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RESEARCH ARTICLE

APPLICATION OF INTERACTIVE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN THE PROMOTION OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN PRIMARY SOCIAL STUDIES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of interactive pedagogical approaches on learner academic engagement in social studies in Kenya's primary schools. The study was conducted against the background of declining educational standards partly emanating from pedagogy. Pedagogy is an integral component of curriculum implementation in the education sector. Yet, the literature reviewed revealed that very little research has been undertaken in the area on use of interactive pedagogical approaches in learner academic engagement, especially in social studies. Of the previous studies in social studies, non, the researcher came across, specifically examined the topic. The study followed the qualitative approach and took the relativist interpretivist philosophical paradigm. Its objective were: establish whether teachers cater for interaction in planning for instruction, determine the contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches to learner academic engagement and lastly establish whether the learning environment is conducive for interactive pedagogical approaches in social studies. Data was collected through observation, interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis. The data was analysed qualitatively whereby it was coded and interpreted along themes based on the objectives and findings of the study. The findings generally show that use of pedagogical approaches by teachers has an influence in learner academic engagement in social studies. In view of the findings thereof, suggestions have been made towards the use of interactive pedagogical approaches on learner academic engagement in social studies to various stakeholders. For teachers, it was recommended that they apply interactive pedagogical approaches during the instructional process, they pay attention to differentiation in social studies lessons and explicitly incorporate interaction in the planning process. To the teacher education institutions, they pay more attention during the training programme to use of interactive pedagogical approaches in various stages of the lesson planning and implementation, and that they educate the student teachers on how to cater for differentiation and inclusion in classroom settings. To policy makers in education, they should increase time allocated for social studies instruction, scale down the social studies curriculum and introduce in-service programmes to teachers on use of pedagogical approaches in the subject.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching over and above all, aims at promotion of academic engagement (Ndaloh *et al.*, 2009). To attain this, a teacher should put in place interactive pedagogical approaches during the instructional process (Obondo 2012, Lewin and Stuart, 2008, Okoth and Ndaloh, 2008). These observations have brought into sharp focus the teaching and learning of various subjects across the curriculum levels. Studies done in Kenya and other countries on the teaching of social studies have revealed that teaching methods, planning for instruction, and learning environment are some of the critical elements with a bearing on the quality of teaching and learning (Delisle, 1997,

Ndaloh, 1999, Ongeti, 2008, Ong'ondo 2009, Kafu and Too, 2011). This paper examines the application of Pedagogical approaches in the attainment of learner academic engagement in social studies at the Kenyan Primary school levels. Studies done in Kenya have not specifically examined the issue of pedagogical approaches vis a vis learner academic engagement. Most of these studies have concentrated on single elements in the pedagogical process (Lendo 2012, Mutwiri 2012, Kang'ali 2012, Karani 1996, Kafu and Too, 2010). This has been despite the fact that the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (K.I.C.D) stresses the importance of learner academic engagement in the instructional process (KIE 2002). In most of the studies which have been undertaken in Kenyan primary schools, it has been established that teachers give less attention to the issue of academic engagement, most have tended to be bogged by syllabus coverage (Ndaloh 1999,

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Mwango 2011, Nabwire 1998, Ogula 1994, Ondimu 1995). Studies conducted in Kenya and other parts of the world on pedagogy have tried to shed light on various aspects of the process in social studies and other disciplines. Some of the areas which have attracted the attention of scholars have included: instructional approaches, media resources, teacher preparation, assessment, assessment, attitude and learning environment. The current study examined some of these areas and their nexus to academic engagement in social studies at the primary school level. Most of the studies mentioned above failed to extricate the nexus between interactive pedagogical approaches and academic engagement. Learner academic engagement is largely a product of teacher facilitation.

Methods of teaching lie at the heart of the instructional process. Moyle's *et al* (2003) contends that a teacher should employ both verbal presentation and non-verbal cues while teaching so as to enhance active learner participation. They aver that this should be done within the following parameters:

- Ensuring that learners enjoy the teaching and learning activities
- Broader involvement of learners in the instructional process.
- Active learner involvement in the teaching and learning process.
- Reference to deeper thinking and meaning making
- Assessing knowledge and learner needs
- Reciprocal communication (explicit and implicit)
- Meta cognitive (thinking about thinking)

