



Education and language

Reconstructionist Analysis on the Relevance of Secondary School Evaluation in Promoting National Cohesion among Students in Machakos Town Sub-County, Kenya

Dr. Ruth Mutunge Mwanzia¹

¹Chuka University, P.O. Box 109-60400 Chuka, Kenya.

*Correspondence e-mail: rmwanzia2011@gmail.com

Abstract:

Education is the primary means of promoting national cohesion, international cooperation as well as socio-economic development. Since Kenya's political independence, national unity has continued to feature prominently among the national goals of education. The National cohesion and integration commission has also emphasized the importance of education in promoting cohesion and integration among Kenyan communities. Despite this emphasis however, the country is faced with ethnic divisions and violence and this raises concern on relevance of the school evaluation in promoting national cohesion. This study investigated the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting national cohesion among students in Machakos Town Sub-County. The analysis of the relevance of secondary school evaluation was based on the ideals and principles as advocated by Reconstructionism philosophy. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population of the study was 24,441 subjects. Stratified sampling method was used to ensure that all categories of schools were covered. Purposive sampling was adopted to select student leaders, teachers and Machakos sub Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. A sample size of 409 comprising of 360 student leaders, 48 teachers and the sub county QASO was used for the study. The research instruments were questionnaires for teachers and student leaders and an interview schedule for the sub- county QASO. Piloting of questionnaires was done in the neighbouring Mwala Sub-County since it had similar characteristics as Machakos Town Sub-County. Validity of research instrument was ascertained by supervisors and other experts in Faculty of Education and Resources Development. Reliability of instruments was estimated by use of Cronbach coefficient alpha method and the coefficients obtained were 0.78 for teachers' questionnaire and 0.81 for student leaders' questionnaire. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 was used. Descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages were used to analyze quantitative and qualitative data. The study established that the secondary school evaluation was more of theoretical without inclusion of practical skills on issues related to national cohesion, the evaluation does not enable the learners to internalize the values of nationalism, patriotism and national cohesion and integration, there was undue emphasis on examination which underscores cognitive domain of learning neglecting other domains such as affective and psychomotor. The researcher recommends that the ministry of education through policy makers and curriculum developers to review the evaluation policies as relate to promotion of national cohesion. The findings and recommendations of this study will offer all stakeholders in education new insights on the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting national cohesion.

Key words: National Cohesion, Evaluation, Reconstructionism, Curriculum, Reconstructionist analysis, Secondary school.

1. Background Information

Education is the process through which knowledge; skills, attitudes and values are imparted for the purpose of integrating an individual in a given society or changing the values and norms of a society (Oluoch, 2002). For individuals, this is a lifelong process as it begins at birth and ends with death. Education is described as comprising of organized and sustained communication designed to bring about learning (UNESCO, 2003). Education is a vital tool in the developmental process of any given nation (Ojiambo, 2009). Education facilitates development and stability of a nation through schools supporting the existing political and economic system in the nation. Bowers (1997) posits that schools through the prescribed curriculum develop national unity while promoting economic development. Further, education fosters transmission of values, norms and expectations related to national cohesion. National cohesion is a process and an outcome of instilling and enabling all citizens to have a sense and a feeling that they are members of the same nation engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges and opportunities (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Thus, national cohesion presupposes national development in a country.

In developed countries like United States of America, development of nationalism is considered as a major aim of education (Fain, Barantovich & Raquel, 2004). Woolman (2001) on a comparative study about educational reconstruction and post-colonial curriculum development of four African countries, Mali, Nigeria, Mozambique and Kenya, noted that the relationship between education and national cohesion in Africa continues to be a question of critical concern in many countries. Education should reflect the dynamic process of nation building that is continually being modified by new conditions (Woolman, 2001). In Kenya, the education sector provides skills and builds knowledge that enable individuals to contribute to the development, safety, security and national growth of the country (Ministry of Education, 2010). Since Kenya's independence, the government has recognized the need to promote national unity and appreciation of diversity. The initiatives put in place towards achieving this endeavor focused on the national goals of education which emphasize national unity, moral

and religious values, social equality and responsible citizenship as the key in enhancing harmonious co-existence among citizens (MOE, 2010). Education is seen as the primary means of social mobility, national cohesion and socio-economic development.

