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Evaluating the Strategies Used in Teaching Life Skills Education for Management of Conflicts among Secondary School Students in Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Life Skills Education (LSE) is internationally recognized for equipping people with abilities to adapt to daily challenges. Students face heightened peer group interaction making interpersonal conflicts rampant as they try to assert themselves while also seeking cooperation. Life skills become prerequisite for conflict management. It is disturbing that despite mainstreaming LSE in Kenya's school curriculum in 2003, students continue to experience heightened relationship-based conflicts with insurmountable consequences that jeopardize learning as revealed in a survey of schools in Kakamega County. This paper evaluated the strategies used in teaching LSE for management of conflicts among secondary school students with the intention of providing insight into what can make LSE more proactive in conflict management. The research was a Descriptive Survey that employed the Ex Post Facto Design. Interviews, questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and observation checklists were used to collect primary data. Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the 456 respondents including students, school administrators and sponsors, LSE and G & C teachers from four Sub Counties in Kakamega County. Study findings confirmed that LSE can indeed equip students with life skills for conflict management; however, the participatory learner-centered methods for teaching LSE were hardly used by the teachers. These methods such as miming, song and dance, role play, poetry/recitals, games and storytelling were associated more with other subjects like oral literature, Fasihi, and drama festivals than with acquisition of life skills. In most schools the teachers lacked interest in participating with the students in LSE so as to help students acquire the life skills. Focus Group Discussions confirmed that in most cases LSE lessons were peer-led with limited or no direction from significant others such as the parents, church and school. The students relied heavily on these peers led discussions to acquire knowledge, information, attitudes and skills and this contributed to conflicts when wrong information, attitudes and skills were learnt. Leaving these inept peers with the pivotal role of imparting life skills promoted conflict. The results on forums that relay LSE indicated recognition that LSE was not only taught through the classroom lessons but also through other forums such as Guidance and Counselling, invited guest speakers, peer counsellors, house/ class meetings, open forums, assembly talks, straight talk club, notice boards, and pastoral care. The school environment promoted non-violence and anti-drug messages through posters on notice boards as reported. It however emerged that the schools unconsciously used these forums that relay LSE without giving the LSE significance; it is as if the programs are more of routine than purposeful. There was incongruence among stakeholders; the administrators, the LSE and G & C teachers who ought to implement LSE did not rate Guidance and counselling forums and class lessons as best forums for relaying LSE as believed by the Sub County Director. The interview with religious leaders revealed that religious institutions concentrated mainly on teaching their religious tenets and life skills came in often by coincidence. It is recommended that the LSE teachers, who are at the core of teaching LSE should maximize student involvement and participation in LSE through use of the diverse heuristic methods so that the students internalize the skill rather than merely retaining the knowledge on LSE. The G & C teachers should choreograph programs in the school that will ensure that LSE is imbibed in learners. They should spearhead peer activities in the school while ensuring that the information the peers have is accurate, clear and free of misconceptions that may derail fellow students.

Keywords: Teaching, life skills education, Management of conflicts

1. Introduction

KIE (2008), states that education is a means by which individuals are equipped with knowledge, skills and values that enable them to become productive citizens. UNESCO (2000), cites that the learning potential of many children and youth in the world is compromised by drug and alcohol abuse, violence and injury, early and unintended pregnancy, infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections; yet these conditions and behaviours can be improved by life skills-based education. Life skills-based health education has been known to make significant contributions to the healthy development of children and adolescents.

Mutie and Ndambuki (2001), note that young people grow up in an environment where they have to interact with others. This predisposes them to conflict. Challenges facing the adolescents are compounded by various factors such as complex developmental changes during adolescence, lack of positive role models, negative mass media influence and inadequate and unreliable sources of information especially on human sexuality. In order to function effectively in these different settings; they need to acquire social skills that can facilitate interpersonal relationships within a community.

In traditional African society, proper structures and strategies which have now died had been put in place to help the children and youth develop and grow as responsible productive members of the society. Kenya Institute of Education, (KIE,2008) notes that throughout the Eastern and South African region (ESAR), there has been a growing awareness that LSE for children and adolescents have for a long time been neglected. A lot of emphasis is laid on imparting academic knowledge while leaving out acquisition of psychological skills which is an inadequate way of preparing young people for the complex challenges that exist in the world. There is need for the youth to be enabled to develop positive values, attitudes, skills and healthy behaviour in order to help them effectively deal with the challenges of everyday life. The Ministry of Education realized that these challenges can be overcome through LSE.

This need to focus on life skills as a critical response to challenges facing young people today is also highlighted in a number of international recommendations. The 1990 Jomtien, Thailand World Conference on Education for All (EFA) includes Universal Primary Education (UPE) of which LSE is a component in the six goals that were to be achieved by the year 2015. UPE was later expected to speed up progress towards achievement of the other Millennium Development Goals (UNICEF, 2002). Kenya as a signatory to the United Nations subscribes to this plan.

Kenya's Vision 2030 identifies three key pillars that will enhance development namely, social, economic and political. The social pillar which enshrines LSE views Kenya's journey towards prosperity as involving the building of a just and cohesive society that enjoys equitable social development in a clean secure environment. This quest is the basis of transformation in eight key social sectors namely, education and training, health, water and sanitation, environment, housing and urbanization, gender, youth, sports and culture (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Kenya recognizes that education and training of all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the Vision 2030. Education equips citizens with understanding and knowledge that enables them to make informed choices about their lives and those facing the Kenyan society. It will help address gender imbalance, youth related problems and obstacles facing vulnerable groups by equipping them with life skills that will enable them to live more productive and satisfying lives in an expanding diverse economy.

The Kenyan government chose to implement LSE through the Ministry of Education as a remedy to psychosocial challenges. KIE laid down various strategies, the first initiative was to establish the HIV and AIDS Education programme in schools; this was expected to impart life skills that would help prevent the spread of the disease among the youth in and out of school through behaviour change as it was recommended by the Koech Report (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Resultantly, the Kenyan education curriculum was reviewed in the year 2003; Life Skills Education was integrated and infused into various subjects. Teaching and learning materials were developed and disseminated, HIV and AIDS Education content was infused into the existing curriculum in schools. Education stakeholders were sensitized, training facilitated and teachers in serviced. Guidance and counselling service was emphasized and a Guidance and Counselling Teachers Handbook developed to equip teachers with knowledge and basic skills in Guidance and Counselling.

KIE (2008), reveals that in the year 2002, with the assistance of UNICEF Kenya Country Office, forty thousand Life Skills Education materials were developed for both primary and secondary schools. One thousand one hundred trainers of trainers were oriented from across the country on how to mainstream Life Skills Education. KIE and UNICEF found it necessary to introduce the art of traditional storytelling, dramatization in Early Childhood Education aimed at instilling essential values based on life skills. A study tour of education officers to Zimbabwe and Malawi with a view of familiarizing themselves with the implementation strategies in LSE in learning institutions was undertaken. A major recommendation of the tour was that Life Skills Education be taught as an independent subject and it also highlighted the need to build capacity of teachers to enable them facilitate the development of life Skills beyond content teaching.