The above parameters demand that a teacher creates an enabling learning environment so as to create a nexus between the critical parts in the instructional process to enable them function at their optimum. It is vital to remember that a teacher's spoken word just as non-verbal cues are of essence in the instructional process. Active learner participation in the teaching and learning activities is central to academic engagement (Sebazungu *et al.*, 2016). These activities should be varied during the lesson. Murray & Brighton (1996) add that multiple activities should be provided in a lesson to enhance interaction among the parts in the teaching system. Generally, methods of teaching which engender active learner involvement have been known to contribute to academic engagement at the primary school level (Ndaloh *et al.*, 2009). However, studies that have been conducted in schools in Kenya and other parts of the world have yielded mixed results. Most of these studies have revealed teacher use of non-learner centred methods of teaching (Makhulo 1984 in Odeo 2003; Karani 1996; Ongeti 2008). Some studies have attributed the use of teacher centred methods among African teachers to teacher education programmes. These programmes have tended to be skewed towards teacher dominance in the instructional process (Vavrus 2009 in Ong'ondo 2009, Merryfield and Mutebi 1990, Ndaloh 1999, Mohammed 1994, and Midega 1990 in Shiundu and Mohammed 2006). In the Kenyan primary schools, the situation has been worsened by the Free primary education programme which was introduced in 2003. This has led to large classes with a corresponding teacher shortfall due to financial constraints. Teachers have therefore resorted to use of teacher centred methods which largely inhibits learner academic engagement. Studies undertaken in Kenyan schools have established that teachers, even though are required to use learner centred methods, employ those where minimal facilitation of the learner by the

teacher occurs. (Ngugi, 2008, Omulando, 2009, Otieno, 2009, Waswa 2009, Kimwari, 2010, Muvango, 2011, Kangali, 2012; Lendo, 2012).

Interestingly, even where teachers have been found to use interactive methods, aspersions have been cast on their quality. This has partly revolved around the questioning technique employed by teachers. Too and Kafu (2011) found that questions posed by teachers in primary schools in Uasin Gishu county in Kenya were of a general nature, in appropriate for learner level and were unevenly distributed among learners. Such questions tended to run counter to quality interaction thus non-achievement of academic engagement in learner population. Another critical issue in the use of interactive pedagogical approaches in the attainment of academic engagement is teacher preparation. Planning entails paying attention to learner level of learning and entry behavior, nature of the learning environment, available physical facilities, areas of content to lay emphasis on during the teaching and extent of learner involvement in the varied activities (Sebazungu *et al.*, 2016). In addition, it involves deep thinking on planning for inherent processes, tasks and strategies of carrying out the components and operations of the teaching and learning process, (Kafu, 2010). Kafu further contends that a teacher should give attention in the planning process to who to teach, what to teach and how to teach the content. However studies done in Kenyan schools have established poor preparation on the part of teachers. Teachers in primary schools have been found to have a shaky grounding in content (Kigotho, 2013; Michira 2014). This is shocking as for effective teaching to be realized, a teacher should possess good mastery of content (Hammond, 1999; Sandholtz, 2011). In Kenya, things have been made worse by lack of quality contribution from quality assurance and standards personnel from the ministry of education (Aoko, 2010). The officers' in-put during pre and post observation conference have not helped to improve teacher preparation. Some of the officers have displayed a poor grasp of issues they are expected to guide the teachers on. Things have further been complicated by teacher low morale due to poor working conditions and terms of service. This has made the Kenyan teacher to rather force the self in his or her professional responsibilities.

Studies focusing on teacher preparation have revealed lack of preparation and at times lack or poor use of essential documents such as schemes of work and lesson plans in the planning process (Ojwang, 2013, Molenye, 2012, Musyoka, 2011, Too and Kafu, 2011, Muvango, 2011, Kimani, 2010, Sumbwa 2008, Bett, 2008). Where teacher preparation is poor or lacks altogether, learner academic engagement in the instructional process becomes rather difficult. The engagement should be explicitly provided for in planning especially in the syllabus (through specific objectives and teaching and learning activities) schemes of work and lesson plans. The learning environment is another element that is of essence in learner academic engagement. A suitable learning environment should be created to enable use of interactive pedagogical approaches so as to engender learner academic engagement. Africa's social studies programmes in schools have been largely informed by the Mombasa conference report of 1968. This report advocates for a democratic learning environment in social studies instruction. Scholars across the world have linked classroom teacher practices to learner academic engagement (Hammond 1999, Moyles *et al.*, 2003, Hayes 2009; Ellis *et al.*, 2005).

However studies done in Kenya and other parts of the world have revealed conflicting positions. Teachers have been found to exhibit behaviour running counter to good classroom practices (Grande *et al.*, 2001, Too, 2004, Bett, 2008, Ngugi, 2008, Too and Kafu 2009; Kodze *et al.*, 2010, Musyoka, 2011). Most of the research that have been undertaken in pedagogy in social studies and other subjects at the primary school level have looked at general aspects of the teaching process. Very little or none in Kenya has examined the issue of interactive pedagogical approaches in the attainment of learner academic engagement. The paucity of literature in the area necessitated the present study. This was informed by the hope that such a study would enrich the pedagogical approaches in social studies at the primary school level in Kenya and other parts of the world.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study were to:

- 1) Find out whether teachers cater for interaction in their planning for instruction.
- 2) Determine the contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches to learner academic engagement in the social studies.
- 3) Establish whether the learning environment is conducive for interactive pedagogical approaches.

