

The Role of Secondary School Co-Curricular Activities, Grounded in Reconstructionist Philosophy, in Promoting National Cohesion among Students in Machakos Town Sub-County, Kenya

Brian Ochieng Otieno

Chuka University, Department of Education, Chuka, Kenya

Abstract

National unity has remained a central goal of Kenya's education system since independence, with institutions such as the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) underscoring the role of education in fostering integration among diverse communities. Nevertheless, persistent ethnic divisions and periodic violence raise concerns about the effectiveness of the school curriculum in promoting national cohesion. This study examined the relevance of secondary school co-curricular activities in advancing national cohesion among students in Machakos Town Sub-County, guided by the principles of reconstructionist philosophy of education. A descriptive survey research design was employed, involving a sample of 409 respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires administered to teachers and student leaders, as well as an interview schedule. Instrument reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.78 for the teachers' questionnaire and 0.81 for the student leaders' questionnaire. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The findings revealed that although many schools actively engage in co-curricular activities, these programs tend to emphasize competition rather than intentionally cultivating the values necessary for promoting national cohesion.

Keywords: Reconstructionist philosophy, Secondary school curriculum, Co-curricular activities, National cohesion

1. Introduction

Education is the process through which knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are passed on 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 promotes transmission of values, norms and expectations related to national cohesion. Bowers (1997) posits that schools through the prescribed curriculum develop national unity while promoting economic development. 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. Reconstructionism philosophy advocates for a school curriculum that emphasizes social reform as the aim of education. Brameld (1965) notes that the school curriculum should focus on student experience by taking social action on real problems, such as violence, hunger, ethnicity, international terrorism, religious intolerance and inequality.

Curriculum does not only mean the academic subjects traditionally taught in schools but it includes the sum total of experiences that a student receives through the manifold activities that go on in the school, in the classroom, library, laboratory, workshop, playgrounds and in numerous informal contacts between teachers, students and significant others (ROK, 2003). Thus, the curriculum helps the students to play a dynamic and constructive part in the development of a society through national integration. According to Oluoch (2002) secondary education in Kenya covers six major areas of curricula activities: communication, mathematics, science, humanities, applied education and physical education. The secondary school curriculum incorporates co-curricular activities such as music and drama, athletics and games which allow students from diverse areas in the country to meet and interact (MOE, 2010). Through such interactions, students from different ethnic backgrounds learn to appreciate other people's cultures leading to social harmony in the society. Teachers in charge of co-curricular activities provide a unique avenue for promoting peace through schools. similarity

Co-curricular activities serve as a mechanism for the transmission of values, norms and knowledge of the society which leads to social harmony and ultimately promotion of national

cohesion. Co-curricular activities are important in educational institutions as they support academic objectives. The contribution of co-curricular activities to the educational process in educational institutions cannot be understated. Researchers like Updyke and Johnson (1970) and McNally (2003) among others have indicated that participation in co-curricular and other related activities have a positive correlation with academic performance among students as well as in promotion of peace and harmony. According to Brameld (1957) co-curricular activities such as music and drama, athletics, ball games, debates, folk songs and dances, school clubs and movements form an integral part of the activities of a school as its curricular work. Proper conduction of these activities helps in development of a practical approach to students' life and fostering of values like national integration and democracy.

Marsh (1992) noted that participation of students in co-curricular activities increases their commitment to school and the society hence increasing academic achievement and educational aspirations. Holland and Andre (1987) reviewed the literature on co-curricular participation and noted that participation in co-curricular activities was correlated with higher levels of self-esteem, involvement in solving political and social problems in school and in the society. Gerber (1996) expressed the relevance of co-curricular activities in promoting national cohesion by emphasizing that involvement in such activities create a feeling of belongingness and a sense of nationhood among the students regardless of their gender, race, ethnic group, religion or socio economic status. This implies that involvement in co-curricular activities helps students to acquire values that can be used in their daily lives or that would be useful in shaping the country through promoting a sense of nationhood.

Students learn cooperation while they engage themselves in group activities (Berkson, 1958). The students acquire traditions of the group, loyalty to the school authorities and likewise loyalty to the nation. Brameld (1965) asserts that co-curricular activities provide opportunities for better knowledge of our culture and awaken cultural interests among the students. Co-curricular activities are important for the training of character as these provide actual opportunities for acting in obedience to the standard of the group and contribute to inculcation of moral ideas and

cultivation of moral conducts. This study sought to find out the relevance of secondary school curriculum in promoting national cohesion.