The Kenyan goals of education underline the importance of education in promoting national cohesion and peaceful coexistence, a prerequisite component for national development. The Ominde Commission Report identified education as a critical pillar in promoting national cohesion in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 1964). According to Ominde Report, education was expected to foster a sense of nationhood and promote national unity (Republic of Kenya, 1964). This is emphasized in the national goals of education, where education is expected to foster nationalism, patriotism and national unity. Education is a central component of the nation's developmental process. The Kenya Vision 2030, which is the blue print of development in Kenya aims at making Kenya a globally competitive and prosperous nation with high quality of life by the year 2030 (ROK, 2007). Kenya recognizes that education and training of all individuals is fundamental to the success of vision 2030.

Education equips citizens with understanding and knowledge that enable them to make informed choices about their lives and those facing Kenyan society. However, a critical examination of Kenya's Vision 2030 indicate that there is minimal emphasis on the role of education in enabling Kenya become a one nation by the year 2030 (Ojiambo, 2009). Education is mentioned in generalities and its role is ambivalent. Ojiambo (2009) further points out that, vision 2030 is unattainable without a robust investment in education that promotes national cohesion and stability. Thus, the role of education in the process requires redefinition and more so with emphasis on secondary school evaluation.

Reconstructionism is a philosophy that centers on the idea of constant change and emphasizes on addressing of social questions to create a better society and worldwide democracy through education (Brameld, 1956). The proponents of reconstructionism philosophy include Brameld and Counts. Reconstructionism philosophy advocates for a school evaluation that emphasizes social reform as the aim of education. Brameld

(1965) notes that the school evaluation should focus on student experience by taking social action on real problems, such as violence, hunger, ethnic violence, international terrorism, religious intolerance and inequality. Counts (1971) stresses that a curriculum should include units on such issues as religious tolerance, ethnic tension, world poverty, gender differences, and socio economic domination. This is to enable individuals to become useful citizens in the country.

Despite the goal of Kenyan education system of fostering nationalism, patriotism as well as national unity; national harmony has not been achieved (Ojiambo, 2009). A research done by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) on secondary school curriculum in Kenya showed that the current evaluation had not played its role effectively in promoting national cohesion especially in view of the post-election violence that the country experienced in 2008 (KICD, 2013). A summative evaluation of the secondary school curriculum carried out by KICD revealed that the negative practices learners encounter do not enable them to internalize the values of nationalism, patriotism, national unity and cohesion as spelt out in the national goals of education and the National Cohesion and Integration Act. On the contrary, when children watch opinion leaders in society talk ill of some ethnic groups, defy court orders and get away with it, the children start to internalize values that create national disharmony such as ethnicity, religious intolerance, socio-economic domination and gender differences.

The nation's cohesion and security has continued to disintegrate under the political system founded around ethnic differentiation and segmentation together with reintroduction of multi-party politics in Kenya (Kenya National Youth charter, 2013). Furthermore, MOE (2010) points out that there is a mismatch between what is taught and what is expected as education products of the society. Indeed there is need to investigate the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting national cohesion as a social and national issue. Machakos Town Sub-County was chosen because it is occupied by people from diverse communities whose children interact together and especially in schools. Also students from different parts of Kenya are admitted to secondary schools in the Sub-County. This study investigated the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting

national cohesion in Machakos Town Sub-County. The analysis was based on the ideals of a curriculum as advocated by Reconstructionism philosophy.

2. Objective of the Study

The study was guided by the following objective:

- i. To determine the relevance of evaluation in promoting national cohesion among students in secondary schools in Machakos Town Sub-County.

