

## Research Article

## Teachers' and Students' Attitude on Effective Teaching of Life Skills Education in Secondary Schools

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**Abstract:** Though Life Skills Education is being implemented in secondary schools, effective teaching is hampered by several factors. The purpose of this study was to explore constraints facing teaching of Life Skills Curriculum among secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. To achieve this purpose, the study was guided by the following objective; to determine teachers' and students' perception towards teaching of Life Skills Education among secondary schools. A descriptive survey design was used for the study. The target population for the study was secondary schools with a total population of 1965, which constituted: 1800 students, 150 teachers and 15 principals. Out of the 37 public secondary schools in the district, the study sampled 17 schools, giving 46% (including 2 schools for piloting which were not included in the actual study). Stratified sampling techniques were used to group schools into two strata. The study targeted principals, teachers and students of the sampled schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to sample teachers and principals, while simple random sampling technique was used to sample students. A total of 225 respondents were sampled for the study; this constituted: 15 principals, 30 teachers and 180 students. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and students while interview schedules were used to collect data from the principals. Piloting was done to test the validity of the instruments of the study. Reliability was determined by seeking advice from the supervisors. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze quantitative data while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The study found that most teachers had negative attitude on teaching of life skills education due to inadequate in-service training while students had positive attitude towards teaching of Life Skills Education. The findings of the study will be significant to KIE as they will use them to revise the training curriculum to incorporate Life Skills Education so as to make teachers have positive attitudes towards teaching of life skills education. Though Life Skills Education is being implemented in most secondary schools studied, it was concluded that effective teaching is hampered negative attitude of teachers, making it difficult for teachers to deliver the relevant content appropriately. The study recommends that teachers should be trained on Life Skills so as make them have positive attitude towards teaching of life skills education; this was viewed as the best strategy for ensuring effective implementation Life Skills curriculum in secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Perception, Life skills education and Curriculum.

World Health Organization (1997) defines Life Skills, as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable persons to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Based on this definition, a working definition was formed for South East Asia Region (SEAR) countries on Life Skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable them to deal effectively with the demands and challenges within the family, community and cultural context

According to UNICEF (2012) definition of life skills, "Life Skills include cognitive skills, practical skills, person's positive behaviour that enable persons to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". Life Skills are psycho-social skills including problem-solving and critical thinking skills, personal skills such as self-awareness, and interpersonal skills. Possessing life skills means having qualities such as high self-esteem, sociability, tolerance, action competencies to generate change, capabilities to have the freedom to decide what to do and who to be (UNICEF, 2011).

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In the USA, for example, evaluative studies of life skills programs suggest that the methods used can help to improve teacher and pupil relationships, and there are indications that life skills lessons are associated with fewer reports of classroom behavior problems (Parsons *et al.*, 1988). There are also research indications of improved academic performance as a result of teaching Life Skills (Abobo and Orodho, 2014). Other positive effects include improved school attendance, less bullying, fewer referrals to specialist support services and better relationships between children and their parents (Abobo, Osero and Orodho, 2015), and therefore, the researcher sought to find out challenges facing implementation of Life Skills in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District.

World Health Organization: WHO (2014) confirmed that world currently is facing numerous challenges such as: indiscipline in schools, civil strife and social deprivation. Life skills education is an intervention which is meant to equip the youths with life skills to solve these problems. However, World Bank (2014) notes that there is urgent need to provide today's youths with systems to deal with the demands of life. Since the individuals rather than the system's recognized as the basic unit of the society. It is essential that the youth to be helped to develop skills inherently to handle a wide variety of choices, changes and stressors. Core skills are ability for a positive adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Secondary schooling being the most important phase of personality of development need to be guided very carefully so that we can build a very strong adolescent community on which the nation can depend on. LSBE explains psychological construct associated with it: such as awareness, attitude and perception of the teachers, parents and most important students are also involved.

