Harnessing Youth Energy for Unity in Kenya: A Study into the Role of Secondary Education in the Fostering of National Cohesion in Kenya

Bulbulen Arap Maritim
Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

Abstract

The development of a national feeling in Kenya which over rides ethnic loyalties rests in bringing about much more conscious unity training through secondary school education system than is practiced at present. Past efforts such as common language, examination and co-curricular activities have been used with little success. The study used descriptive survey design in which the existing situation in secondary schools was explored in so far as unity is concerned. The study targeted secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County and the respondents included the school heads, teachers, students and educational officials. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents to be included in the sample, and questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data from 11 schools randomly selected from the 48 public secondary schools in the district. Three pilot schools were used to test the validity (0.86) and reliability (0.321) of the instruments. The collected data was examined using descriptive statistical techniques. The research findings indicated that secondary education foster national unity to some degree but more is needed. The research is intended to provide a guide to educators and policy makers in formulating sound philosophy to guide curriculum and other policies that promote the development of cohesive virtues amongst the learners. Teaching and learning activities should be purposefully directed towards the promotion of unity among the learners of different ethnic communities.

Keywords: *Secondary education, curriculum, national cohesion*

Introduction

At independence in 1963, Kenya adopted a philosophy of education that would best serve a country united in national purpose. The vision, mission and calls for education and training have continued to be guided by the following attributes; National unity, unity of purpose, social responsibility, moral and ethical values, life-long learning, science and technology, equity, quality and environment. The concern of this study is the first two characteristics that secondary education should inculcate patriotism and nationalism. These two characteristics mean that education should enhance teamwork, national cohesion and integration by institutions being a medium for the promotion of values of mutual respect and tolerance in the society. A society is the largest group to which all people belong. Societies share many likenesses such as culture, land religion and language. A culture is all the ways of acting, thinking and believing that a people share

(Giovanni, 2015). Most Kenyan societies share the same religious beliefs (Protestants, Catholics) and the same language (English, Kiswahili).

Though there is ethnic difference in culture, most Kenyans know what the goals and values of the whole society are and share many of those goals and values. There are also problems that are common to all societies and these societies try to solve them by using institutions. An institution is a special pattern of behavior that affects one part of group life. Examples of institutions are technical institutes, polytechnics, schools, churches and family. Education is provided for in schools and therefore they serve as centers of patriotic development. Kenya is one of African countries with the realization that secondary education holds the key to creating unity and jobs for youth (Mwiria, 2005).

All nations use their institutions for a common purpose to holds the society together. If harnessed well, education could equip the youth with skills to eliminate poverty and enhance national cohesion. Cohesion and teamwork is a high priority for most employers, being able to work well with colleagues. Employers look for individuals who can bring different strengths to the teams, people who can work amicably with all, contributing innovative ideas.

Education through many programs, should tackle effective communication among the youth and employees resulting in improved ethnic coexistence, family and peer relationships and conflict resolution (Giovannini, 2015). The teacher is responsible for directing the subject matter in a manner that all or most of the activities lend themselves to social cohesion. Secondary education must be instrumental in the promotion of positive interactions and inter communications that lead to lasting co-existence among the people (Lee, 2017).

Research Objective

The study was guided by the following specific objective, to assess the role of secondary school education in enhancing national unity.

Education and Social Responsibility

The philosophy of education in Kenya (Session Paper No 10, 1965) embracing the concept of national cohesion and practical education system is regarded as the single most important means for the promotion of national unity. It is a necessary and critical part of developing the Kenyan 'national character' which in the minds of many Kenyans has not yet been fully developed. How can a Kenyan society exist if a national character has not been build? Emile Durkheim theorized this in his book 'The Evolution of Educational Thought'

> "…Society can only exist if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity. Education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands…"

(Haan, 2017).

National characteristics of any given nation find their growth and expression in the nation's schools where teamwork and striving for the national common good forms integral and critical components of education and training system. As a social responsibility, the role of secondary education, parents and community should be to tame the learner to fight against disunity and to strive for the good and the beautiful as interpreted by that society into which he or she is born. Learners can easily be tamed through objective socialization as they have no suspicion of each other and form strong group work. The spirit of this fundamental principle is seen in the wide curricula, drama and music competitions and festivals and in teams such as those of athletics or soccer activities. Education of young people only thrives where there is a clearly defined group of people living together as a society. Society needs its young to assimilate them as closely as possible into culture pattern desired (Lee, 2017).

