

The Role of General Public in the Development of Technical and Vocational Education in Primary Schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the role the general public play in the development of technical and vocational education in Primary schools. These subjects were: Home science, Art and Craft and Agriculture as offered in Primary schools in the urban and rural setting of Eldoret Municipality and the surrounding areas in Kenya. A random sample of eight (8) schools was selected for the study. The respondents included eighty (80) standard eight (Std VIII) pupils, thirty-one (31) teachers and ten (10) parents of the pupils studying these subjects. From the study, a large proportion of the respondents, most of whom were made up of teacher-respondents, affirmed that the local communities were supposed to contribute to the provision of equipment and facilities in the development of technical and vocational education in Primary schools while some of them indicated that the communities were supposed to establish and manage the schools. As such, parents and the general public should be sensitized on the importance of technical and vocational component in the Primary school curriculum so that they can give it the support it deserves be it materially or morally in the task of national development. In addition, the government makes the technical and vocational subjects more attractive by providing adequate facilities and resources to Primary schools. The informal sector of the economy should be strongly supported so as to attract Primary school-leavers who achieve relevant practical skills. The study is useful to all education stakeholders as it highlights the need to incorporate socio-economic contextual factors in improving performance in technical and vocational subjects in individual schools.

Key Words: Role, General Public, Development, Technical, Vocational Education, Primary Schools, Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

Introduction

A considerable amount of informal technical education and training occurs at virtually every Jua Kali (informal sector) site where an artisan or would-be-artisan utilizes the practical skills (TVET Bill, 2012; Yambo, 1986; Anderson, 1970; Sifuna, 1992). Those artisans who do not possess any or sufficient skills learn under those who have mastered enough skills in somewhat informal way until they gain some proficiency in various skills in a particular trade, after which they practise on their own. This was the practice in traditional education (Nyerere, 1967; Richardson, 2004). The number of technical training opportunities and, naturally, trainees for apprentices has, thus, significantly increased since 1978 (RoK, 1983; Ayot, 1987; King, 1980; Fowler, 1984). This aspect is also supported by the Wanyingi Report (RoK, 1983) which reflected on the opportunities offered by the new 8-4-4 system of education. The report suggested that the practical aspects of education should be given priority. This is a clear indication of the government's commitment to the technical and vocational component in the 8-4-4 system of education particularly at the Primary school level, given that the post Primary level already had been given its due consideration (Eisernon *et al.*, 1986).

According to Yambo, 1986 the structure of formal technical education and training in Kenya has so far been characterized simultaneously by a general lack of coherence: inadequate coordination, and a considerable overlap in terms of the courses taught, the levels of sophistication at which the courses are taught, and the institutions in which they are taught (p. 25).

In anticipation of the shortcomings, the Kenya government (RoK, 1981) issued a draft document on technical and vocational education training in which it stated:

As Kenya moves into the 8-4-4 education system, a number of school leavers from mainly Primary school level who will need skill training will significantly be high... Thus, we must train a significant number of our school leaving population at the level in question. We must ask ourselves: Which courses? What qualifications? (for both pupils and teachers) as well as, What type of institutions will be required at present and in future to accomplish the task? This is a tripartite question calling for rationalization of technical education and training in its numerous aspects and types (p. 1).

The main opportunity of training or further education available for Primary school technical and Vocational-oriented graduates includes either joining youth polytechnics or informal sector (Adams, 1997). Jua Kali sector across Kenya consists of various on-the-job training skills (Adams, 1997; *Daily Nation*, 2000). The skills gained in Jua Kali sector are suited to Primary school leavers because they do not have as much choice as their counterparts in secondary schools (Jameson & Lightfoot, 1982; Sarr, (2000)). The Jua Kali sector courses, unlike other courses mentioned above, do not discriminate much in terms of entry qualifications. Entry requirements in Jua Kali training are largely based on acquaintances with the already established trade gangs in addition to the interests of the individuals. It is considered that a Primary school standard eight graduate is fit enough for Jua Kali sector although a Primary school dropout is also considered (Sifuna, 1984; 1986). In the absence of all the above available opportunities, a Primary school graduate with some orientation or exposure to certain technical and vocational skills is definitely a useful member of both the family and Kenyan society at large (Yambo, 1986; Kerre; 1996).

The Primary school technical and vocational subjects are supposed to enable the learner to choose a career with some confidence from the prevailing opportunities (RoK, 1984; Kerre, 1999; UNECA, 2005). According to UNESCO (*Daily Nation*, 1999; Nyerere, 2009), graduates of academic institutions tend to develop negative attitude towards technical and vocational work because the subjects are not held in high esteem by many of their counterparts who are pursuing these subjects. African countries were urged to reform their education systems by placing more emphasis on technical and vocational skills thereby diversifying learning so that young people would secure what applied to real life situations (Manda, 2003; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2004). Generally, the success of many technical and vocational programmes might heavily depend on the development of related infrastructure in the developing world including the relevant facilities and resources as well as properly training the teachers (Court & Dharam, 1974).