A National Life skills Stakeholders Conference held in Nairobi in 2006 recommended the teaching of Life skills as an independent subject in primary and secondary schools to allow school time to be used in teaching. This became operational in the year 2008 aimed at helping students develop and exercise life skills in handling even interpersonal conflicts (KIE2006). This literature informs us that Kenya's initiative to include LSE in the curriculum as an independent subject was not only driven by the recognition that LSE is meant to assist learners to handle problems emanating from risky sexual behaviours that lead to HIV and AIDS but also there is the recognition that there are other weighty issues in the life of a student that cause conflicts, hence the need for students to be equipped with conflict management skills that can enhance healthy interpersonal relationships. Despite all these huge investments in LSE through time, there still exists a gap in the effectiveness of LSE.

Conflict management among students in Kakamega County, Kenya still remains a mirage; this study evaluated the strategies employed in teaching LSE and the impediment that limited students' personal and interpersonal prowess in life skills.

2. Strategies used in teaching Life Skills Education

Bishop (1995), defines teaching strategy as the deliberate planning and organization of teaching and learning experiences and situations in the light of psychological and pedagogical principles with a view to achieving specific goals. He advises that these strategies should be based on age, ability, motivation and interest. This perspective expects that curriculum planners for LSE have designated the manner in which this subject should be presented to learners in order to ensure that it imparts the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes that will make it valuable to the recipients.

UNESCO (2000), points out that skills-based health education can be placed in a variety of ways in the school curriculum. Sometimes it is a core subject within the broader curriculum; it can also be placed in the context of related health and social issues, within a carrier subject or it may be offered as an extracurricular programme. It is argued that regardless of its placement, teachers and school personnel from a wide range of subjects and activities need to be involved in its teaching. A narrow focus on Skills-based health education is unlikely to sustain changed behaviour in the long term. More powerful and sustained outcomes tend to be achieved when skills-based health education is coordinated with policies, services, family and community partnerships and mass media. O'Donnell et al, (1998), research shows that a curriculum combined with youth community service reduces risky behaviours such as fighting, early sexual behaviour and substance use more effectively than a curriculum alone.

Oluoch (2006), considers it very necessary to prepare in detail those teachers and head teachers who are going to implement a curriculum so as to make them conversant with all the provisions of the whole curriculum. This makes it possible for them to understand the curriculum plan, materials and equipment and thereby become aware of the implications of the curriculum for children. Kann et al (1995), equally recommends training of skills-based health educators. They posit that trained educators are more likely to implement programmes as intended, that is, teach all the required content and to use effective, high quality teaching and learning methods. UNESCO (2004), also considers the training of Life skills teachers to be an issue as crucial as provision of a comprehensive framework for providing LSE. Skills-based health educators must possess a mix of professional and personal qualities. Some individuals bring all these qualities to the job; others must receive training to acquire them. Mangrulkar et al (2001), say that the best skill-based health facilitators are those that can be viewed as role models for healthy behaviour, are credible and respected, are skilled and competent and those able to access resources, leadership and institutional support. These views of scholars emphasize the value of training educators for effectiveness of any teaching program. This study sought to find out if the teachers of LSE were equipped with teaching strategies.

WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA and the World Bank (2000), recommend that during the course of implementation of skill-based health education there is need for process evaluation which monitors the progress of implementation and provides feedback so that you can make adjustments. This process evaluation therefore helps to observe whether the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes are being developed, to find out if the learning activities were carried out and whether the prescribed methods were used in delivery. Outcome evaluation is also deemed necessary since it assesses the results and impact of the interventions and determines if and to what extent interventions were effective in achieving desired objectives. The researcher's interest was to find out if any evaluation of the successes of LSE in secondary schools in Kakamega County is undertaken to enable LSE meet its intervention aim of conflict management.

Methodology in teaching refers to approaches and sets of methods used in presenting the subject matter with an aim of achieving different specific objectives (KIE, 2008). There are two main approaches; teacher-centered approach (expository) and learner-centered approaches (heuristic). WHO (1999), recommends methods such as group work, discussion, debate, storytelling, peer-supported learning and community development projects as means of inculcating LSE. Other methods that are recommended to be employed in the imparting of life skills include; role plays, songs and dances, brainstorming, case studies, miming, poetry and recitals, games, question and answer method.

UNESCO/ UNICEF/WHO and the World Bank (2000), recommend that lectures are suitable methods for helping students acquire accurate knowledge; while discussions are suitable for influencing attitudes; role plays are suitable for developing skills. It is recommended that a wide range of teaching and learning methods be used to enable students to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills. Whatever the choice made by the teacher, teaching and learning methods ought to be relevant and effective for the selected topic. Bishop (1995), points out that it is the responsibility of the teacher to make lessons captivating and he emphasizes that the best methods are those that allow active involvement and participation of learners rather than those that make learners passive recipients. Hence teachers are entrusted with the duty of choosing the most suitable methods for every given topic. This capability of teachers should enable realisation of the teaching of LSE for conflict management. The study purposed to evaluate the methods used for teaching LSE for conflict management in secondary schools in Kakamega County.

CARICOM & UNICEF (1999), explain that the role of the teacher in delivering skills-based health education is to facilitate participatory learning. They argue that participatory learning utilizes the experience, opinions and knowledge of group members; it provides a creative context for the exploration and development of possibilities and options; and affords a source of mutual comfort and security that aids learning and decision making. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), encourages participatory teaching techniques. His research shows that people learn what to do and how to act by observing

others, positive behaviours are reinforced by the positive or negative consequences viewed or experienced directly by the learner. Retention behaviours can be enhanced when people mentally rehearse or perform modelled behaviour patterns. Studies of approaches to health education have shown that active participatory learning activities for students are the most effective method for developing knowledge, attitudes and skills together for the students to make healthy choices (Tobler, 1992). CARICOM (2000) and CARICOM & UNICEF (1999), highlight some advantages of participatory teaching to be; promotion of cooperation rather than competition, improved perception of the self and others, recognition of and value of individual skills, enhanced self esteem, promotion of listening and communication skills, promotion of tolerance of others, added innovation and creativity and increased ability to deal with sensitive issues. Kirby et al, (1994), recommend that in order to achieve specific behavioural outcomes, programmes aimed at developing young people's life skills should be taught in the context of a particular topic such as a prevalent health issue. The emphasis laid on participatory methods for imparting LSE is invaluable. This study sought to find out the extent to which these inevitable methods of imparting life skills were used in secondary schools in Kakamega County.