Research Questions

The present study aimed at answering the following research questions:

- 1) Have the teachers catered for learner interaction in different aspects of the instructional process in planning for instruction?
- 2) Is there a relationship between use of interactive pedagogical approaches and learner academic engagement in Social Studies instructional process?
- 3) Is the learning environment created by the teacher during the Social Studies instructional process conducive for interactive pedagogical approaches?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried in Uasin Gishu County in Kenya which has registered a dwindling performance in social studies in the Kenya Primary Certificate of Education examinations at the end of the primary school cycle. (Uasin Gishu County Director of Education office 2013). The study adopted the relativist interpretivist philosophical paradigm (Creswell, 2009) with a qualitative multiple case study method. The study's ontological and epistemological underpinnings was nominalist and interpretive-anti positivist, respectively. Maree and westhuizen (2014) observe that the former adopts the view that social reality can be understood merely through words and names created by the mind and with levels of individual consciousness while the latter is anchored on the premise that Knowledge is softer, more subjective, spiritual or even of a transcendental kind. Purposive sampling was used to select 16 schools. A total of 656 participants. Comprising 16 teachers and 640 learners participated. The respondents' were drawn from both genders and came from urban, peri-urban and rural schools. Data was generated through in-depth interviews, observation, focused group discussions and document analysis.

Data on teaching methods was gotten through observation, interviews and focused group discussion. That on planning for instruction was derived from document analysis and interviews whereas data on the learning environment was generated through observation. A four-step criteria:credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability was observed to ensure trustworthiness of the research. In addition, triangulation was used to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. To ensure ethical considerations, respondents informed consent and assent was sought, their confidentiality and anonymity was also guaranteed. The researcher also negotiated access with gate keepers to further ensure ethics were observed. Permission to undertake the study was also sought from relevant authorities (Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011, Cresswell, 2009, Holmes, 2006; Rudestan and Newton, 2001).

The data was coded, transcribed and analysed qualitatively based on emerging themes.

Findings of the study

In this section, an interrogation of the findings from observation, interviews, focused group discussion and document analysis are made.

Incorporation of interaction in planning for instruction

The study revealed that the teachers prepared the S.O.W as is recommended by the Ministry of Education. The topic and subtopics covered in the period of interest by the researcher were four. They included map reading and interpretation (elements of a map, compass points and map interpretation), physical features (mountains), vegetation (types and characteristics of vegetation in Africa) and rotation of the earth (longitudes and latitudes). Table 1 shows the topics and subtopics whose S.O.W were addressed in the study.

Table 1. Topics and sub-topics whose S.O.W. were used in the study

| Topic | Sub-topic |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Map reading and interpretation | Elements of a map |
| | Compass points |
| | Map interpretation |
| Physical features | Mountains |
| Vegetation | Types of vegetation and their characteristics |
| Rotation of the earth | Longitudes and latitudes |

On the scheme of work, three elements were of interest to the study. These were:

Specific Objectives

Specific objectives is an integral element in the S.O.W. Besides giving the lesson directions, it may indicate presence or lack of interaction in the instructional exercise. This is more so as observed by Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) that qualitative researchers believe that the meaning of a text resides in the minds of its writer and its readers. They add that a document can have different meanings at different levels of analysis. To try to establish whether interaction was provided for in the S.O.W, the researcher collected the specific objectives formulated by teachers for the lessons which were observed (Codes ToI to To II represent the observations). They were: By the end of the lesson, the learner should be able to identify and locate the main physical features and draw them in a map of Africa.

To11

By the end of the lesson, the learner should be able to work out time using longitudes.

To12

By the end of this lesson, pupils should be able to identify the elements of a map and their uses.

To1

By the end of this lesson, pupils should be able to draw the 16 point compass and use them to describe direction of places.

To2

By the end of the lesson, the learner should be able to describe the position of Kenya in relation to its neighbours.

To3

By the end of the lesson, the learner should be able to identify the main physical features of Kenya.

To4

By the end of the lesson, the learner should be able to:

- Explain how Fold mountains are formed,
- Name different Fold mountains in Africa,
- Explain how Residual mountains are formed
- Name different Residual mountains.

To5

By the end of the lesson, the learner should be able to:

- Define a map,
- Define map reading and interpretation,
- Name the elements of a map.

To6

By the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to:

- Explain the term vegetation,
- Name the types of vegetation,
- State the characteristics of equatorial rain forest

To7

By the end of the lesson, learners should be able to state and list down the elements of an appropriate map.

To8

By the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to:

- List the elements of a good map.
- Interpret features which are found on a map given.
- Identify and explain the physical features, human activities and settlement pattern on the map given.