3. Literature Review

Bakhda (2004) indicates that evaluation is an integral part of teaching and learning as well as one of the basic components of any school curriculum. Evaluation plays an important role in determining what learners learn. Bakhda (2004) adds that learners learn most when they are quite precisely aware of how their efforts are to be judged and evaluated. In addition, evaluation plays a central role in deciding what teachers teach and how they teach. According to Bishop (1995) evaluation is the sole means for ensuring the progressive and enlightened development of individuals. This implies that evaluation enables teachers, learners and all other educational stakeholders to determine to what extent the objectives of secondary school curriculum have been achieved. Evaluation activities help in the determination of the degree to which the learning objectives are being or have been met (Oluoch, 2002). Evaluation should be based on the consistency, validity and reliability, continuity and comprehensiveness in line with the objectives of secondary school curriculum. Thus the current study investigated the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting national cohesion

According to social reconstructionist, evaluation covers a broad spectrum of students' abilities like articulation of issues, generation of possible solutions, redefinition of their world views and willingness to take action towards an ideal development (Brameld, 1956). Students are expected to evaluate their own learning and to reflect as a group about the actions they have taken. Brameld (1965) adds that reconstructionists are interested in the effect of the curriculum upon the community. Factors to be weighed include the growth of community consensus, increased political power of the working class and an improved quality life. Rafique (2009) observed

that, a national curriculum of a country is the backbone of educational system and should remain the government's subject for promoting national cohesion. One of the objectives of secondary school education in Kenya is to prepare students to make a positive contribution to the development of society and to acquire attitudes of national patriotism, cooperation, adaptability, a sense of nationhood (Sifuna, 1990). Evaluation is a fundamental component of curriculum and should be a continuous process and an integral part of curriculum which provides feedback on the achievement of objectives..

In Kenya, the education system relies on evaluation of formal education through written examinations (Mwaka, Kafwa, Musamas & Wambua, 2013). There is need to move focus from exam-orientation to overall development of the individual (Digolo, 2006). This does not mean that teachers abandon academic work and focus on co-curricular activities but they should focus on both and realize that both reinforce each other. Evaluation systems in school should focus seriously on all domains. According to Bishop (1995) all the objectives of secondary school curriculum should be evaluated, not only some. Evaluation is mostly concerned with addressing objectives in the cognitive domain. Objectives such as attitudes of cooperation, of commitment, of national patriotism are just as important (Bishop, 1995). This implies that secondary school curriculum should evaluate students in consideration with all domains in order to promote national cohesion.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Reconstructionism philosophical theory by Brameld (1956) and Counts (1971). Reconstructionism is a philosophical theory that advocates for reform and argue that student must be taught how to bring about change. This Philosophy holds the view that societies continually reform themselves in order to establish peaceful co-existence, thus social questions emerge as quests to create a better society and worldwide democracy. Reconstructionism philosophy emphasizes the importance of changing for the better as well as centering on the idea of constant change (Brameld, 1956). To a reconstructionist, the world is a ceaselessly evolving whole and its inhabitants need to ceaselessly evolve themselves in order to

cope with the situations around them (Brameld, 1966). The major premises of reconstructionism are: society is in need of constant reconstruction or change; social change involves a reconstruction of education and the use of education in reconstructing society.

Brameld (1956) affirms that humankind must embrace a united global organization that encompasses people of all nations, race, culture, gender and socio-economic status with the common purpose of constructing a peaceful environment. Reconstructionism philosophical theory encourages individuals to make necessary changes that will be beneficial to their future. This theory is concerned with the role of the school as an agency for social improvement. Schools build the capacity for economic growth, improvement of living standards and constructive life that benefits all people (Brameld, 1965). The school curriculum must emphasize problem-solving involving problems inherent in society. It is important for a teacher to be actively involved as a social and educational activist (Berkson, 1958). The teacher should be aware of the world issues and be able to incorporate them into his/her teachings. The teacher is essential in informing the students of the problems, giving possible solutions, and assisting the students in trying to solve possible issues.