The role of peer educators in Life Skills Education is greatly underscored. Australia, Chile, Norway and Swaziland collaborated in a pilot study on the efficacy of social influences approach in school-based alcohol education. The data showed that peer-led education appears to be effective in reducing alcohol use across a variety of settings and cultures (Perry and Grant, 1991). Other media for teaching-learning life skills includes: classroom lessons, guidance and counselling sessions, pastoral care, Christian Union/Young Christian Association, notice boards, use of suggestion boxes, news reports through journalism clubs, Straight talk clubs, invited guest speakers, open forums, peer educators, group discussion, assembly talks, and class or house meetings. The Kenya Education School Support Program Report (Republic of Kenya, 2005), notes that there are many family problems which pose serious challenges in the growth and development of the Kenyan child. The escalating violence against children and rising stress in society demand well coordinated and informed counselling interventions so as to provide learners with life skills to enable them face these challenges. This report indicates that guidance and counselling is in tandem with life skills. It can be used to impart life skills that would equip students with problem solving skills. This study undertook a critical look at the propriety of placement of LSE in the school program by schools in Kakamega County, the level of conversance of the teachers with the LSE curriculum and its evaluation, the place of guidance and counselling in fostering LSE and the relevance of the method and forums for imparting life skills. It also sought to verify the involvement of the learner in LSE through participation and peer education so as to ascertain the influence of these strategies in students' conflict management abilities.

3. Statement of the Problem

Life Skills Education enjoys international approval as a prerequisite subject in education for every young person due to its inherent life skills enhancement that aid youths in conflict management among other growth and development needs. Globally the success of teaching LSE to the youth has been varied. This has been manifested in the USA, Canada, United Kingdom and a growing number of African countries including South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe (WHO, 1999). In these countries the rationale for introducing LSE was dictated by prevailing social contexts that required sustained response. This varies from substance abuse, prevention of HIV and AIDS, adolescent pregnancy, child abuse, coping with social pressure to creating a curriculum that transmits education for life, (The Human Rights Watch, 2002, WHO, 1999). The success of these initiatives has depended on the degree of exposure to LSE. The exposure to LSE in Kenyan schools started in 2003 as an integrated subject aimed at addressing the HIV and AIDS pandemic as recommended by the Koech Report, (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Subsequent recommendation by a National Life Skills stakeholders conference held in Nairobi made LSE an independent subject aimed at equipping learners in both primary and secondary school with psychosocial skills that would help them cope with conflicts and challenges that arise as they grow (KIE, 2006). Hence from 2008, LSE has been one of the compulsory subjects listed for teaching in Kenyan schools. To date learners continue to show inability to handle life challenges in schools and in their social lives despite the implementation of the LSE curriculum. In Kakamega County, cases of school dropout and spread of HIV, frequent fights, theft cases, bullying, harassment of students by prefects, drug abuse, lesbianism/homosexuality, sneaking out of school and boy-girl relationships that culminate into pregnancy and at times abortion are rampant (Kakamega County, Quality and Standards Assessment Reports 2012-2014). The problems point towards unresolved conflicts and/ or weaknesses in the learner ability to use life skills to handle conflict situations. This brings to question the essence of LSE provided for conflict management. It is in this context that this study sought to evaluate the strategies used for teaching LSE for management of conflicts among secondary school students in Kakamega County.

4. Objective of the study

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the strategies used in teaching LSE for conflict management among secondary school students in Kakamega County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to assess the methods used in teaching Life Skills Education, establish the students' views about forums that relay LSE and investigate the forums used in schools to relay life skills.

5. Conceptual framework

This study was informed by three theories namely; Piaget's theory of cognitive development (Bee,1998), Kohlberg's theory of moral development, (Kohlberg1981) and the conflict communication theory advanced by Cahn (1992) in order to provide a solid framework for its analysis. Piaget's theory shows that the period of adolescence, is a time when most people are of secondary school age; this is the time when one can ably master higher level cognitive skills such as decision making. It is at the same stage in Kohlberg's view that they ought to imbibe skills of knowing to live with the self and with others. It is also this time that they can develop moral values in their society. As they go through this stage there is the push and pull between being able to assert one's authority as the 'self' and the desire to cooperate with others since there is the need to belong with others. This scenario heightens the pressures and conflicts that surround the learner. It is these conflicts experienced that Cahn seeks to interpret in his conflict communication theory. Depending on the strategies used to teach LSE, the student at this stage may be able to engage his/her cognitive skills to make moral choices that may help in conflict management or on the contrary be unable to make good moral choices which may contribute to acceleration of conflict amongst students.

6. Research design and methodology

The research was a Descriptive Survey that employed the Ex Post Facto Design. Interviews, questionnaires, FGDs and observation checklists were used to collect primary data. Secondary data reviewed was used to corroborate the findings. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the 456 respondents from four Sub Counties in Kakamega County, Kenya: namely: Kakamega Central, Mumias, Butere and Lugari. The sample comprising both rural and urban population was 384 students, 22 school administrators, 22 teachers of LSE, 22 G & C teachers and 6 sponsors cutting across girls boarding, boys boarding, mixed boarding, mixed day, girl's day and boy's day, girl's day and boarding and mixed day and boarding categories in both public and private schools. Four FGDs were also held to get more opinions and insight into this study. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The main techniques used to analyze were frequency distributions, bar charts, pie charts and percentages.

The Kakamega County is cosmopolitan in nature with a variety of tribes, religious groups in Kenya represented here as noted by the Kakamega County Education Task Force Report (Republic of Kenya, 2014). The cosmopolitanism allowed access to views from a variety of Kenyan cultures and religious faithful. This allowed the researcher to expose the study to a mixed breed of backgrounds, levels of socialization and varied school cultures. This scenario gave the researcher a rich cross section with diverse experiences that can serve as a representative population for the entire population. Kombo & Tromp (2006), state that capturing variability in a population allows for more reliability of the study and the greater the diversity and differences that exist in the population sample, the higher the applicability of the research findings to the whole population.