From the foregoing, the key terms used to describe the behaviour expected the learner to exhibit included: Identify, locate, work out, identify, draw, explain, name, define, state, list down, interpret and describe. A closer examination of these terms reveals that they are better achieved through interactive pedagogical approaches during the instructional exercise. However, these squarely lie in the teacher’s realm. The teacher can only achieve this, if in the execution of the exercise, opportunities are provided for interaction. This is critical as Ong’ondo (2009) had established that student teachers found schemes of work unnecessary at times. The same study found that some student-teachers found lesson plans unnecessary and consequently stopped preparing them as soon as they realized that assessors would no longer be visiting

them. If this applied to student teachers, it is highly probable that practising teachers may equally harbour similar sentiments thus fail to adhere to the demands of the contents of the documents. Moreover, student teachers are greatly influenced by practising teachers who even at times serve as cooperating teachers to them during teaching practice.

Teaching and learning activities

Another element in the S.O.W which may reflect a teacher’s thinking on the concept of interaction is teaching and learning activities. Table 4.3 shows the teaching and learning activities provided for in the S.O.W of the teachers whose lessons were observed.

Table 2. Teaching and learning activities

| Explanation |
|---|
| Asking and answering questions |
| Making notes |
| Drawing |
| Displaying teaching and learning resources. |
| Observation |
| Giving notes/writing notes |
| Discussion |

From table 4.3 the teaching and learning activities were skewed in favour of the teacher. The teaching activities included: explanation, asking and answering questions, displaying the teaching and learning resources, giving notes and guiding the learner through discussion. Consequently, the teaching and learning exercise at the planning stage was teacher centred thus allowing for minimal learner interaction in the exercise. Even though the teaching activities have corresponding learning activities in a learning situation, where they are skewed towards the teacher, a learner’s level of interaction is greatly reduced.

Teaching and learning resources

Instructional resources are vital in the teaching and learning exercise. They do provide the presence of or lack of interaction in the instructional exercise. This is more so on how they are used. Table 3 shows the teaching and learning resources which were indicated by the teachers in their S.O.W.

Table 3. Instructional resources indicated by teachers

| |
|---------------------|
| Atlas |
| Charts |
| Maps |
| Chalk/writing board |
| Pupil’s textbook |

Depending on how the graphic and printed materials above are used, they can encourage or discourage interaction in the classroom. Petty (2004) observe that visual aids help gain learner attention, add variety, aid conceptualization and memory during the learning process. All these point to, if well used, encouragement of interaction in the classroom. It is with this in mind that the present study sought to establish whether the way the teacher uses the visual and other resources during instruction, encouraged interaction or otherwise, especially among the learners.

Contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches to learner academic engagement

The contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches to learner academic engagement in social studies was investigated through lesson observation and teacher interviews. This touched on the second research objective. Of interest were data from two tools.

Classroom observation

Three frames of reference were used to guide observation of the teaching methods being used in social studies. It is essential to remember that while executing teaching, one brings on board all the three crucial elements of instructional process: planning, instructional procedures, and assessment. This thus affords a researcher to gain a picture of the attainment of academic engagement in all the three crucial elements of the instructional process: planning, instructional

procedures and assessment. This thus affords a researcher to gain a picture of the attainment of academic engagement in all the three issues which were addressed in the study- planning for instructions, pedagogical approaches and learning environment. First, the researcher identified the method(s) being used; next, he commented on the methods in the particular lesson being observed before finally commenting on learner participation as a reflection of their academic engagement. A total of 16 social studies lessons were observed in six Primary schools within Uasin Gishu County. Results of the observations made regarding the teaching methods and accompanying comments are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the teachers mainly used the question and answer and lecture (explanation) methods in most of their lessons. In a few cases, teacher demonstration and discussion was used. The former was used by three teachers while only one teacher used demonstration. Most of the lessons were characterized by too much teacher-talk. Poor questioning

Table 4. Lesson observations on teaching methods used by social studies teachers (n=16)