Abobo and Orodho (2014) revealed that teachers teaching life skills education had negative attitude towards instruction of life skills education while the students portrayed a positive attitude towards learning of life skills education. This was due to: teachers had not been trained how to teach life skills education, hence indicating low level of perception by teachers. The same sentiments are shared by Monyangi (2010) contended that teachers' negative perception affected effective implementation of life skills education among secondary schools in Nairobi County. However, her study asserted that life skills curriculum was relevant especially in the war against prevention of HIV/ AIDS. Furthermore, her study noted that instruction strategies were student friendly but the curriculum was hurriedly implemented because teachers did not get in-service training of the course. Additionally, her study concluded that life skills education was instructed like a co-curricular activity an alongside physical education and lastly, it was revealed

that most teachers faced constraints in teaching of life skills education.

Oketch and Role (2018) confirmed that there was significant relationship between of teaching of life skills education and development of character among learning institutions in Kenya. Teachers and students accepted the significance of life skills education in the development of socially accepted morals. The study also identified teachers' negative as one of the constraint facing the implementation of life skills education. The instruction of life skills education among secondary school learners is very relevant to students, teachers, parents, educators, policy makers and stakeholders.

The Ministry of Education in Kenya introduced the teaching of Life Skills Education as non-examinable subject in secondary schools in 2008 with the intention to empower students with psychosocial competencies that would help them make informed decisions, solve problems, think creatively and critically, communicate effectively, build health relationships, empathize with those in need and manage their life in a healthy and productive manner including the fight against HIV and AIDS infections. It is a comprehensive behaviour change approach that concentrates on the development of the psychosocial skills needed for life. The curriculum goes beyond offering knowledge to the development of the whole individual. One of the advantages of Life Skills Education is that the topics covered are adaptable to many different contexts (Secondary Life Skills Education Teacher's Handbook, 2008; KIE Syllabus for teaching of Life Skills Education, 2008). The researcher, therefore, sought to determine teachers' and students' perception towards teaching of Life Skills Education among secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County.

Students' perception also plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of a curriculum innovation. Just as teachers, students must accept a curriculum for it to be effective (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). It is when students react to the experiences they encounter in the curriculum with the cooperation, that a successful implementation of a curriculum can be achieved at classroom level. If these students see little relevance in the curriculum activities taught, they are not going to be motivated to participate to learn.

It is the teacher who finally decides the arrangement of learning experiences and the methods of content presentation and he/she does most of the evaluation. It is the teacher therefore, who initiates, develops and directs students' learning. Therefore, a teacher who has a positive attitude towards Life Skills education and uses appropriate instructional strategies is likely to influence the students develop the same attitude (Oluoch, 1982; Omulando and Shiundu, 1992).

This study therefore, sought to find out if students' and teachers attitude affect the implementation of life skills education in secondary schools.

## 2. Literature Review

Regarding students' perception towards teaching of life skills education: Abobo *et al.*, (2015) as cited in Thurstone (1931) defines attitude as the effect for or against a psychological object. Thurstone contends that there is need to test people's perception, these can be achieved by assessing people's beliefs which he considers to be verbal expressions of attitudes. It suggests that there is need to test people's perception, this can be done by assessing people's views which he regards to be verbal expressions of perceptions. In implementation of a school curriculum, the teacher's perception is very significant. This is because teaching is an art guided by educational values, personal needs and by a variety of beliefs or generalizations that the teacher holds to be true.

The learners also play important position in the successful implementation of a curriculum innovation. Just as teachers, learners must accept a curriculum for it to be effective (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). It is when learners react to the experiences they encounter in the curriculum with the cooperation, that a successful implementation of a curriculum can be accomplished at classroom level. If these learners see little relevance in the curriculum experiences instructed, they are not going to be actuated to participate to learn.

Githinji (2007) revealed that teachers teaching HIV and AIDS life skills education had negative perceptions towards instruction of HIV and AIDS life skills education in Kiambu and Nairobi Counties because of inadequate teaching content, in-sufficient knowledge and lack of enough life skills education among tutors and learners. Furthermore, her study noted that teachers found it difficult to explain and teach some of the ways in which AIDS is spread. Additionally, her study concluded that some of HIV/AIDS life skills education teachers lacked were: training and inadequate teaching time, cultural differences, resistance from parents, and lack of support from the administration were other problems that teachers encountered while implementing HIV and AIDS life skills education.