6.1. Sampling Technique & Sample Frame

Study population	Sampling technique	Population N	Sample size n	Data collection instrument
Schools	Multistage	321	22	Observation checklist
Administrators	Purposive	321	22	Interview
Sponsors	Purposive	321	6	Interview
LSE teachers	Purposive	321	22	Questionnaire
G & C teachers	Purposive	321	22	Questionnaire
Form II & III students	Purposive/ simple random	Above 10000	384	Questionnaire
FGDs	Simple random	22 schools	4 groups of 8	Interview

Table 1

7. Findings on main methods used in teaching LSE

The student respondents were given a list of five common methods of teaching namely; lecture, discussion, brain storming, case studies, and question and answer method; they were asked on a Likert scale of one to five to show the frequency with which these methods were used in school to teach LSE. The scale was as follows: 1= never, 2= not sure, 3= sometimes, 4=often and 5= very often. Table2 below shows the students' scores:

Method used when teaching LSE	Frequency & percentage	Never	Not sure	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Total
Discussion method is used when teaching LSE	F %	30 7.8	10 2.6	94 24.5	113 29.4	137 35.7	384 100.0

Method used when teaching LSE	Frequency & percentage	Never	Not sure	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Total
Question & Answer method is used when teaching LSE	F %	62 16.2	19 5.0	105 27.4	76 19.8	121 31.6	383 100.0
Lecture method is used when teaching LSE	F %	68 17.8	33 8.6	119 31.1	73 19.1	90 23.5	384 100.0
Case studies method is used when teaching LSE	F %	95 24.8	80 20.9	80 20.9	76 19.8	52 13.6	384 100.0
Brain storming method is used when teaching LSE	F %	122 31.8	106 27.6	75 19.5	48 12.5	33 8.6	384 100.0

Table 2: Students' Scores on Frequency of Use of Varied Teaching Methods
Source: Researcher (2016)

The students' scores were summarized in two categories determining use of a method or non-use and the results are in the figure.1 below.

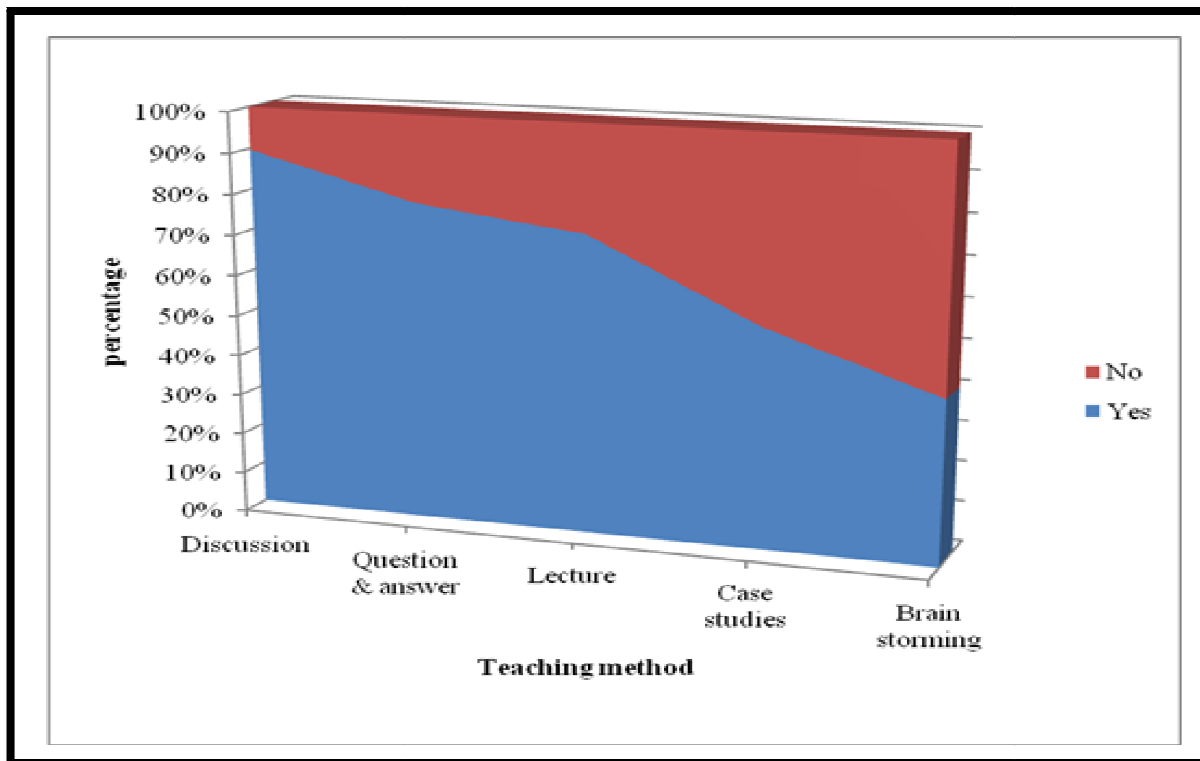


Figure 1: Methods Used In Teaching LSE
Source: Researcher (2016)

Further, comparison of the views of students, LSE teachers and G & C teachers was made to determine the methods commonly used to teach LSE. The mean scores for the frequency of use of various methods were calculated on a scale of 1-5 for the students, G & C teachers and the LSE teachers. These views of the varied respondents are presented in Figure 7.2 below:

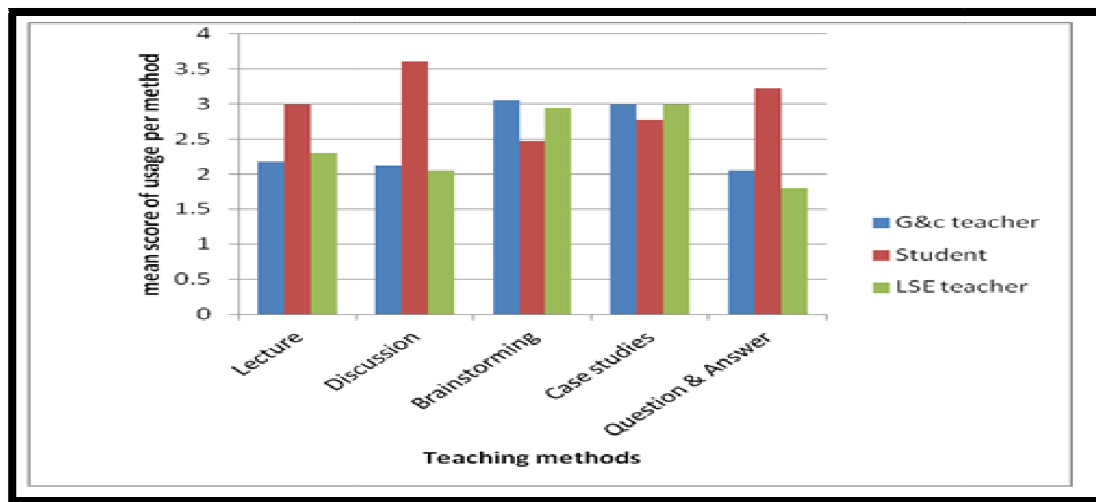


Figure 2: Comparison of Views on Methods Used To Teach LSE
Source: Researcher (2016)

Various views emerged as to why certain methods were chosen over others as follows.