| Lesson observed | Sub-topic | Observe teaching | Typology |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| To1 | Countries | Question and answer Explanation | Teacher was dominant over the teaching and learning exercise. The few learners who were given a chance to participate showed mastery of concept. |
| To2 | Revolution of the earth | Question and answer | Teacher dominated the teaching and learning exercise through teacher talk. Few learners given a chance to partake of the lesson showed mastery of concepts. |
| To3 | Revolution of the earth | Question and answer Explanation Teacher demonstration | Little evidence of learner academic engagement as teacher allowed chorus responses. |
| To4 | Rotation of the earth | Question and answer Explanation Demonstration | Teacher dominance over the instructional process A few learners indicated comprehension of concepts. When the teacher asked some passive ones, they indicated total lack of knowledge of what was being examined. |
| To5 | Rotation of the earth | Question and answer Explanation Demonstration | Teacher dominated the instructional exercise, allowed chorus responses hence posed difficulty in gauging learner academic engagement. |
| To6 | Elements of a map | Explanation Discussion Question and answer | Teacher balanced talk with active learner participation. This allowed for learner academic engagement. |
| To7 | Elements of a map | Question and answer Explanation | Teacher dominated the teaching and learning exercise; allowed chorus responses, dictated notes, making it difficult to gauge learner academic engagement. |
| To8 | Map reading and interpretation | Question and answer Explanation | Too much teacher-talk punctuated with poor questioning technique which allowed for chorus responses thus making it difficult to gauge learner academic engagement. |
| To9 | Physical features | Question and answer Explanation | Teacher dominated the instructional process through too much teacher talk and note writing. This made it hard to gauge learner academic engagement. There was mostly lower order questions |
| To10 | Formation of mountains | Question and answer Explanation | Too much teacher talk, punctuated with chorus responses from learners. Teacher also posed several leading questions. This made it difficult to establish learner academic engagement. |
| To11 | Factors influencing climate | Question and answer Explanation | Classroom was dominated by teacher talk; poor questioning technique reflected in encouragement of chorus responses and posing of vague questions. Most questions were of lower order. Thus making gauging interaction difficult. This made learner academic engagement be difficult to establish. |
| To12 | Vegetation | Question and answer Explanation | Teacher gave learners little time to ask or answer questions. He/she mostly dominated the teaching and learning exercise. He/she didn't make notes but instead read directly from the textbook. There was little evidence of learner academic engagement. Questions were mostly lower order. |
| To13 | Climatic regions of Africa | Explanation | Teacher talked most of the times and gave learners notes to copy. There was no element of learner academic engagement. Uneven spread of questions to the learners. |
| To14 | Climatic regions of Africa | Explanation, Question and answer | Teacher allowed for chorus responses, hence making it difficult to establish learner academic engagement. The questions were not spread evenly to most learners in the classroom. |
| To15 | Climatic regions of Africa. | Question and answer Explanation | Questions were mostly used at introduction and conclusion. The rest of the lesson was mainly dominated by teacher talk. There was a lot of chorus responses Uneven spread of questions. |
| To16 | Map reading and interpretation | Question and answer Explanation | Questions mainly came from the teacher. The teacher dominated the lesson with too much talk. Little interaction observed Uneven spread of questions to the learners. |

technique was also noted. First, questions were not directed at individual learners. This attracted chorus responses. Secondly, the teachers, allowed individual or a group of learners to dominate the teaching and learning tasks during the lessons. This made few learners be the only ones who answered most of the questions. Thirdly, questions mainly came from the teacher and were not evenly spread in all the four stages of the lesson. Most of the questions posed by the teachers were at the introduction and conclusion stages of the lessons. Another observation noted was on the levels of the questions along Bloom's cognitive domain. A majority of the questions asked by the teachers were in the lower order in the cognitive domain. They mainly covered knowledge and comprehension levels. In addition, a teacher posed vague questions. These made the learners to be unable to respond to such questions hence making it difficult to gauge learner academic engagement. The researcher observed that among the learners who were actively engaged in lessons, there was academic engagement. The learners showed mastery of the content which was being tackled by the teacher. However, in the case of learners who were passively involved in the lesson, there was evidence of lack of academic engagement. Teacher dominance of the instructional process characterised by too much teacher talk made it difficult to gauge the extent of learner academic engagement in the instructional exercise. It was also difficult to establish academic engagement where teachers encouraged chorus responses from the learners due to poor class management. Dictation and provision of notes further made matters more difficult. Whenever this was done, it was difficult to establish whether or not there was academic engagement among the learners.

Results from the teacher interviews

Thematic analysis was used to analyse responses elicited from interviews conducted with the teachers whose lessons were observed. The respective teachers' views were sought on what informed their choice of the pedagogical approaches, extent to which they used interactive pedagogical approaches, their views on the contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches to learner academic engagement and factors which determined the use of pedagogical approaches. On the first item, teachers gave three reasons: width of the syllabus, learner participation and learner grasp of concepts. When probed further, T11 observed thus, "social studies is so wide which requires pupils to be probed to speak". When asked on the extent to which they used interactive pedagogical approaches, most of the respondents alluded to using them all the times. T12 for example observed "at the primary school level, you must make the teaching interactive otherwise, learners will be bored and sleep". However lesson observations cast aspersions on this position. Teacher views on the contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches on learner academic engagement elicited a positive response. Most of the respondents alluded to the contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches on learner academic engagement. They supported its use in the instructional exercise. T16 observed thus "whenever learners are actively engaged in the lesson, I enjoy it because, they will answer all my questions correctly. I hate passive learners very much. At times I try to make all to actively participate but this is never tenable".