The use of practical project work in teaching, enhances cooperation, thus learners learn to appreciate each other and accept the ways of other communities. As a social responsibility the ministry of education should consider the image of education as the sum of attitudes, associations and feelings.

Research Methodology

This study used the descriptive survey research design to assess the role of secondary school education in enhancing national unity and to identify educational approaches and policies in secondary school that negate national unity. A descriptive survey design attempts to describe the existing situation in a system in order to establish greater insight into factors which are operating and to discover new causal relationships (Kothari, 2008). The word survey signifies the gathering of data regarding present conditions. It is useful in proving the value of facts and focusing attention on the most important things to be reported (Ivankova, 2018). This design is justified by the fact that the role of secondary education in national unity required the researcher to ask groups of students and teachers questions relating to education and unity. The information was collected from these people in order to describe some aspects or characteristics such as opinions, attitudes and beliefs of the population of which the groups are part. The survey questions helped to identify education cultures and school policies that socialize learners against national unity.

Study Area

This study was carried out in public secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County in Rift Valley province, Kenya. This area was selected because the region was one of the areas that was hard hit by 2007-2008 post-election violence (Lee, 2017).

Target Population

The groups involved in the research were sampled students, teachers, principals, Quality Assurance Officers (QUASO) and the County Education Officer (CEO) of the area. The students provided information as to whether secondary education improved their ethnic coexistence or not while teachers confirmed if indeed the first objective for education to foster national unity is addressed in their curriculum and schemes of work. As inspectors of schools, the QUASO and SSAC gave an overview of the extent to which national unity is achieved in secondary schools and ultimately the CEO certified if indeed the district residences are living in harmony with education playing a central role. Secondary school education was chosen because it was the researcher's contention that ethnic sentiments start at secondary level and that high school teachers were aware of the impact of teaching methodologies and education policies on the behavior change of learners. The institutions incorporated, were public schools as they were obliged to implement the national objectives of education.

Sampling Procedures and Sampling Size

The target population of the study was large and therefore sampling was necessary. Sampling is a method of getting a representative potion of a population to take part in the study. Both unrestricted random and purposive sampling designs were used in this study (Cohen, Manion. & Morrison, 2006). There are 48 secondary schools in the district and 23% of the schools participated in the study.

To select the particular school from each of the zones, lottery, as a technique of simple random sampling was used where each school was assigned a number written on a piece of paper. The papers were rolled and mixed thoroughly and then one paper was picked at random. To select the teachers, students and the principals, purposive sampling procedure was used. Purposive sampling is a design based on choosing individuals as samples because of good evidence that they are representative of the total population (Ivankova, 2018). A total of 52 student's leaders, 32 class teachers and 11 principals were selected. This design was also used in the selection of Quality Assurance Officer and the CEO.

Prefects and their assistance as well as the class teachers of form three classes took part in the study. Form three class was chosen because this group is well adjusted to the school culture and most sensitive to social innovations. Form one and two are still adjusting to high school routine while the form fours are more concerned with their examinations and careers. In schools, a prefect is appointed to represent a class while a class teacher takes charge of a class on behalf of the teachers. Similarly, a head teacher is appointed to run a secondary school on behalf of the board, parents and teachers. The CEO takes charge of the school activities in the district. All the information given was integrated and recorded for use in analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

To obtain the required information from respondents, two types of research instrument were developed namely; questionnaires and interviews schedules. Separate questionnaires were prepared for the students and teachers. A description of interview schedule for the principals and CEO were prepared. The instruments were designed to seek information on the role of technical and secondary education in enforcing national unity. Other information in this regard was obtained through document analysis.