Evaluation in the form of formative and summative examinations influences curriculum implementation; this due; to great value given to formative and summative examination certificates by communities, schools, teachers and students to concentrate on subjects that are examinable and are thought to promote academic excellence. This affects the success of the broad goals and objectives of the curriculum Whitaker, 1993). In addition, a study by Rooth (2005) in South Africa argued that life orientation is not being taken seriously because it is not an examinable subject. In some cases, it is not taught at

all despite the fact it is included on the timetable. In other schools, it is not even included on the timetable. The non-examinable status of life skills education makes learners to have negative perceptions towards it and hence undermining its teaching among secondary schools.

Concerning teachers' perceptions towards implementation of life skills curriculum, the study ascertains that; it is the teacher who finally determines the arrangement of learning experiences and the strategies of content delivery and he/she does most of the assessment. It is the teacher therefore, who initiates, develops and directs students' learning. Therefore, a teacher who has a positive perception towards teaching of Life Skills Education and uses appropriate teaching approaches is likely to influence learners to develop same perception (Oluoch, 1982; Omulando and Shiundu, 1992).

Prinsloo (2007), in South Africa argued that lack of commitment by some principals to make the implementation of curriculum a success at the school level is a challenge facing the teaching of the life skills education. Some principals indicated that it was difficult for them to support the instruction of life skills curriculum because majority of the students in their schools are "careless, irresponsible and have no vision or mission in life." The principals felt that there was little impact of life skills education could make on students even if the principals provided some support for the instruction of the subject among their schools. The principals' excuse for their lack of commitment to make life skills education a success among their schools may be regarded as a negative perception; they were blaming learners for their constraints among their schools.

Witt (2002) contends that instruction strategies are influenced by the teacher's perceptions towards teacher's competence about the subject matter; a teacher uses teacher centred approaches which allows her or his full control of the class. If she/he is competent, she/he allows children to learn on their own and gives help when necessary. Grogan (1993) also notes that cultivation of positive attitude is of great significance to a school teacher. In this study, the study intended to determine teachers' perception towards the teaching of Life Skills Education among secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County.

The making an implementation of a curriculum successful purely depends on teacher's attitude towards her or his teaching activities at classroom level. In this study teacher's positive attitude means 'teacher's beliefs and interest towards teaching given the conditions of his or her work. (Jansen, 2002). The feeling that a teacher has about his or her teaching work shapes his / her ability in implementing a curriculum policy. Kadzamira (2006), a study noted that low

salaries and coupled with other poor working conditions in Malawi causes widespread teacher discontent; so teaching is regarded as “employment of last resort.” Teachers’ discontent with their career may affect the implementation of any curriculum including life skills education.

Teacher’s positive attitude towards implementing a curriculum depends on teacher’s content knowledge of the curriculum. Teachers should understand the goals and content of syllabus well in order to implement it effectively. Teachers who are supposed to implement a new curriculum sometimes cannot even identify its main features. The problem is likely to be encountered when teachers are required to change their educational approaches to teach this new curriculum (Pratt, 1980). Mahlangu, (2001) raises a concern about introducing a curriculum to teachers and leaving them to implement without further guidance. Mahlangu argues that such decisions are likely to have negative impacts on the success of the implementation of any curriculum including life skills education. He further says that, such implementation is likely to waste time, money and effort because the expected results will not be realized. He suggests that implementation decisions have to be made by people who know its possible effects on the learners. The intention of the study was, therefore, to determine teachers’ and students’ perceptions towards implementation of Life Skills Education among secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County.

### 3. Statement of the Problem

Life skills education was implemented in secondary schools in Kenya in 2008 by the MOE. The purpose of its implementation was to equip the students with psychosocial competencies that would enable them make informed decisions, solve problems, think creatively and critically, communicate effectively, build health relationships, empathize with those in need and manage their life in a healthy and productive manner including the fight against HIV and AIDS infections. Despite the introduction of life skills education in schools, tutors’ negative perception towards instruction of life skills curriculum affect negatively effective implementation of life skills education among secondary schools in Tran-Nzoia County. Teachers’ negative attitudes may reduce the possibilities of life skills education achieving the objectives for its implementation, for example, students may not acquire skills required to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life. This Paper therefore, sought to determine teachers’ perception towards implementation of life skills education among secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County.