Teacher views were also sought on factors they put into consideration when deciding to use interactive pedagogical approaches. This item elicited the following responses: time,

level of inclusion and differentiation and availability of relevant instructional resources. T14, on time, had this to say "Interactive pedagogical approaches requires a lot of time to actualize. Time allocated for lessons is too small hence very little time is set aside for learner active involvement. Otherwise if you allow it, you wouldn't adequately cover the syllabus". Teacher T18 on level of inclusion and differentiation observed that "we have different categories of learners in the class. Some learn better when the teacher explains. Others internalize concepts when we illustrate them, while others prefer to manipulate materials. These learning styles dictate my choice of interactive pedagogical approaches".

The learner and contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches to academic engagement

In order to further explore the contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches on academic engagement, focused group interviews were held with six groups of learners. In addition, a test on the sub topic of the lesson which was observed was administered to learners in an effort to compare the scores of learners who were actively involved in the lesson from those who passively participated in the same. The discussions guiding learners through the focus group discussions were conducted through English and Kiswahili. Code-switching was used to ameliorate poor mastery of English among some learners. The test was however written in English. On the first item, learners discussed at length on contribution of pedagogical approaches on academic engagement. Learner responses were varied on several items. Participants in focused group discussion were coded as LF 1(a), b,c,d,e,f to 6, a,b,c,d,e,f. Discussion on methods of teaching elicited responses pointing towards use of explanation and question and answer. A respondent observed "Mwalimu hupenda kueleza akituuliza maswali mara kwa mara, na hajali kama wengine hawajibu baadaye hutuambia tuandike notes but siku zingine hueleza kwa kina na kutuambia tuandike". LF4c. (The teacher likes asking questions from time to time not caring whether some of us don't answer and later tells us to write notes, but sometimes he explains in detail then tells us to write). Another member of a different group observed that "wengi wetu hufurahiya na kuelewa wakati tunaulizwa maswali mbali mbali na mwalimu" (Majority of us like and understand when we are asked different questions) LF1a. Generally learners in all the groups agreed that whenever they were actively involved in the lesson, they made mastery of the content of interest in the instructional exercise.

From the performance in the tests given to the learners on the sub-topic covered during the lesson observations, it was revealed that learners who actively participated in the instructional exercise, scored higher than their counterparts who least participated. Some of the learners in the latter category had expressed negative attitude towards social studies during the focused group interviews. The reasons they gave for this was that the subject was wide, some sub topics were difficult, teachers were boring and that some teachers failed to explain the concepts in a manner that they could understand. In interviews which had been held with teachers, the teachers alluded to the fact that passive participation stemmed from weak learners, those who had repeated the class and those with a negative attitude towards the subject. The issue of negative attitude cuts across the two groups of respondents. Some are however touching on policy issues, others touch on teacher

delivery while those advanced by the teacher can be categorised under teacher attitude and learner ability. What all these confirm is that a section of learners have problems in social studies lessons to an extent of hampering the achievement of their academic engagement.

Social studies instruction and classroom environment

I was interested in finding out whether the teachers created an enabling environment for learner academic engagement. Data was collected from observation, interviews and focused group interviews. From my observations (Coded To1 to 16) most teachers created a democratic learning environment. They were also in full control of the instructional process. Learners were allowed to air their views freely as teachers responded in a non-threatening manner to learner efforts. However, the 'halo' effect of the teachers' presence was not controlled. Nonetheless, the learners confirmed the existence of a free learning environment even in the focus group discussions.

A sample of field notes will suffice:

"The teacher has created and maintained a free learning atmosphere. She is in good control of the instructional process. This is reflected in the authoritative mien she maintains. She also has rapport with the learners who whenever assigned tasks, carries them diligently and with precision". To3

Interviews held by teachers revealed that they were aware of the necessity of establishing a free learning environment in a learning situation. Most observed that social studies instruction demanded such an environment to make learners understand the concepts that are addressed.

A teacher during the interview observed thus:

I usually allow learners to feel free in my social studies lessons. They ask any question they feel like and where they have problems I encourage them to be free to seek my help. With such an environment, I have learnt that I usually achieve my specific lesson objectives TII2.

From focused group interviews, learners equally attested to the fact that teachers created an enabling environment for learning in social studies. A sample of some of their views were:

Teachers are good, they treat us well in class and whenever you ask a question, they try to answer it well. LF1b.

I have never felt that the classroom environment is hostile. The teacher allows us to freely talk about various issues and uses very friendly language LF1b.

Mwalimu wetu ni mzuri sana, hutukubalia tuchangie darasani bila uoga wowote. LF1f. (Our teacher is very good, he allows us to contribute without any fear).

Generally, the teachers created an enabling environment in learning situations from the views expressed by learners during the focused group interviews. They allowed the learner ample time to air their views during the instructional process, didn't use threatening language or any other forms of non-verbal communication that could pass for such to the learners. Further, the learners felt that their teacher created an enabling environment for learning social studies. This was expressed by the learners severally during the focused group interviews. One learner even went further to observe that "If it is not for

my social studies teacher, I would have hated the subject" she added that the teacher made the subject enjoyable as she was friendly and concerned with how they were progressing in the subject. From the interviews with the teachers, it was established that they tried their best to create a conducive learning environment during the teaching and learning of social studies.