Reconstructionism philosophy emphasizes on the use of school curriculum to reconstruct society and a nation in whole in order to resolve social problems and promote harmonious living and peaceful co-existence. The philosophical theory helped the researcher in conceptualizing the variables of the current study of school evaluation components utilized to promote national cohesion. The current study focused in the reconstructionism philosophy on the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting national cohesion which made the components of school curriculum as advocated by reconstructionism philosophy in informing the conceptualization of the variables by the researcher. KICD has designed and developed components of secondary school curriculum which would be equated to the components advocated by reconstructionism philosophy. National cohesion is a social and a national issue that can be influenced through the school curriculum as advocated by the reconstructionism philosophy which was the focus of the current study.

5. Research Design

Research design is an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that combines relevance to the research purpose with the economy in the procedure (Orodho, 2009). The researcher used descriptive survey research design for the study. This design was adopted for this research because it involved studying conditions or events that had already occurred. The design is appropriate because the researcher determined and reported the way things were (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Best and Kahn (1998) describes a descriptive survey research design study as research that deals with variables that have already occurred and hence cannot be deliberately manipulated through researcher’s invention. The main purpose of descriptive survey research design in a study is therefore to determine reasons or causes for the current status of the phenomenon under study. The research design enabled the researcher in this study to

determine the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting national cohesion. The description was enriched with philosophical techniques of critical analysis and conceptual analysis to ensure that elaborate analysis and description was done.

6. Results and Discussions

The objective of the study sought to determine the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting national cohesion. The question items on this objective were constructed basing on the ideals of a school evaluation as advocated by reconstructionism philosophy.

An item was included in the research instrument that sought to determine from the student leaders and teachers the extent to which evaluation in school promoted national cohesion. Table 1 shows both the student leaders and teachers responses as measured on a five point Likert scale.

Table 1: Extent of School Evaluation in Promoting National Cohesion

Respondents	Very great extent		Great extent		No opinion		Small extent		No extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student leaders	30	8.3	71	19.7	47	13.1	107	29.7	105	29.2
Teachers	6	12.5	9	18.0	8	16.7	13	27.1	12	25.0

Information in Table 1 shows that, 29.7% of the student leaders indicated that evaluation in school promoted national cohesion to a small extent while 19.7% indicated that it does so to a great extent. Among the teachers, 27.1% of the teachers indicated that evaluation in school promoted national cohesion to a small extent, 25.0% indicated no extent and 18.0% indicated a great extent.

Evaluation covers a broad spectrum of students’ abilities like articulation of issues, generation of possible solutions, redefinition of their world views and willingness to take action towards an ideal development (Brameld, 1956). Evaluation is very useful to bring improvement in teaching and

curriculum. Evaluation plays an important role in teaching and learning process. It provides accountability to the society, parents and to the education system. The respondents showed that the mode of evaluation in the education system does not enable the students to discover ability, skill, interest, aptitudes and temperament. Perhaps, this is because the evaluation target cognitive domain only.

An item was included in the student leaders’ questionnaire which required them to indicate the extent to which their teachers are involved in evaluating them on project work based on issues related to national cohesion. Table 2 shows the student leaders responses.

Table 2: Student Responses on the Extent of Involvement in Evaluation on Project work

Issues related to national cohesion	Very actively involved		Moderately involved		No opinion		Lowly involved		Not involved at all	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Religious tolerance	41	11.4	49	13.6	31	8.6	123	34.2	116	32.2
Ethnic co-existence	26	7.2	41	11.4	30	8.3	179	49.7	84	23.4
Gender equity	29	8.1	31	8.6	52	14.4	131	36.4	117	32.5
Socio-economic integration	39	10.8	48	13.3	59	16.4	115	31.9	99	27.5

n=360

On religious tolerance, 34.2% of the student leaders indicated that they were lowly involved while 32.2% indicated that they were not involved at all. 13.6% of the respondents indicated that they were moderately involved while 11.4% of the respondents indicated that they were very actively involved. On ethnic co-existence, 49.7% of the student leaders indicated that they were lowly involved in evaluation on project work on the issues of ethnic co-existence as relates to national cohesion; 23.4% pointed out that they were not involved at all. Only 7.2% of the student leaders were very actively involved.