Findings

Inculcation of Unity through Secondary School Education

In order to address the objective which was to assess the role of secondary school education in enhancing national unity, students were required to state whether the curriculum offered in school help to promote tribal co-existence among learners in school. The curriculum and co-curricular activities offered in secondary school were assembled in six groups as shown by figure

Students Perception on the Role of Secondary School Education in the Promotion of National Unity

The students were asked to give their opinion on the extent to which each of the groups helped to bond them together in the contexts of national unity. The data indicate that for both mathematics and sciences, only 6% in each case of the student respondents were of the view that they promote unity. At 28%, games and sports were seen to be the most supportive activities to national unity, followed by Humanities at 24%. Clubs and societies also helped to boost unity as 23% of students viewed it as so. 13% of the students were of the view that creative arts promoted unity. From these results, it was the students opinion that the role of curriculum and co-curriculum activities in schools in fostering national unity were represented by a combined 49% (6+6+24+13) and 51% (28+23) respectively. This suggests that according to the students, co-curricular activities support unity more than curricula activities. Seemingly, the learners concentrated on academic work in class as individuals paying attention to the teachers. They answer questions in class by raising their hands and one person is allowed to respond. Similarly tests and end of term examinations are done by each student individually. In this way, the learners may view engagements in class as hardly fostering their unity as different communities whereas activities like football, volleyball, netball, music drama and athletics engage them as a team. A team learns to work together in coordination and action.

This way they learn to accept and appreciate each other regardless of which community they came from. Music and drama festivals, for example should have themes for the fostering of national unity and both teachers and students

composed items that were directed to this objective. However, unity can also be promoted in class activities if teachers consciously use class examples laws and concepts in their teachings to promote national unity.

Science teachers for example may use the way systems such as digestive, endocrine, respiratory and circulatory systems work together for the wellbeing of a person, or reactions that form compounds to stress unity of communities. Compositions in English language and Kiswahili could be based on topical issues of unity. Perhaps in their training the teachers are geared towards logical rather than sociological criterion. This way, teaching and learning is centralized on the subject content and not their social application in everyday life.

In addition, the students were asked to give what in their view, were the reasons why their curriculum offered the subjects and items such as mathematics, Sciences, Humanities, and creative Arts, games and sports as well as clubs and societies. Since the students may give varied reasons, the researcher grouped them into academic, economic and socio cultural reasons. Academic reasons were all those that relate to advancement in scholarly work such as engagement in undergraduate and post graduate studies. Economic reasons include all those that help students to acquire skills to enable them to run income generating activities, commercial projects and trading. Socio cultural reasons on the other hand, referred to those that promoted harmony and welfare of the society. They were concerned with social education and ethics in which learners acquired behavioral norms and ways of solving societal problems. National unity is a socio cultural value of education which must be engaged in all the activities of education. By considering the main reason that each student gave against the curriculum content, the results were compiled in Table 1.

Table 1 *Students Reasons for Taking the Various Courses in the Curriculum*

Curriculum content	Main reason for Curriculum			
	Academic	Economic	Socio- cultural	Total
Mathematics	35 (67.3%)	17 (32.7%)	0 (0.0%)	52 (100%)
Sciences	33 (63.5%)	17 (32.7%)	2 (3.8%)	52 (100%)
Humanities	6 (11.5%)	4 (7.7%)	42 (80.8%)	52 (100%)
TVET and Creative Arts	7 (13.5%)	43 (82.7%)	2 (3.8%)	52 (100%)
Games and Sports	4 (7.7%)	4 (7.7%)	44 (84.6%)	52 (100%)
Clubs and Societies	1 (1.9%)	50 (96.2%)	1 (1.9%)	52 (100%)

The results in Table 1 show that for mathematics, 35 out of 52 respondents, representing 67.3% were of the view that it was for academic reasons. Similarly the sciences also served to sustain academic endowment of the learners as 33 out of 52 (63.5%) were in support. Most learners viewed humanities as supporting unity since 80.8% presented this view. To a large extent, games and sports were viewed to promote unity (84.6%). Creative courses (82.7%) as well as clubs and societies (96.2%) served economic purposes. Those who took creative Arts such as music, drama, drawing and design and fine Arts hoped to earn a living through such engagements. It also follows from those results that learners joined clubs and societies mainly to generate some income.

Students Reasons for Taking the Various Courses in the Curriculum

In respect of the student numbers, academic and economic values dominated their aim of going to school. Many students however viewed humanities and games and sports as promoting socio- cultural values.

Arguably, the students may be right in these opinions if the approaches of teaching by their teachers were content based and there is no concern for long term implications in terms of society. On the other hand, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development could be failing the system by not adequately preparing the methods of implementation of the national objectives. In an oral interview, both the CEO and QUASO gave similar opinions to those of the learners citing academic and economic reasons as dominating the minds of learners and parents.