Discussion of study findings

This section explores the findings of the study along the three research questions that it sought to address. The respondents understanding of the contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches to academic engagement was gauged in a number of ways in this study. Lesson observation were made to establish whether teachers practised the use of interactive pedagogical approaches in the classroom. Interviews were held so as to enable the researcher get more information. From these two tools, the researcher was able to compare what the teachers claimed to do, and what they actually did in the classroom. Document analysis was critical in providing deeper insight into the teacher's understanding of interactive pedagogical approaches. In the ensuing sections the researcher discusses the contribution of interactive pedagogical approaches to learner academic engagement. Attempts are made to establish the relationship between the three areas of interest in the research questions and learner academic engagement. A discussion of the study findings drawing upon both conceptual and research literature that had been examined is also made.

Incorporation of interactive pedagogical approaches in the planning for instruction

The study findings reveal that incorporation of interactive pedagogical approaches in the planning for instruction is the first step towards its use in the classroom. Analysis on this item revealed that teachers incorporated interactive pedagogical approaches. However a closer scrutiny of these revealed that interaction was not explicitly provided for in the Scheme of work and Lesson plan. Teacher dominance of the instructional process further negated any attempts at interaction in the transactional stage in the lesson at planning. This was notwithstanding the fact that, the specific objectives had an in-built provision for interactive pedagogical approaches in varied aspects of the lesson implementation. The same was noticeable in the instructional resources template in the Scheme of work and lesson plan. During subsequent interviews with the teachers, they seemed to be at a loss on the absence of explicit incorporation of interaction at the planning stage. Lack of explicit provision for interaction in the Scheme of work and lesson plan. may stem from lack of teacher deep thinking while preparing the document vis-a-vis its actualization in the classroom. It is possible that this is partly caused by teachers not seeing the necessity of the document in the instructional process as observed in Ong'ondo (2009) where most of the student teachers were found to view the documents as only being of relevance during teacher supervision. Ong'ondo observes that this is an attitude they borrowed from the practising teachers. This may make them prepare the document in a casual manner devoid of serious thought on its nitty-gritty such as incorporation of interaction in the entire landscape of the teaching exercise at the planning stage. As observed by Kafu (2010) planning for instruction entails critical thinking, precise decision making and

professional commitment on the part of the teacher. The issue of lack of preparation and poor preparation of the professional documents by teachers has featured in many studies. Findings of the present study resonates well with studies undertaken by Molenye (2012) and Kafu & Too (2009). However unlike these studies, the present study focused on the incorporation of the element of interaction which is a sub-part of the wider world of the planning process which was covered by the earlier studies.

There was limited learner activities at the planning stage. This greatly hampered any attempts at incorporating interaction in the pedagogy. The findings of the study confirm the observations of Otunga *et al* (2011) and Kafu (2010). The two vouch for provision of interaction at the planning stage of the lesson and contend that there should be a flow of activities in a specific manner in the planning process to enable interaction be attained in the instructional process. Failure to incorporate interaction at the planning stage may be the reason why in the actual classroom, little attempts are made at promoting interactive pedagogical approaches.

Use of learner centred instructional methods and their contribution to learner academic engagement

This study pointed to the fact that interactive instructional methods (approaches) is an aspect of pedagogical approaches whose contributions are critical to learner academic engagement. Through classroom observation, interviews and focused group interviews, data on this item was gathered. The study revealed that most of the respondents used question and answer, explanation and teacher demonstration instructional methods. Only a small number of respondents used discussion. Out of these methods, only question and answer and discussion are learner centred hence able to allow for interaction in the instructional exercise. Explanation, also when properly used can encourage active learner participation. However, this is dependent on how the method is used by the teacher. However over-use of any method makes the instructional process monotonous and boring. This is why Ogula and Onsongo (2009) presents a case for variety in instructional methods.

From the analysis, there was little interaction in the methods of teaching that were used. Teacher dominance was a prominent characteristic in virtually all the methods that were observed. Whenever question and answer was used, poor questioning technique reflected in poor spread of questions to the learners, vague questions, acceptance of chorus responses and failure to pose higher order questions were noted. Classroom discussion was poorly organized and mainly involved whole class discussion. No attempts were made at discussing in pairs or small group. Nonetheless, the few attempts made at interaction bore positive fruits. Learners who were actively engaged in the lessons, demonstrated learner academic engagement. This is something that clearly emerged from the study. These findings corroborate those of Ogula (1986), Ong'ondo (2009), Odeo (2003), Matseshe (2005), Kang'ali (2012), Lendo (2012) and Munyakigezi (1998). All these studies observed that lack of learner active involvement in the instructional process had a negative impact on learner performance hence by extension academic engagement. In addition, these findings validate those of Mannison *et al* (1994) who found that use of interactive methods had a relationship to academic engagement. On use of teacher centred methods, this study confirms the findings of studies done by Makhulo

(1984), Theuri (1985), Ongeti (2008), Ndaloh (1999), Omulando (2009), Otieno (2009) and Waswa (2009). All these studies established the dominance of teaching methods in the expository strategy in the instructional process. Through the interviews held with teachers, they gave the reason for using teacher centred methods of teaching as the wide syllabus and learner characteristics. The latter was brought about by learners who were weak and could not productively partake of the learning tasks. Some of these learners were said to have had a poor background in the lower classes.