#### 3.1. The Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper was to explore constraints affecting effective teaching of life skills curriculum among secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia

County. The specific objective of the study was to: determine teachers’ and students’ attitude towards implementation of Life Skills Education among secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The research question arising from the stated objective of the study was: what are the teachers’ and students’ attitude towards implementation of Life Skills Education in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The findings of the study would be of importance to the following groups of people: The research would provide an opportunity for the teachers to express their views positively regarding the implementation of life skills Education. It would also make the teachers reconsider and re-examine their teaching strategies into life skills education and become more positive towards teaching of life skills education.

### 4. Theoretical Framework

This study used Social Learning Theory or Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Albert Bandura (1986). This theory explains that children learn to behave through both formal instruction (for example how parents, teachers and other authorities and role-models tell them to behave) as well as observation, and for example, as they see adults and peers behaving). The children’s behavior is reinforced or modified by consequences of their actions and responses of others to their behaviors. Students learn to behave, through observation and social interaction, rather than just verbal instruction. Similarly, students taught skills through process of instruction, rehearsal, and feedback rather than just instruction. Bandura also stressed that self-efficacy, defined as confidence in one’s abilities to perform appropriate behavior, is important to learning and maintaining behaviors.

### 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey. The purpose of descriptive survey is basically to observe, describe and document aspects of a situation as they naturally occur hence the choice for the study. The fact that it is not concerned with characteristics of persons, it provides information about population variables. It was on the basis of these characteristics of descriptive survey that teachers’ and students’ perception towards implementation of life skills education in secondary schools were determined. The design was therefore, deemed appropriate as it enabled this study to determine teachers’ and students’ attitude towards implementation of Life Skills Education in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. Trans-Nzoia County is cosmopolitan in nature because it represents both rural and urban setting. The main objective was to have fair a representative of the general circumstances that affects implementation of life skills education in secondary schools. In addition, the study chose the area because of limited time and financial resources. Furthermore, the locale is accessible in terms of transport which prompted the researcher to choose it.



The study targeted 37 principals, 150 teachers and 1800 students. The total target population was 1965. The study used simple random sampling, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were applied to select the study sample. The study sampled 180 students, 30 teachers and 15 principals. The study, therefore, sampled 225 respondents for the study which formed (11.5%) of the total target population of 1965. The study used questionnaires, interview schedules and Observation schedule to collect the data for the study.

The study instruments were pre-tested in two of the secondary schools not included in the actual study. Piloting provided an opportunity to make necessary adjustments to research instruments. Piloting enables the study to have meaningful observations because it helped to detect deficiencies in the instruments. The study enhanced validity of the instruments, by employing content validity. This was done in terms of checking for items that were vague or not necessary, weaknesses of the instruments and whether respondents understood the items. The study also established the content validity by seeking his supervisors' opinion whether or not the items in the instruments were relevant. The supervisors reviewed the content of the instruments to determine validity to ensure the instruments accurately measured the variables it intended to measure.

The reliability of the instruments was tested from the two piloting public secondary schools by the use of split-half method. The questionnaires for the teachers were tested on four teachers and the questionnaire for the students was tested from 24 students separately to get the correlation coefficients for each instrument. The study made appointments with principals of the sampled schools to request them for permission to carry out the study in their schools. The study arranged with the principals to confirm the dates for data collection and got the consent of the school administration. The instruments were administered to the respondents who were given ample time to respond to the questions. The researcher ensured confidentiality of the information given by the respondents. Quantitative and qualitative data method techniques were used to analyze data of the study objective. Quantitative data collected from questionnaires were analyzed, presented and interpreted using frequency tables while qualitative data from the interviews was presented in text around themes and according to the objective of the study.