The CEO observed that the goal of national unity was achieved to a greater extend through sport, history education and the singing of national anthem. He was responding to the questions on whether secondary school education had achieved national unity. "The curriculum has not really addressed this goal. Unless we come up with a compulsory subject where we discuss issues of unity education, patriotism or nationalism, the subject of negative ethnicity may continue to present a challenge to unity".

Teachers Perception on the Role of Secondary School Education in the Promotion of National Unity

The second targeted group of respondents was the class teachers of the selected secondary schools. 36 class teachers were served with questionnaires in which they were to give their opinions on whether secondary. A 91% rate of these teachers observed that secondary education partially achieved the goal of national unity through the singing of national anthem and part of curriculum such as history, geography and sports activities. While 9% of the teachers felt that secondary education had not promoted unity at all. No single teacher agreed that the objective of attaining national unity through secondary education had fully been realized. Considering that the teachers were concerned with curriculum implementation, these findings present a critical point of concern. Do the teachers carry out their activities with the national goals of education in mind? Seemingly

the teachers were overly engaged in the specific objectives related to formal education (syllabi & classroom undertakings) leaving little or no time for the other (informal and non-formal) perspectives of education. The role of the teacher in all these aspects of education was very important for the student to make acceptable choices in life.

This also touches on the training of the teacher and the contact time between them and the learners. Seemingly most teachers viewed the goal of national unity as one to be addressed in assemblies through national anthem and such other activities like sports and history. National unity was not inscribed in their training programmes but as they went to the field, it formed an essential part of human creativity. Those who promoted it had to be creative in their day-to-day teaching. Many others simply sailed in the fluid work of society and as such would not help to improve inter-ethnic tolerance through their teachings.

Further to this, the teachers were to respond to statements relating to secondary school learning and national unity as indicated in Table 2. It shows the extent to which teachers agreed or disagreed to the statements.

Table 2 *Teachers Responses to Issues Relating to Secondary School Education and National Unity*

	Teachers Responses					Total
Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	
Secondary school students are not tribal	1 (3%)	16 (50%)	4 (12.5%)	11 (34.5%)	-	32 (100%)
Some subjects of secondary school curriculum do not address issues of unity	3 (9.4%)	22 (68.7%)	2 (6.3%)	5 (15.6%)	-	32 (100%)
Secondary education achieves the goal of national unity	- (0.0%)	8 (25%)	2 (6.3%)	19 (59.4%)	3 (9.3%)	32 (100%)
Peace education should be taught in secondary level of education	11 (34.4%)	21 (65.6%)	- (0.0%)	- (0.0%)	- (0.0%)	32 (100%)
I influence learners attitude towards national unity in my teaching	5 (15.6%)	15 (46.9%)	12 (37.5%)	- (0.0%)	- (0.0%)	32 (100%)

Over 50% of the teachers were of the view that secondary school students were not tribal. This findings supports the researchers contention that majority of the students in secondary schools did not see anything inherently wrong with tribe. They were not keen to identify with their 'places' of origin and were open to process of negotiation and revision. It is this potential that education at this level, should be exploited to bring about the desired goals.

A rating of 78.1% was in agreement that portions of secondary school curriculum do not address issues of national unity. And 59.4% of the teachers disagreed to the statement that secondary education achieved the goal of national unity, whereas 25% agreed to it. This reveals that most teachers did not interpret specific objectives of their areas of specialization beyond the classroom achievement. The 15.6% who disagreed may be the group that saw beyond the class objectives and were ready to negotiate a cosmopolitan existence for learners. Life Skills Education is an improved version of Social Education and Ethics which was phased out sometimes back. It became necessary to introduce life skills education to schools after 2008 post-election violence as a way of embracing a philosophy of nonviolence, love, compassion, trust, unity, fairness cooperation and reverence for human family in secondary school learning. Some teachers were of the view that peace education could be introduced to further foster national unity. But as to whether this will bring the desired attitude change is a process open for negotiation.

Principally, the teachers should be trained specifically to serve as peaceful role models to help counteract images of violent behavior that young people receive through media and in their home areas. The teaching style must adjust to the various needs of the learner and concerns about violence that students bring to classrooms. An issue of concern is the difference between teaching separately peace education classes versus integrating peace themes into existing curriculum. With the knowledge that good social values and peace are the sinews that binds our societies together, education authorities must reflect seriously on how schools can weave these characteristics into the upbringing of the youth.