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). 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 curriculum. 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 curriculum in promoting national cohesion as a social and national issue. This study investigated the relevance of secondary school co-curricular activities in promoting national cohesion in Machakos Town Sub-County. The analysis was based on the ideals of a curriculum as advocated by reconstructionism philosophy.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

A summative evaluation of the secondary school curriculum carried out by KICD revealed that the negative practices that 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. Despite the goal of Kenyan education system of fostering nationalism, patriotism as well as national unity; national harmony has not been achieved (Ojiambo, 2009). Education is mentioned in generalities and its role is ambivalent. This raises the question on the relevance of the school curriculum in promoting national cohesion. This study sought to investigate the relevance of secondary school curriculum in promoting national cohesion among students in Machakos Town Sub-County.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The findings will be beneficial to policy makers, curriculum developers, curriculum implementers and other stakeholders in education. The findings will provide valuable reference for policy makers to review the curriculum policies as relate to promotion of national cohesion.

The findings of the study will sensitize other stakeholders in education on the importance of the role that education and in particular secondary school co-curricular activities play in promoting harmonious living in the society.

2. 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.

2.1 Sample of the Research

A sample size of 409 respondents was used for the study. Stratified sampling was used to ensure that all categories of schools were involved in the study that is; national, extra county, county and sub-county. Purposive sampling was adopted to select teachers, student leaders and Machakos Town sub county QASO. Taking an average of 30 student leaders, one head teacher, one curriculum master, one co-curricular master and one guidance and counseling teacher in each school, this translated to 34 respondents per school. Thus the number of schools selected for the study were 12 that is, $(409-1/34) = 12$. Three hundred and sixty (360) student leaders, 48 teachers and the Sub-County QASO were sampled for the study.

2.2 Research Instrumentation

The researcher used two instruments to solicit data from the respondents which included two sets of questionnaires to collect primary data: the student leaders' questionnaire and the teachers' questionnaire. The researcher also developed interview schedule that guided interview conducted with the Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer.

2.3 Data analysis

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 and 0.81 for teachers and student leaders' questionnaire respectively.

3. Results and Discussions

The objective aimed at determining the relevance of co-curricular activities in promoting national cohesion among secondary school students in Machakos Town Sub-County, Kenya. The question items on this objective were constructed basing on the ideals of a school curriculum as advocated by reconstructionism philosophy. Student leaders and teachers were asked to rate the extent to which co-curricular activities promoted national cohesion. Table 1 shows both student leaders and teachers responses.

Table 1 Extent of Co-curricular Activities in Promoting National Cohesion

Respondents	Very great extent		Great extent		No opinion		Small extent		No extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Students leaders	13	3.6	72	20.0	63	17.5	122	33.3	90	25.0
Teachers	2	4.2	11	22.9	4	8.3	18	37.5	13	27.1

Information in Table 1 shows that, 37.5% of the teachers indicated that co-curricular activities promoted national cohesion to a small extent, 25.0% indicated no extent while 20.0% indicated a great extent. Among the student leaders, 33.3% indicated that co-curricular activities promoted national cohesion to a small extent, 27.1% indicated no extent while 22.9% indicated a great extent. Only 4.2% of the student leaders indicated a very great extent.

According to reconstructionism philosophy, co-curricular activities should aim at promoting loyalty to a nation, cultural diversity, religion tolerance, positive ethnicity and social interaction which form the key indicators of national cohesion. According to ROK (2003), co-curricular activities play an integral part of a school as its curricular work and proper organization and conduction help in the development of every valuable attitude and qualities. Co-curricular activities such as games, music and drama festivals should be used as means of nurturing tolerance of diversity amongst students' population. The aim of education is not only for intellectual development but also for the development of personality with emphasis on achievement of mental, ethical, social, emotional and cultural values. Basing on the ideals of reconstructionism philosophy, the findings of this study suggest that there is no relevance of co-curricular activities in promoting national cohesion

An item was included in the student leaders' questionnaire which required them to indicate the extent of involvement in interacting and sharing experiences under co-curricular activities based on issues related to national cohesion. Table 2 shows the student leaders responses.

Table 2 Student Leaders' Responses on Interacting and Sharing Experiences

Selected indicators of national cohesion	Very actively involved		Moderately involved		No opinion		Lowly involved		Not involved at all	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Religious tolerance	28	7.8	42	11.7	40	11.1	157	43.6	90	25.0
Ethnic co-existence	29	8.1	33	9.2	13	3.6	143	39.7	142	39.4
Gender equity	3	0.8	35	9.7	22	6.1	156	43.3	144	40.0
Socio-economic integration	13	3.6	72	20.0	63	17.5	122	33.9	90	25.0

n=360

Information in Table 2 shows that, 43.6% of the student leaders indicated that they were lowly involved in interacting and sharing experiences under religious tolerance, while 25.0% indicated that they were not involved at all. Only 7.8% of the respondents indicated that they were very actively involved in interacting and sharing experiences under religious tolerance. On ethnic co-existence, 39.7% of the student leaders indicated that they were lowly involved in interacting and sharing experiences to promote national cohesion while 39.4% pointed out that they were not involved at all. Only 8.1% of the student leaders indicated that they were very actively involved in interacting and sharing experiences on ethnic co-existence.