**6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

To test on the attitude towards implementation of life skills education in secondary schools, student respondents were asked to indicate their agreements with different statements towards implementation of life skills education in secondary schools. The findings of the study were as presented in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1. Attitude on Implementation of Teaching Life Skills Education**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total %
Teaching of Life Skills in schools is not necessary because they are non- examinable.	35	17	7	32	9	100
Teaching of Life Skills consumes time that can be used to teach other examinable subjects.	11	35	7	39	8	100
Life Skills is an important subject in the school curriculum.	60	27	8	3	2	100
Content of Life Skills education is easy to understand.	42	34	15	6	3	100
Teaching of Life Skills will promote awareness and enhance change behaviour.	58	25	10	3	4	100
Provision of teaching and learning materials for Life Skills is expensive but not worthwhile.	20	23	19	33	9	100
The aims and objectives of teaching of Life Skills are irrelevant and unattainable.	15	10	10	62	11	100

Table 6.1 shows that 35% of the student respondents strongly agreed that teaching of Life Skills Education in schools was not necessary because they are non-examinable. The study also found that 35% of student respondents concurred that teaching of Life Skills Education consumes time that can be used to teach other examinable subjects. Regarding the importance of life skills, it was found that 60% of the student respondents strongly agreed that teaching of life skills Education in secondary schools was very significant. The study further found that 42% of the

student respondents strongly agreed that content of Life Skills education was easy to understand and that teaching of Life Skills will promote awareness and enhance change behaviour as indicated by 58% student respondents. According to Oluoch (1982), a teacher who has a positive attitude towards life skills education and uses appropriate instructional strategies is likely to influence the students develop the same attitude. The study also found that students disagreed with the statement that the aims and objectives of teaching of Life Skills Education are irrelevant and unattainable.

This is an indication that students recognized the importance of Life Skills Education in their schools.

Regarding the attitude of the teachers to the teaching of Life Skills, the study found that most of the teachers had negative attitude towards the teaching of Life Skills Education. This was evidenced by the fact that many of the teachers had not been trained on the Life Skills Education. The same sentiment is shared with Witt (2002) argue that teaching methods are influenced by the teacher's attitude towards the teacher's competence in regard to the subject matter; a teacher uses teacher centered method which allows her full control of the class. If she/he is competent, she/he allows children to learn on their own and gives help when necessary. Grogan (1993) adds that cultivation of positive attitude is of paramount importance to a school teacher.

In an interview with the principals 93.3% on the perception of teaching Life Skills Education by teachers and students, the study found that teachers and students do not take Life Skills Education seriously since it is not examinable. Rooth (2005), his study in South Africa agree with these findings that life skills education is not being taken seriously because it is not examinable subject. Whitaker (1993), assert that assessment in the form of examination influences curriculum implementation due to the great value given to public examination certificates by schools, teachers and students tend to concentrate on subjects that are examinable and are thought to promote academic excellence It was further found that teachers had negative attitude towards the subject thus affecting its implementation in the curriculum. Regarding students' attitude, it was found that students take the teachings of life skills education positively especially those on how to manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner including the fight against HIV and AIDS and students are receptive as they participate by asking questions.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the finding of this study, it was concluded that teachers have negative perceptions towards the teaching of Life Skills Education on the basis that most of them have not been trained on Life Skills Education and because life skills education is not examinable subject. Students are perceived to have positive perceptions towards the teaching of Life Skills Education as evidenced by their participation through asking questions and discussions during the teaching of life skills education in secondary schools.

Based on this conclusion, the study recommends that teachers should change their perceptions towards the teaching of Life Skills Education in secondary schools. By viewing the teaching of life skills education positively, teachers will be motivated to impart life skills into students.

Teachers' negative perceptions towards Life Skills Education should be considered before allocating Life Skills Education to teachers. There is need to review the tradition of schools of teachers taking up the teaching of Life Skills Education because they are C.R.E and Biology teachers and are expected to teach it. It should be assigned to teachers who have some interest in the subject. Finally, Life Skills Education should be examinable so that students and teachers take it seriously like other examinable subjects in the school curriculum.

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