In the few instances where interaction was allowed in the instructional process, learners actively engaged in the learning exercise. Eventually they showed, from the responses, having attained academic engagement. This was demonstrated through their active involvement in different learning tasks. From most of the studies that have been reviewed, it has been established that teachers use both teacher centred and heuristic related methods. However none of the studies has attempted to specifically focus on interactive pedagogical approaches and their contribution to learner academic engagement in the instructional process. They have tended to stop at the methods being used without digging deeper into whether they allow for interaction. In this study, it was established that interactive instructional methods have a contribution to learner academic engagement. The observation supports the findings of Lendo (2012) which established that where interaction is allowed in a teaching method, learners tend to be motivated, have enhanced concentration and improved memory thus promoting understanding. They also validate the findings of Shishiwa (2013) who found that use of learner active methods led to greater academic achievement.

Teacher classroom practices and learner academic engagement

Social studies recommends a democratic learning environment during the instructional process. This is what necessitated a study on the influence of teacher classroom practices on learner academic engagement. This study found that teachers created a friendly learning environment for social studies instruction. They were friendly to the learners and didn't use threatening language whenever they interacted with the learners. Learners were also allowed by the teacher to express freely their views on content of interest. With an enabling learning environment, the learners greatly benefitted from the instructional process. This promoted learner academic engagement in social studies. This finding validates the finding of Musyoka (2011) which revealed that lack of a free learning environment greatly contributed to negative attitude towards a subject hence lack of academic engagement. The conducive learning environment created by the teachers in social studies lessons facilitated exploration. Learners were able to explore different dimensions on the content of interest during the instructional process. They actively engaged in the teaching and learning exercise hence benefitting from the lesson transaction. This concurred with Harris and Smith's (1976) and Kafu (1976) observation that the classroom should be environmentally friendly to exploration so as to enable the learner actively partake of the learning tasks. The teacher should give equal attention to the interpersonal dimension of teaching as an activity. He or she should interact with the learners and contribute positively to the development of learners' identities. This confirms Kohl's (1986) observation which has been reported by Wright, Ellis and Perevett (2010)

that teaching involves helping students acquire understanding, knowledge and skills they didn't previously have. To do this, it is essential to enable the students to feel good about themselves as learners and to create an atmosphere that enables them to focus energy on learning. This equally concurs with Barth's (1986) observation that social studies presupposes an environment which encourages exchange of ideas, dialogue and experimentation.

Conclusion

This study took a qualitative approach on data presentation, interpretation and analysis. On discussion of findings, it has been revealed that teachers do not explicitly cater for interaction in their planning for instruction, inadequately use interactive pedagogical approaches in teaching methods and lastly, the teachers were found to create an enabling learning environment to learner academic engagement in social studies instruction.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Teachers

Teaching plays a vital role in the instructional process. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that teachers increase the level of use of interactive instructional methods and techniques in social studies, pay attention to differentiation in social studies lessons so as to carry all the learners on-board during the instructional process and that they explicitly incorporate interaction in their planning for instruction in social studies.

Teacher education institutions

Teacher education institutions play a big role in imparting student teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and values. These are the things which eventually are practised by teachers upon qualifying to teach in schools. It is thus vital for the teacher education institutions to pay attention to among others, guiding their products in the use of interactive pedagogical approaches. Consequently this study recommends that the institutions incorporate or increase use of interactive pedagogical approaches in their teacher education programmes. The study further recommends that the institutions educate the student teachers on how to cater for differentiation and inclusion in classroom settings. This should be done by giving ample practice to the prospective teachers on use of interactive pedagogical approaches and differentiation and inclusion. More courses can be introduced in these areas.

Policy makers

Some of the recommendations made above require policy intervention. This demands that policy makers in the Kenyan education sector come in. Consequently this study recommends that the social studies curriculum at the primary school level be scaled down so as to enable the curriculum implementers use interactive pedagogical approaches hence not rush to cover the syllabus through the use of non-

interactive pedagogical approaches as it was noted during the study. In light of the present syllabus, time allocated for the use of interactive pedagogical approaches in the subject should be increased. More lessons should be added to social studies' instructional time. There is also an urgent need for introduction of in-service courses for teachers of social studies on use of pedagogical approaches in social studies lessons. The in-service courses should also cover how to undertake differentiation and inclusion during curriculum implementation.

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