2. Discussion Method

Majority of the students 344(89.6%), as seen in Table2 above stated that discussion method was used in the teaching of LSE. At the FGD level the students clarified that the teachers gave them topics to discuss in groups which they formed. In most of the cases these discussions were led by the peer leaders; in few instances the teachers would join the students for discussion. The students' mean score on use of discussions confirmed students' preference for discussions at a mean that is above average at 3.61 out of 5 unlike the LSE teachers and the G & C teachers whose means were both below average; 2.05 and 2.12 respectively.

KIE (2008), explains that a discussion is a purposeful conversation proceeding towards a certain objective. It allows exchange and sharing of ideas, experiences, facts, opinions on given topics. For a discussion to be effective there is need to identify the topic for discussion, then formulate small or large groups and find sufficient background information to the topic prior to the session. There is need to encourage the use of open-ended questions that allow a variety of answers during discussion, it is necessary for the teacher to go round groups clarifying concepts that require clarity. All members ought to make contribution to the discussion. At the end of the discussion a summary of views and ideas ought to be presented while laying emphasis on the correct skills that ought to be imbibed. Some of these views about group discussions are true of the findings of the study. The major misgiving is the absence of the teachers during discussions. This created a vacuum since students lacked someone who could clarify to them difficult concepts as well as emphasizing to them the correct skills to be imbibed. It also opened room for resurgence of conflicts especially where the students do not develop the right attitudes and skills from their discussions.

Weinstein (2007), explains that if students can help one another during class work, they are less likely to get stuck or to have to sit and wait for the teacher's assistance and neither will they involve themselves in disruptive behaviour. This could be perhaps one reason why students found themselves preferring this method in the absence of teachers. Webb and Farivar (1994), report that group discussions allow students to take an active role in their own learning since they are free to ask questions, they allocate turns for speaking, they can evaluate the work of others, they provide encouragement and support for each other, they can debate and explain to each other and the more they explain the more they learn. This view concurs with the FGD view that students were more motivated to work with their peers during discussions since it allowed them to be fully involved in learning LSE.

Many students, 220(57.3%) stated that time used to teach LSE was limited, this could also explain why they preferred to use discussion method. Caricom (2000), explains that discussions are especially useful when time is limited. They maximise student's input, increase both familiarity and the likelihood for consideration of how another person thinks. Above all they help students to hear and learn from their peers. The fact that discussions allow students to have a voice and a hearing as they share experiences makes them most likeable to students. Discussions give students opportunity to practise turning to each other for problem solving. They help students deepen their understanding of a topic and personalise their connection to it. They develop skills in listening, assertiveness and empathy.

Even though Perry and Grant, (1991), recognize the efficacy of peer-led education on mainly areas of social influence, these peers ought to have the prerequisite skills to impart in others. In the FGDs the students reported that teachers hardly came to class to teach LSE. In many cases the students were given topics to discuss. These same students revealed through the questionnaires that LSE topics on sexuality were not exhaustively tackled by the teachers. This necessitated finding ways of acquiring information, opinions, attitudes and skills which they direly require to use in handling day to day affairs from peer-led discussions only. The absence of a teacher during discussions denied learners the opportunity for clarification of attitudes,

concepts, opinions and ideas. It exposed students to negative influences on their attitudes and opinions. This opened the door to misconceptions and misjudgement of matters thus escalating conflicts among the students.

7.2. Question and Answer Method

Many student respondents, 302(78.8%), stated that the question and answer method was used in teaching and learning of LSE. They explained during FGD that this method was used by both the teacher-led lessons and the peer-led sessions. Students asked questions to unravel areas of curiosity. They also asked questions in order to get new knowledge and guidance on how to approach issues they considered difficult or new fields. KIE (2008), insists that this method must allow free flow of information between the teacher and the student through probing hence instances where students used the method on their own can be rated poor on their ability to impart life skills. The fact that the method allows remembrance of past experiences and linking of the known and unknown makes it more necessary since the teacher ensures this lineage.

Students were more endeared to this method because its participatory approach arouses motivation and curiosity thus promoting learner participation. Dixie (2007), agrees with this notion when he enthuses that because of the great learner participation, this method gives students a high degree of ownership of the lesson thus enhancing effective classroom control. CARICOM & UNICEF (1999), also concur when they stipulate that the role of a teacher in promoting skill-based education is to facilitate participatory learning. The students' mean score on use of question and answer remained higher than that of the other respondents at 3.23 out of 5, the LSE teachers scored 1.80 while the G & C teachers got 2.06. This was the least used method in the perspective of the LSE and the G & C teachers. On the contrary it is the second most used method in the perspective of the students. KIE (2008) states that in question and answer method the teacher or learner tries to find out information through asking questions and getting answers from the respondent. It stimulates thinking and creativity. This method can be deemed an easier option for students in the absence of teachers due to its liberality; it allows the students to think, ask questions and give answers whether right or wrong. The biggest limitation in all these is the absence of a teacher who should verify the answers to the questions asked. One Imam from Macho Masjid (Lugari), confirmed during interview session the value of teacher-guided question and answer method which was one of the best methods used in teaching Islamic tenets that were also meant to equip Muslims with life skills that would enable them to exemplify the life their founder Prophet Muhammad.

7.3. Lecture Method

A good number of student respondents, 282(73.7%) agreed that the lecture method was used in teaching LSE. They explained during FGDs that teachers who wished to cover a topic quickly flooded them with information on the given topic. This concurs with Weinstein (2007), who explains that due to overcrowded curriculum, teachers find it easier to cover curriculum when they do the talking and students do the listening. The lecture method allows the teacher to be the owner of knowledge so he/she subjects the learners to passive recipients. In lecture method a teacher gathers facts on a given topic and presents them wholesome to the students. Often the student's role is to memorise the facts. The method allows the teacher to cover several topics within a short duration. Hence emphasis is more on coverage of content and not so much on student participation which contravene life skills acquisition thus increasing the probability for conflict among students.

The students' mean score on use of lectures was high at 2.99; the LSE teachers' mean was 2.30 and the G & C teachers 2.18. The students' opinion on the use of lecture method was higher than that of the teachers. This casts doubt as to whether the teachers really used this method. UNESCO/UNICEF/WHO and the World Bank (2000), recommend that lecture method is only suitable for making students acquire accurate knowledge this makes it inapplicable for imbibing skills for conflict management.

Students confessed that when the lesson was relayed through lecture throughout, they were always left with issues that required clarification. This confession explains why areas related to relationships and sexuality remained weighty and with unanswered questions as reported by students during FGDs. Imparting of life skills requires that students be involved in the learning process hence use of the lecture method was inadequate as it merely provided knowledge not skill to the learners. Bishop (1995), argues for insightful learning over rote learning. He explains that relationships and principles are more important than mere facts and that applying what is learnt is more important than merely learning it. Since LSE is a skill-based health education subject, there is no better method of teaching it other than use of methods that involve students. If students should acquire skills for conflict management, then they ought to practise the skills and the attitudes and not to cram the knowledge.