On gender equity, 43.3% of the student leaders indicated that they were lowly involved in interacting and sharing experiences to promote national cohesion while 40.0% indicated that they were not involved at all. Only 0.8% indicated that they were very actively involved on activities related to this issue. On socio-economic integration, 33.9% of the student leaders indicated that they were lowly involved in interacting and sharing experiences to promote national cohesion while 25.0% indicated that they were not involved at all. Only 3.6% were very actively involved.

An item was included in the teachers’ questionnaire that sought information on the extent of involvement of students in interacting and sharing experiences under co-curricular activities based on issues related to national cohesion. Table 3 shows the teachers’ responses.

Table 3 Teachers Responses on Interacting and Sharing Experiences

Selected indicators of national cohesion	Very actively involved		Moderately involved		No opinion		Lowly involved		Not involved at all	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Religious tolerance	4	8.3	9	18.8	0	0.0	24	50.0	11	22.9
Ethnic co-existence	0	0.0	10	20.8	0	0.0	19	39.6	19	39.6
Gender equity	0	0.0	12	25.0	2	4.2	18	37.5	16	33.3
Socio-economic integration	2	4.2	13	27.1	4	8.3	18	37.5	11	22.9

n=48

Information in Table 3 shows that 50.0% of the teachers indicated that students were lowly involved on activities related to religious tolerance while 22.9% indicated that they were not involved at all. Only 8.3% indicated that they were very actively involved interacting and sharing experiences on religious tolerance. On ethnic coexistence, 39.6% of the teachers indicated that students are lowly involved in interacting and sharing experiences on ethnic coexistence as relates to promotion of national cohesion.

On gender equity, 37.5% of the teachers indicated that students are lowly involved in interacting and sharing experiences on the issue so as to promote national cohesion while 33.3% indicated that they were not involved at all. The findings in Table 19 further showed that 37.5% of the teachers indicated that students are lowly involved in interacting and sharing experiences on issues related to socio-economic integration so as to promote national cohesion. Only 4.2% of the teachers indicated that students are very actively involved in sharing experiences on the issue.

Co-curricular activities form an important part of school curriculum by providing educational activities to the students and thereby help in broadening their experiences (Marsh, 1992). Co-curricular activities can be defined as the activities that enhance and enrich the regular curriculum during the normal school hours. All co-curricular activities are organized with specific purpose which varies according to the nature and form of such activities (McInally, 2003). These activities are designed to meet the needs of the students and cover a broad wide range of their abilities and talents. Such activities stimulate the interests in the students and provide equal opportunities to all the students to participate. The activities enhance the learning experience of the students and help in recognizing and developing their inner skills such as leadership qualities, creative or innovative skills. These activities help in developing the grasping power of the students and provide an opportunity to the students to work in teams and thus develop team spirit in them. The findings indicate that students are lowly involved in interacting and sharing experiences under co-curricular activities in promoting national cohesion.

An item was included in the student leaders instruments that sought information on the extent to which themes related to national cohesion were addressed through co-curricular activities. Table 4 shows responses obtained from student leaders.

Table 4 Student Leaders’ Responses on Themes in Promoting National Cohesion

Themes related to national cohesion	Very Great Extent		Great Extent		Undecided		Small Extent		No Extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	Religious tolerance	13	3.6	63	17.5	72	20.0	90	25.0	122
Ethnic co-existence	23	6.4	59	16.4	53	14.7	102	28.3	123	34.2
Gender equity	29	8.1	66	18.3	49	13.6	99	27.5	117	32.5
Socio economic integration	36	10.0	99	27.5	76	21.1	117	32.5	32	8.9

n= 360

Information in Table 4 indicates that 33.9% of the student leaders indicated that religious tolerance is not addressed through co-curricular activities while 17.5% indicated that religious tolerance was addressed through co-curricular activities to a very great extent. 34.2% of the

student leaders noted that issues to do with ethnic co-existence were not addressed through co-curricular activities to any extent while 16.4% indicated great extent. Results in Table 20 further showed that 32.5% of the student leaders also noted that co-curricular activities did not address gender equity to any extent. The teachers' responses regarding the extent to which themes related to national cohesion were addressed through co-curricular activities are as presented in Table 5