Information on Table 2 shows that 27.5% of the student leaders indicated that they were lowly involved in evaluation on project work in promoting gender equity while 27.5% indicated that they were not involved at all. About 16.4% held no opinion. Only 13.3% indicated that they were moderately involved while 10.8% indicated that they were very actively involved. On socio-economic integration, majority (36.4%) of the respondents indicated that they were lowly involved in evaluation on project work in promoting socio-economic integration while 32.5% indicated that they were not involved at all. About 14.4% held no opinion. Only 8.6% indicate

that they were moderately actively involved while 8.1% were very actively involved.

Project work offer learners meaningful opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge they acquire through direct instruction. As learners make careful observations and inquiries through their project work, they are likely to have a reason to use literacy and numeracy symbols to represent and communicate to others what they are learning about their topics. As Dewey (1943) explains, much of our thinking is stored in symbols. It is reasonable to assume that what each student chooses to communicate to others is meaningful to her or him. In this way, the Project work can serve as a useful and meaningful complement to a more typical, systematic, or direct form of instruction. A further advantage of the project work lies in the context it offers for children to develop desirable dispositions towards themselves and toward others.

An item was included in the instrument that sought to determine from the student leaders and teachers the extent to which evaluation on group discussion promoted national cohesion by addressing issues related to it. Table 3 shows both the student leaders and teachers responses as measured on a five point Likert scale.

Table 3: Extent of Evaluation on Group Discussion

Respondents	Very great extent		Great extent		No opinion		Small extent		No extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student leaders	30	8.3	71	19.7	47	13.1	107	29.7	105	29.2
Teachers	6	12.5	9	18.0	8	16.7	13	27.1	12	25.0

Information in Table 3 shows that 29.7% of the student leaders indicated that evaluation on group discussion promoted national cohesion was to a small extent, 29.2% indicated no extent while 19.7% indicated a great extent. About 13.1% held no opinion while 8.3% indicated a very great extent. Majority (27.1%) of the teachers indicated a small extent, 25.0% indicated no extent and 18.0% indicated a great extent. Of the respondents 12.5% indicated a very great extent. Only 2.1% held no opinion on the extent to which evaluation on group discussion promoted national cohesion.

Reconstructionism philosophy emphasize on evaluation with consideration of all the domains in order to promote national consensus. In open ended question, unreliability and invalidity were listed as some of the weaknesses of evaluation in promoting national cohesion. Counts (1971) notes that a evaluation that encourages memorization and theoretical knowledge to the exclusion of understanding limits its learners from practical application which addresses various values and some of which promote social, physical and moral development. According to Mwaka *et al.* (2013) there is need for national mobilization and sensitization on goal oriented education. Thus, education should be given for its own sake and not solely as a means for gainful employment but as a means for overall development of the learners

According to Brameld (1971) evaluation should emphasize the development of traits like persistence, emotional control and self-confidence among others of which these traits lead to social betterment, discipline and cooperation leading to a nationalized structure. The responses from questionnaires and interview schedule showed that there was a small extent of evaluation in achieving national cohesion. Reconstructionism philosophy is emphasizes on an evaluation that develops learners with consideration on all aspects

including physical, moral, social, intellectual and academic. Based on the ideals of reconstructionism philosophy, the findings of this study suggests that there was no relevance of evaluation in promoting national cohesion among secondary school students in Machakos Town Sub-County.

7. Conclusion

The researcher explored on the relevance of secondary school evaluation in promoting national cohesion among students in Machakos Town Sub-County. From the findings, the researcher concluded that evaluation does not promote national cohesion. There is undue emphasis on examinations which undermines effective assessment. Most schools use written tests approaches, whereas observations and projects are rarely used. Moreover, these tests are cognitively skewed and ignore other domains of learning. The secondary school evaluation does not adequately equip the learners with the necessary competencies to meet the aspirations of Vision 2030. The study recommends need to explore evaluation strategies that incorporate all the three domains of learning that is; cognitive, affective and psycho-motor. Evaluation should be comprehensive to deal with the aspects of student's growth like physical, mental and social which cannot be measured by written examinations.

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