7.4. Case Studies

About half the students, 208(54.3%) indicated that case studies were also used in the teaching of LSE. This method was unfamiliar to some of the students; they did not seem to understand what case studies were. KIE (2008) states that a case study in the context of a teaching method describes a problem, situation or character that presents a dilemma in which participants come up with options on how to resolve the conflict. Case studies aim at appealing to learner's emotions, this helps them to identify and internalise the concepts and issues raised in the case. It expects learners to apply the skills learned to solve similar problems. It helps learners to appreciate other people's challenges. Kirby et al, ((1994), states that to achieve specific behavioural outcomes, programmes aimed at developing young people's life skills should be taught in the context of a

particular topic. This emphasizes the uniqueness of some concepts in life skill that make the use of case studies essential in imparting skills.

The students' mean score on use of the case studies was 2.77, the LSE teachers 3.0 and the G & C teachers 3.0. While for the teachers this was a highly rated method out of the highest limit mean of 5, for the students this method was the second least used. An interview with a Muslim Imam revealed that case studies were commonly used during 'Madrassa' to imbibe life skills in the learners. The case studies dwelt mainly on lives of the 'Maswahaba', contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad who were believed to have seen Muhammad, believed in him and lived exemplary live. The teachings guided on matters of dressing, eating, use of language, relating with others, prayer, respect, good neighbourliness among other day to day activities. KIE (2008) explains that case studies can be developed by the teacher or selected from already developed ones such as characters in works of literature. In case studies students are presented with a dilemma in which they should participate in giving options for resolution. This implies that in the absence of teacher participation, the option of students using case studies becomes limited. In the Muslim 'Madrassa', the 'Ustadh' (teacher) takes the lead in giving the case studies and denoting the lessons and life skills. This is unlike the school set up where the absence of the teacher deprives the students the possibility of benefitting from case studies. Case studies can be best used in schools through the teaching of Literature which allows analysis of characters and events in their lives. The teachers of Literature need to ensure that they not only teach content but also impart life skills through their lessons.

7.5. Brainstorming

Brainstorming allows free expression of ideas among participants as new concepts are explored. Emphasis is laid on respecting views of all participants. Only 160(40.6%) of the students admitted that brainstorming was also one of the methods used in teaching LSE. Of the 234(59.4%) who denied its usage, 122 (31.8%) said it was never used while 106 (27.6) were not even sure of what it entailed. This implies that this was an unfamiliar method to most of the students. The students' mean score on use of brain storming was 2.47, the LSE teachers 2.95 and the G & C teachers 3.06. This was the least mean score in the rating of mean scores for methods by the students while it is the highest scoring method for the G & C teacher. Brainstorming allows learners to think with open minds, it encourages learners to develop a wider perspective while addressing issues, it enables them to involve in critical and creative thinking; these are some of the core topics in LSE. Brain storming is highly a teacher initiating method that requires probing from time to time so as to give direction to the discussion. The absence of teachers during LSE lessons gives reasons as to why this was a rarely used method. KIE (2008) explains that brainstorming allows free expression of ideas among participants on a given issue and all participants' contributions should be respected and accepted; guidance and counselling is one subject that greatly esteems other opinions. The G &C teachers popularly used brainstorming in advancing guidance and counselling matters.

7.6. Other Methods That Impart LSE

The five methods discussed above were the methods commonly used in teaching in schools. There are many other participatory methods that are deemed fit for imparting life skills. Tobler (1992), avers that participatory learning activities for students are the most effective methods for developing knowledge, attitudes and skills to help students make healthy choices. WHO (1999), consider methods such as debates, storytelling, role plays, songs and dances, miming, games, poetry and recitals as a means of inculcating life skills. The researcher therefore delved these other participatory methods meant for use in the teaching of LSE in order to evaluate the frequency with which the LSE teachers used them. Figure 7.3 below presents these results.

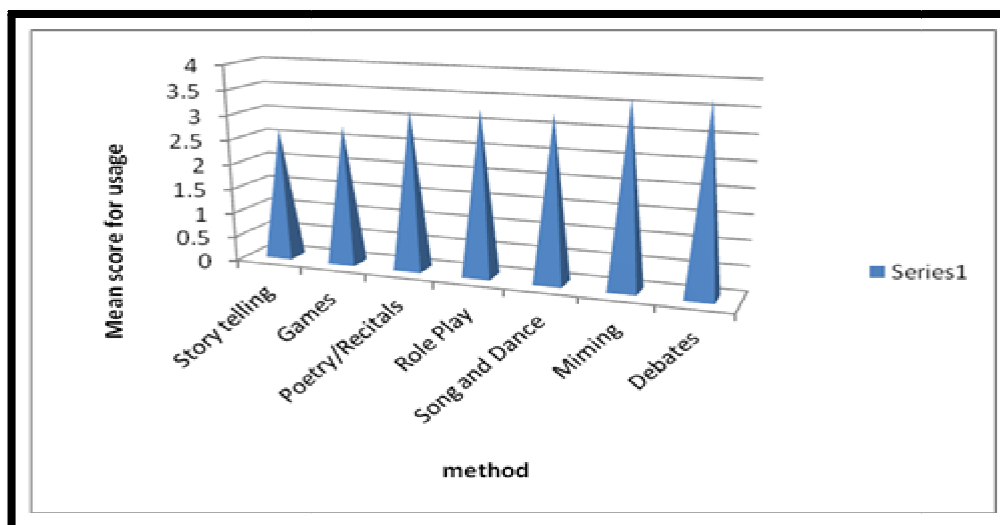


Figure 3: Mean Scores of Other Teaching Methods Used By LSE Teachers
Source: Researcher (2016)

The LSE teachers revealed that the method most commonly used in teaching LSE was debates which had a mean score of 3.70 out of the overall 5. Debates are discussions that involve two opposing parties with each group expressing opinions about a given topic, however the teacher should correct misconceptions and explain any views expressed in a debate (KIE2008). Debates are deemed suitable for both decision making topics and relationship-based topics. The students explained during the FGDs that debates were held on fortnight basis and they covered a wide range of topics.

Miming scored 3.65 as a method commonly used by the LSE teachers. Miming entails use of gestures, signs, facial expressions and physical movement without words. During the FGDs students expressed doubt as to whether miming was used. Many did not seem to understand the meaning of miming. Song and dance had a mean score of 3.40 while games had a mean score of 2.8. While games, song and dance create cheer, they also provide moral lessons. They promote positive social interaction. During FGDs students explained that song and dance were mainly used by teachers of Literature and Fasihi to teach oral Literature; through oral Literature they learnt moral lessons. They also explained that song and dance were also components of school drama festivities. This explanation of students shows that these methods in this case were not treated as avenues for teaching LSE per se and hence if any skills were imparted it was by coincidence rather than intentional. The students said that they held both intra-school and interschool games quite often. However, it did not occur to them that this was also an avenue for relaying life skills. One Muslim Imam explained that during "Madrassa" (Muslim Religious Classes), songs, called, "Kaswida" were popularly used to teach life skills. These songs carried moral lessons on life issues besides providing the Islam tenets that promoted harmonious living.