Table 5 Teachers' Responses on Themes in Promoting National Cohesion

Themes related to national cohesion	Very Great Extent		Great Extent		Undecided		Small Extent		No extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Religious tolerance	2	4.2	8	16.7	3	6.3	18	37.5	17	35.4
Ethnic co-existence	2	4.2	10	20.8	2	4.2	22	45.0	12	25.0
Gender equity	0	0.0	14	29.2	2	4.2	16	33.3	16	33.3
Socio- economic integration	2	4.2	8	16.7	3	6.3	14	29.2	21	43.8

n= 48

Information in Table 5 shows that 35.4% of the teachers noted that religious tolerance was not addressed through co-curricular activities compared to 4.2% who indicated that religious tolerance was addressed through co-curricular activities to a very great extent. On ethnic co-existence, 45% of the teachers indicated that it was addressed through co-curricular activities to a small extent compared to 20.8% who noted that it is addressed to a great extent. The results also show that 33.3% of the teachers indicated that gender equity was not addressed through co-curricular activities to any extent while 29.2% noted that it was addressed to a great extent. On socio-economic integration, 43.8% of the student leaders noted that it was not addressed through co-curricular activities to any extent compared to 16.7% who indicated great extent.

Co-curricular activities are important to students' holistic education (Gerber, 1996). Through co-curricular activities, students discover their interests and talents while developing values and competencies that will prepare them for a rapidly changing world. Co-curricular activities also promote friendships among students from diverse backgrounds as they learn, play and grow

together. Participation in co-curricular activities fosters social integration and deepens students' sense of belonging, commitment and sense of responsibility to school, community and nation (Marsh, 1992). Co curricular pursuits are integral to the educational program and—whether or not they carry academic credit—have legitimate links to regular courses. They underpin the goal of teaching students to be responsible and fulfilled human beings with opportunities that develop character, critical thinking, social skills, and talents. Students who participate have the chance to excel individually, be part of a group, and gain real-life lessons about the importance of teamwork, responsibility, commitment, and hard work.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The school should not be visualized as merely a place of formal learning whose concern is to communicate a certain, prescribed quantum of knowledge but rather as a living and organic community which enhance capacity for cooperative work. Based on the ideals reconstructionism philosophy, the findings of this study suggest that there was no relevance of co-curricular activities in promoting national cohesion. Although many schools participate in co-curricular activities, these are rendered to competition rather than a dimension to inculcate the intended cohesion and integration values through different themes related to national cohesion. Based on the findings of the study, there is need to review co-curricular activities in reference to issues related to national cohesion. This can be done through drama, music and establishment of clubs geared towards promoting peace and appreciating diversity.

References

- Berkson, I. B. (1958). *The Ideal and the Community: A Philosophy of Education*. New York: Harper Brothers.
- Bowers, C. A. (1997). *The Culture of Denial*. New York: State University Press.
- Brameld, T. (1957). *Cultural Foundations of Education: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*. New York: Harper Brothers.
- Brameld, T. (1965). *Education for the Emerging Age: Newer Ends and Stronger Means*. Retrieved on 18th November 2013 from <http://www.educ.philosophers.com>
- Gerber, S. B. (1996). Extracurricular Activities and Academic Achievement. *Journal of Research Development in Education*, 30(1), 42-50

- Holland, A. & Andre, T. (1987). Participation in Extracurricular Activities in Secondary School: What is Known, What needs to be Known? *Review of Educational Research*, 57,434-466
- Marsh, H. (1992). Extracurricular Activities: Beneficial Extension of the Traditional Curriculum or Subversion of Academic Goals. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84(4), 553-562.
- McInally, P. (2003). *Parents: Adopt Positive Role in Youth Sports*. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.
- Ministry of Education, (2010). *Peace Building*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Murithi, T. (2009). *The Value of Reconciliation: Ethics of Peace Building*. Edinburgh: University Press.
- Ojiambo, P. O. (2009). *Quality of Education and its Role in National Development: A Case Study of Kenya's Educational Reforms*. Urbana Champaign: University of Illinois.
- Oluoch, G. P. (2002). *Essentials of Curriculum Development*. Nairobi: Bondo Ltd Publishers.
- Orodho, J. A. (2009). *Elements of Education and Social Science Research Methods*. Maseno: Kanezja Publishers.
- Republic of Kenya, (2003). *Secondary School Education Syllabus*. Nairobi: Government printer.
- Updyke, W. F. & Johnson, P. B. (1970). *Principles of Modern Physical Education, Health and Recreation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.