Need to Involve the General Public in Technical and Vocational Education

Studies in technical and vocational education and training have been conducted in the past (Court, 1972; Orwa, 1982; Sifuna, 1984; Nzioka, 1986; Yambo, 1986; Ndua, 1988; Simiyu, 1990; Gliga, 2002; Atchoarena; Delluc, 2002), but none of them has focused on the teaching of technical and vocational subjects in Primary schools. Thus, the problem has not been adequately researched on. Furthermore, critics of the new outlook of technical and vocational education in Primary schools have overlooked the fact that the problem requires more scrutiny and concentration than simply give it a superficial contemplation (Foster, 1977; UNESCO-IBE, 2010; Republic of Kenya, 2012).

What is the role of the general public in the development of technical and vocational programs in Primary schools? The underlying problem is that technical and vocational subjects in Primary schools are not adequately taught. The author in this paper argues that the general public has a role to play in ensuring that the facilities are adequate to support teaching these subjects; that schools are managed effectively to provide environment conducive to learning, and that the learners, being members of society, are motivated not only to acquire the technical and vocational skills, but also to explore ways in which these skills can be put to practice within the society. There is need, therefore, to examine the technical and vocational component of the Primary school curriculum to make it more attractive in society (Mbangwana, 1996; Republic of Kenya, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c).

Limitations of the Study

The concept of a good or an effective method of teaching a technical or vocational subject in a primary school is complex, pervasive, and elusive to decipher. This is so because, the judgment depends on the user and consumer of the teaching method. Thus, there is not any agreement among scholars as well as teachers on a single most appropriate method of teaching technical and vocational subjects in primary schools since this depends on the skills of individual teachers.

According to the setting adopted in the study, an insider of an institution including a primary school cannot alone objectively decipher what primary school teachers consider to be effective teaching of technical and vocational subjects because once basic assumptions of "effective" teaching have been embodied, and with the passage of time, they drop out of awareness, and are taken for granted leaving little room for improvement. On the other hand, an investigator from outside cannot objectively decipher what the primary school teachers (insiders) consider to be effective instruction of technical and vocational subjects if he has not shared with the insiders long enough, observed various settings, and examined various documentary evidences.

Nevertheless, any well-trained teacher should be able to assess the process of what an effective teaching entails. Consequently, reaching a consensus involves elaborate and extensive data collection and analysis of activities, and, therefore, involving a long time and a lot of funds. Although the content of the study and sample size consisted of selected Municipal (urban) schools and accessible rural schools from only one county in Kenya, the findings can be generalized for urban and rural schools in other counties but, the generalization is not automatic. Generalization is only possible if some replication logic is applied and a theory specifying that the same results should occur should be tested. Replication logic is the same that underlies the use of experiments and allows scientists to generalize from one experiment to another. The scientist does not attempt to select "representative" experiment. Ideally, the teachers teaching these subjects are the same products of the educational system including the characteristics of the pupils and the curriculum.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu County in the Northern part of the Rift Valley Province, Kenya. The target population for this study consisted of:

- The teachers who taught the technical and vocational subjects for 2 or more years. They taught Home Science, Art and Craft, and Agriculture in the selected urban and rural school in Uasin Gishu County of the Rift Valley Province, Republic of Kenya.
- Standard eight (Std VIII) pupils taking the above subjects in the selected urban and rural schools.
- Parents of the school children taking Home Science, Art and Craft, and Agriculture subjects in the selected urban and rural schools

A sample of 17 (27%) teachers and 14 (22%) teachers from urban and rural schools respectively, participated in the study. Eighty pupils and ten parents were also selected to participate in the study. This gave a total sample size of one hundred and twenty-one (121) participants. This ensured that the sample size was larger than thirty percent of the population which Charles (1988) considers to be an adequate size for collecting reliable information that is free from bias. To arrive at this sample, all the teachers who taught Home Science, Art and Craft and Agriculture subjects were identified and selected since the number involved was convenient.

Twenty pupils each from urban and rural schools respectively, were randomly selected to participate in the study. Twenty of the parents in each school whose children were in standard eight (Std VIII) and were taking technical and vocational subjects were identified and selected. The sample consisted over 40% of the total population.

The tools used for data collection in the study were: observation and interview schedules, and document analyses. Data was analysed using both basic and inferential statistics (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Simiyu, 2011). Descriptive themes based on the research questions were developed. An item-by-item analysis of data was performed. The coding of the close ended responses and the frequencies, and percentages to each response in each individual question was analysed in tabular form. The frequencies and percentages were used by the author to draw up conclusions and make subsequent recommendations.

Results and Discussion

Role of the general public in the development of technical and vocational education

Table 1 presents the views of the respondents about what the general public contributes towards the development of technical and vocational education in Primary schools. A large proportion, 48(47.9%), of the respondents, most of which was made up of teacher-respondents, said that the local communities were supposed to provide equipment and facilities in the development of technical and vocational education in Primary schools while 48(39%) of them said the communities were supposed to establish and manage the schools. Only 12(9.9%) of these respondents said that the communities were supposed to establish and manage the schools as well as provide equipment and facilities to the schools. A remarkably small proportion, 3(2.5%), said that the community's work was neither of the prescribed roles.