Role play had a mean score of 3.30. Role plays are short drama episodes in which a participant experiences how a person behaves and feels in a similar life situation. They are good for developing skills such as negotiation, assertiveness and self awareness. As students enact a particular concept, they exercise the attitudes expected of them in the particular role played. They therefore imbibe the character envisaged. The FGDs revealed that skits were mainly used during the Christian Religious Education lessons to teach values that exemplified Jesus' teachings on various themes such as prayer, good neighbourliness, discipleship and worship. The students explained that they enjoyed these skits and they enabled them to remember the teachings given. Students considered role play as avenues for fostering mastery of academic concepts rather than imparting life skills.

Recitals/poetry had a mean score of 3.20. Recitals are compositions that capture themes in a precise way. They communicate feelings, opinions, habits, and ideas. They appeal to people's emotions to enable them adopt or change behaviour. The FGDs revealed that recitals/poetry were also a reserve for language teachers while teaching Literature or while preparing learners for drama festivals. The students said they enjoyed these and could analyse the message of the poets and draw comparisons to their day to day living.

Story telling had a mean score of 2.65. Story telling involves telling narratives with a particular theme based on actual events. They involve giving an account of detailed information about a life situation in an interesting way while passing a moral lesson. Students explained during FGDs that story telling was more of an aspect of oral literature than a method for imparting life skills. One student remarked that:

- In both Oral Literature and Fasihi Simulizi we engage in storytelling, we sing songs and even recite poems; we also engage in analysis of these concepts by looking at the characters, themes and styles used by the authors. We do this in preparation for examinations, (views of a Form III student, Mumias Sub County, 2016)

The revelation by this student confirms the fact that these participatory methods are used in schools mainly for providing knowledge for passing exams and if ever they impart life skills, it is not by intention but by coincidence wherever it occurs because the learners' interpretation of these methods is in a different context all together. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), shows that people learn what to do and how to act by observing others and that positive behaviour is reinforced by positive actions while negative consequences are experienced directly by the learner. He emphasizes that retention of behaviour can be enhanced when people mentally rehearse or actually perform modelled behaviour patterns. This reality presented by Bandura is the ultimate achievement in LSE as imparted through participatory learning. The teachers' avoidance of participatory methods is thus a big impediment to life skill acquisition.

8. Findings on Forums for Teaching LSE

UNESCO (2000), explains that a narrow focus on skill-based health education is unlikely to sustain changed behaviour in the long term. It is advocated that more powerful sustained initiatives coordinated with policies, services, family and community partnerships be used. It is in this light that varied extra-curricular forums that can also impart life skills have to be identified. The researcher therefore sought for forums that are used to relay LSE in the schools from all the respondents so as to establish which forums effectively relayed LSE. Eleven key areas were highlighted as potential forums for relaying LSE. The results of the students' views are shown in the table below:

Forums that relay life skills effectively	Frequency & percentage	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Guidance & Counselling	F %	3 0.8	6 1.6	13 3.4	83 21.6	279 72.7	384 100.0
Peer Counselling	F %	12 3.1	30 7.8	28 7.3	109 28.4	205 53.4	384 100.0
Invited guest speakers	F %	10 2.6	26 6.8	23 6.0	143 37.2	182 47.4	384 100.0
C.U./YCS	F %	17 4.4	23 6.0	35 9.1	143 37.2	166 43.2	383 100.0
House/class meetings	F %	22 5.7	40 10.4	30 7.8	154 40.1	138 35.9	384 100.0
Open forums	F %	20 5.2	42 10.9	58 15.1	131 34.1	133 34.6	384 100.0
Class lessons	F %	24 6.3	56 14.6	29 7.6	141 36.7	134 34.9	384 100.0
Straight Talk Club	F %	19 4.9	66 17.2	55 14.3	105 27.3	139 36.2	384 100.0
Assembly talks	F %	28 7.3	50 13.0	38 9.9	156 40.6	112 29.2	384 100.0
Pastoral care	F %	21 5.5	49 12.8	87 22.7	128 33.3	99 25.8	384 100.0
Notice boards/ Posters	F %	30 7.8	78 20.3	47 12.2	140 36.5	89 23.2	384 100.0

Table 3: Views on Forums That Relay LSE

Source: Researcher (2016)

The students expressed their belief in the ability of all the areas listed to relay LSE since the area with least percentage in agreement, namely, pastoral care had 227(59.1%) respondents. Pastoral care is an example of a community service that can be rendered by even the youth. O'Donnell et al (1998) states that curriculum combined with youth community service has the potential to reduce risky behaviours such as fighting, early engagement in sex and substance use much more effectively than a curriculum alone. This view shows that even the least rated forum has great potential for imparting life skills among students. It is the participation in the community service that inculcates the skill.

Majority 362(94.4%) of the student respondents listed guidance and counselling as the best forum that relayed LSE most effectively. Guest speakers who were also invited through to provide guidance and counselling came in second position with 325(84.6%) of the student respondents rating them as effective in relaying LSE. Peer counselling, which is also a facet of G & C was in third position in its effectiveness with a rating of 314(81.8%) respondents. C.U./YCS another arm of G & C was viewed by 309(80.4%) respondents as an effective medium for relaying LSE. House/class meetings which are also G & C forums were seen as effective for relaying LSE by 292(76.0%) students. Kenya Education School Support Program Report (Republic of Kenya, 2005), explains that there are many family problems that pose great challenges in the growth of the child in Kenya and this calls for coordinated and informed counselling interventions that will provide life skills to these young people. This report gives emphasis to G & C in schools; hence this forum ought to be given eminence by all teachers the administrators included.

Class lessons were rated highly by 275(71.6%) students, open forums had 264(69.7%) students, assembly talks had 268(69.8%) and straight talk club had 244 (63.5%) students, while notice boards had 229 (59.7%) students. These latter forums are also viewed as avenues for G & C even though they may not necessarily be planned by the teacher in charge of guidance programmes.

Implementation of G & C in schools came as a ministerial policy in the education sector so as to deal with the myriad problems and conflicts that had increased in educational institutions. As already observed in literature review, the decision to make LSE a classroom lesson also came by ministerial policy as UNESCO (2000) proposes for life skill initiatives. It is therefore necessary that these policies be taken seriously by the teachers who are meant to implement them.