Principals Perception on the Role of Secondary Education in the Promotion of National Unity

The oral interview carried out by the researcher with the principals of the schools showed a 72.7% support for revision of curriculum in order to bring a meaningful transformation towards national unity. This is shown by Figure 1 shown.
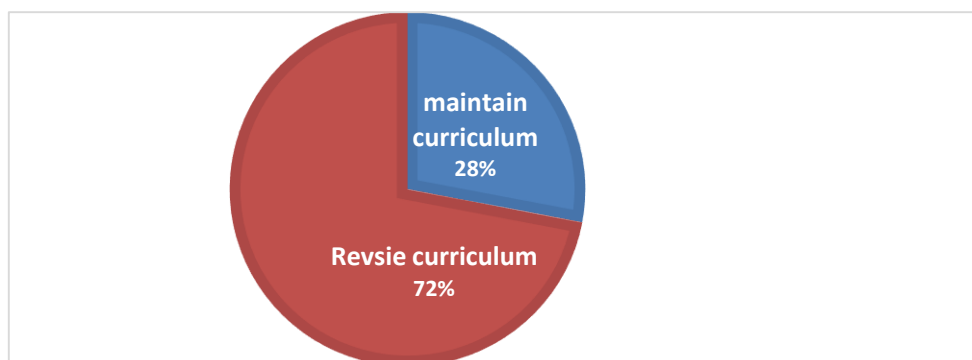
Figure 1: *Principals Opinion on Change of Curriculum*

The principals felt that the national goals were well thought out and were good for the country but the design of the curriculum was such that the implementers who were primarily the teachers took little notice of them. It needs re-structuring to attract active participation of all teachers. A rating of 27% of the principals however were of the view that the curriculum should be maintained as it is, but to train the teachers on ways of handling attributes entrenched in the philosophy of education. Other than the role of curriculum, 73% of the principals observed that generally, secondary education do not foster unity and 18% felt that the system promotes unity.

Education Officers Perception on the Role of Secondary Education in the Promotion of National Unity

Both the County Education Officer and the Quality Assurance Officer observed that there was need to change formal and non-formal curriculum so as to develop a close interaction in content and activity. Since the recommendation by Koech Report (2000) of Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET) in which education was to facilitate national unity and adaptation to changing circumstance, little has been done towards this direction. The government centered its attention on access, retention, equity and internal efficiencies within the education system.

The findings from all the respondents - students, teachers, principals and education officials show that secondary school education has to a large extend not fostered national unity as prescribed by the national objectives. The curriculum is geared toward individual achievement such as academic pursuit and economic endowments. The aspect of national unity is given less attention in the day-to-day curriculum activities in secondary school. It was the view of most respondents that co-curricular activities such as games & sports, drama, music and humanity courses which include history and geography help to foster unity. On the overall, education does not provide learners with personal experiences to cherish unity within and outside them. Indeed education should not only nurture personal growth but it should serve as an instrument for transmitting and renewing culture. Every effort should be made through education to secure a community of purpose and experience, to foster a common identity of ideas.

Conclusion

Secondary education curriculum is predominantly meritocratic and both the methods of enrolling learners and teachers go against the objective to bring ethnic groups closer to each other. And the cultures established in schools appear to vary from school to school. In this way schools do not have a common front towards the attainment of the goals. The contemporary school curricula develops cooperative attributes of learners to a small extent, considering the role played by Art subjects such as History, geography and CRE. Research results also showed that the use of official languages such as English and Kiswahili and co-curricular activities help to promote cohesive tendencies among learners.

Recommendations

Secondary education, as argued in this study ought to promote unity among the people of Kenya. It ought to inculcate in the learners a lasting attribute of patriotism and selfless co-existence among themselves. In respect of the faulty education system and curricula, there's need to restructure the secondary school system to pursue unity education within or independent of other subjects. The Ministry of Education may institutionalize teaching and learning experiences which relate closely with unity of learners and support cultures in schools such as music, drama, peace and unity debates as well as democratic elections of prefects which in the final end enforce the spirit of co-existence of workers, teachers and students, regardless of ethnic identity. There is also need to develop a mechanism whereby the stakeholders in education such as parents, teachers, education officers and other actors in private sector, all play a role in development of syllabi and goals for the attainment of national unity. The schools that are classified as national schools are those endowed with resources and post good results in national examinations. These schools admit students from all over the country using a balanced ratio.

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