#page](http://iajer.rstpublishers.com/full_view_62.jws#page) (September 8,2016)
- Republic of Kenya, (1999). *Secondary School Syllabus: Volume2, October 2007*. Nairobi: KIE.
- Republic of Kenya(2014) *National Environment Policy*.Nairobi:Ministry of Environment ,Water and Natural Resources.(online) Available: <http://www.environment.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/NATIONAL-ENVIRONMENT-POLICY-2014.pdf> (October 11<sup>th</sup> ,2016)
- Rono(2013)*Uhakiki wa Kimaudhui na Kifani wa Kidagaa Kimemwozea*. Tasnifu ya Shahada ya Uzamili. Haijachapishwa. Chuo Kikuu cha Nairobi
- Walibora,K.(2012)*Kidagaa Kimemwozea*.Nairobi:Target