Table 1: Contribution of the public to technical and vocational education in primary school

Respondents	Teachers	Pupils	Parents	Total
Responses				
Establishment & management Of the schools	14(45.2)	30(37.5)	4(40.0)	48(39.7)
Provision of Equipment & Facilities	16(15.6)	37(46.3)	5(50.0)	58(47.7)
Establishment, management of Schools, Provision of Equipment & facilities	1(3.2)	10(12.5)	1(10.0)	12(9.9)
Neither Establishment of Schools Nor Provision of Facilities	0(0.0)	3(3.7)	0(0.0)	03(2.5)
Total	31(100)	80(100)	10(100)	121(100)

According to the government (Republic of Kenya, 1988), Primary schools were supposed to be established and managed by local communities and parents through their school management committees. As a means of developing and sustaining quality in Primary school education, the Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs) had been strengthened to ensure efficient school management. The government stressed the importance of these PTAs in using all possible means to mobilize members of the local communities to provide resources for the development of facilities and resources in their respective Primary schools. At the commencement of the 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya, the government anticipated higher pupil enrolments as well as more equipment supply for teaching practical subjects (Republic of Kenya, 1984, p. 20; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Since the government could not afford the cost, parents were required to partially meet this cost of equipment. It seemed that local communities are expected to establish and develop schools in their respective areas of jurisdiction including the provision of relevant equipment and facilities despite the fact that this had been far from its being achieved.

It was realised from the study that technical and vocational subjects instilled some practical skills and attitudes to the Primary school youth which could be applied to say employment if the subjects were taught effectively. The content was too broad to be covered in the specified duration and, thus, the youth were overloaded. This called for curriculum review in order to reduce the content. The negative attitude towards the subjects seemed to emanate from the way the subjects appeared to have been haphazardly introduced without pilot testing coupled with the poor mentality towards these subjects by wealthy families. Human and physical resources were inadequate and teachers were not adequately trained to teach the subjects. Rural schools were more adversely affected whereby improvisation in materials and facilities were evident. Gender disparity in the teaching of Home science was noticed. Furthermore, large classes were realized in practical lessons, a factor which could pose safety problems, among other factors. Local communities were not keen at supporting technical vocational programme because they were already overburdened with high fees.

Conclusion

From the above findings it appears that the technical and vocational component of the Primary school curriculum should be revised with the following in mind: Firstly, the government should examine how other countries have successfully introduced technical and vocational education in their educational systems. Secondly, it should relate this education to the requirements of the local communities as reflected in the school curriculum.

Thirdly, there should be a reduction of subjects so that only relevant ones including content are taught based on the available resources. Fourthly, teachers should be effectively trained to teach this type of education in Primary schools. Thus, there is need for curriculum developers to initiate a check-list from which to base their reviews of the curriculum. Once people are made to understand and respect the development of society and the social behaviour that befits it, discrimination of these subjects will be a thing of the past. Summarily, history, comparative experience, philosophical, (meaning and justification) and sociological aspects of technical and vocational curriculum should be considered as an important prerequisite for revising the Primary school practical subjects. History looks at the past from the colonial era. Comparative experience would relate to what other countries have done it, philosophical would relate to critical thinking and search for knowledge and wisdom to solve problems intelligently; while sociological would prepare youth for life in society since social framework plays a role to influence the expectations of youth in life - the youth grow, develop and learn within social framework set up by society. What this means is that the actual skills imparted in schools may be less important than the creation of attitudes and cognitive abilities which enable individuals to adjust to frequently changing job situations (Fagerlind & Saha, 1983; Blaug, 1984). Thus, there is still the sociological aspect in which it seems that the society has held a high regard for academic education than technical and vocational education.

Recommendations

Kenya aspires to get industrialised by the year 2020, or is it 2030? and this is one of the collective effort through which industrialization can be achieved. It is thus, recommended that the government should initiate and develop a programme in institutions to equip the youth with technical and vocational skills and attitudes in order to solve the problem of widespread youth unemployment (ILO, 2009). All teachers, pupils, and parents should also be sensitized on the importance of these subjects in national development, especially the wealthy families who expect their children to get into 'white collar' employment. Thus, the government could meet only partial cost of constructing workshops and laboratories and equipping them leaving the rest to the parents to augment the extra costs. Key issues in technology do not affect just one isolated part of the world or society. The issues are global and no one country or region can be self sufficient economically without relying or cooperating with another. Managers of schools should be appointed from among persons who are committed, competent, experienced, and with a vision in education.

Universities and other stakeholders can also play an indirect role of enhancing the general public support for the development of technical and vocational education in schools. This, they can by conducting research on contextual issues affecting schools and disseminating the findings to the public, the government and non-governmental agencies that have interest in the same. As such, more research should be conducted in the following areas:

- How Primary school graduates with high proficiencies in technical and vocational skills can be employed in the formal sector or find gainful self-employment in informal sector
- How negative attitudes of wealthy families and the general public who disregard these subjects can be reversed
- How these subjects can best be taught in other Primary schools in the country in order to come up with more conclusive results

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