The researcher chose to compare the rating of the students for forums that effectively relay LSE with the views of other respondents. The mean scores for the various forums were calculated for every category of respondents on a scale of 1-5. The chart found in Figure 3 below displays this comparison between the views of the students and those of the administrator, LSE and the G & C teachers:

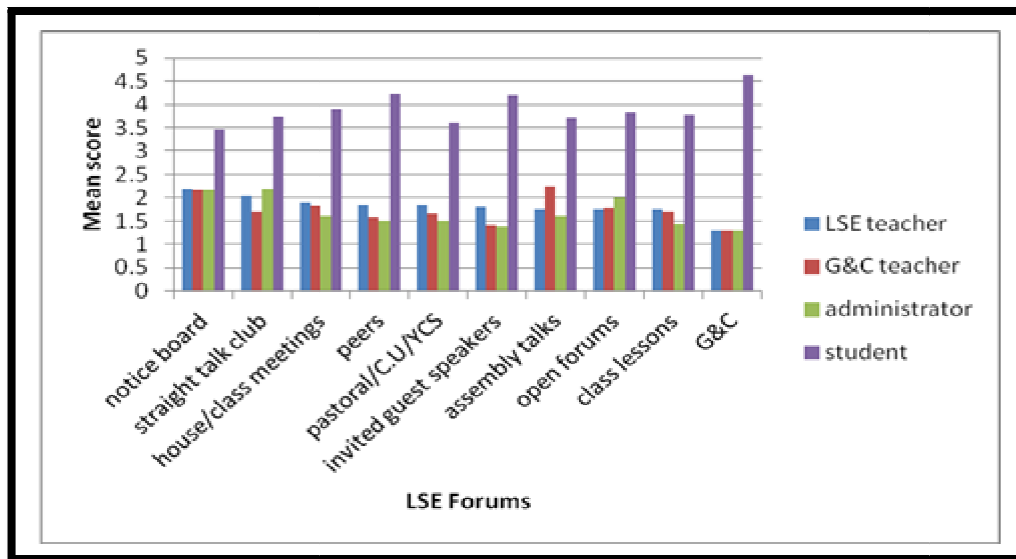


Figure 4: Forums for Relaying LSE
Source: Researcher (2016)

Figure 8.1 above present's total divergence between the views of the students and those of the other respondents. While the student's ratings for all forums is above average, all the other respondents' who are entrusted with ensuring that life skills are imparted have all scores below average. What the students consider to be the best forum for relaying life skills (guidance and counselling) is rated as the least possible forum by all other respondents.

The students' results show that the best three forums for relaying LSE are, guidance and counselling, invitation of guest speakers and peer counsellors; for the administrators the best forums are straight talk, notice boards and open forums; for the LSE teacher the best are notice boards, straight talk club and house/class meetings while for the G & C teacher it is assembly talks, notice boards and house/class meetings. It is obvious that much as the LSE teachers are trusted with the task of relaying life skills through the classroom lessons, most of these teachers do not think that this is the best forum for relaying life skills, that is why they prefer that life skills be rather relayed through notice boards, straight talk clubs and house or class meetings; they prefer to distance themselves from their responsibility. During interviews, the school administrators had revealed that most schools experienced high teacher shortages, this was a causative factor for teachers' preference for methods of imparting life skills that did not require their undivided attention and hence the preference for use of notice boards, assembly talks, house and class meetings and straight clubs; these are forums that can even be run by students. It is for this same reason that the administrators who are in charge of curriculum implementation did not regard classroom lessons highly as forums for relaying life skills.

It is also clear that the G & C teachers who draw G & C programmes, lack confidence in the capability of their forums to relay LSE in as much as the students who are their recipients have full confidence in the G & C programmes as avenues for relaying life skills.

The above scenario gives a picture of school set ups that are not ready to implement LSE; the teachers did not seem to understand what LSE is; students appeared to have a picture of avenues for LSE. This incongruence makes the implementation of LSE to become a difficult task. KIE (2008), states that other media for teaching LSE includes: classroom lessons, G & C sessions, pastoral care, C.U/YCS, notice boards, suggestion boxes, straight talk clubs, journalism club reports, invited guest speakers, open forums, peer educators, assembly talks, class and house meetings: teachers seem to be oblivion of this reality. When consulted regarding forums that relay LSE to learners in secondary schools, one sponsor who is a Sub County Director of Education said that:

- LSE is relayed through peer education clubs, guidance and counselling programs and the use of resource persons who give talks to learners (Interview views; Butere Sub County Director of Education, 2016).

The views of this educator agree with the views of the students and the expectation of the curriculum developers (KIE, 2008). Interviews with the faith-based sponsors revealed divergent views; during the interview with some of the sponsors it was noted that the faith-based sponsors seemed to devote their sessions with students to mainly teaching religious tenets and where life skills were taught it was in relation to the life style expected by the founders of the religion. One Imam said that:

Students are mainly taught the Islamic system of belief in 'Madrassa', which covers character and religious custom, (Interview views of an Imam, Macho Masjid Lugari, 2016). A Roman Catholic priest added that they were taught discipleship, Christian tradition and sermons (Lugari, 2016).

Two protestant priests explained that students in sponsored schools were given chaplaincy services which included, preaching, teaching the Gospel, conducting Bible study and to some extent offering guiding and counselling services. One of the two clarified that:

We organise mentorship programmes for students focussing mainly on topics that help them make right choices in life. We train them on moral values, building self esteem as we also preach to them (Interview with an ACK Priest, Mumias Sub County, 2016).

These views show that though the religious faiths also made attempts at imbining life skills, not all of them undertake it as their duty and for the few who do, it is not their main focus. It comes as a by the way as they carry out evangelization. Hence the religious leaders have not in entirety taken up their role of mentorship that Kohlberg's theory (1981), envisages for institutions. Kohlberg views the family, schools and religious institutions as capable of successfully inculcating life skills in individuals. This failure is what has contributed to heightened conflicts among students in secondary schools.

9. Summary of the study

This study evaluated strategies used in teaching LSE for conflict management. It discussed various methods used in teaching LSE. While proponents of LSE prefer participatory methods of teaching LSE, a sharp discrepancy was noted between the views of the students and those of the teachers. Teachers preferred teacher-centred techniques rather than these participatory approaches that the curriculum developers propose for use. Learners on the other hand appreciated learner-centred techniques in spite of the fact that the unavailability of the teachers deprived them of the much-needed clarification of concepts, opinions and attitudes. This situation opened room to misdirection and hence increasing the prevalence of conflict. Most LSE sessions were peer-led, even though the results on sources of LSE had shown that students had low confidence in the ability of peers to impart life skills as contrasted with belief in their parents, the church and the school. This implies that there was a high likelihood that reliance on peers as an entity could lead to imbining wrong opinions and hence wrong knowledge, wrong attitudes and thereby wrong skills; this in itself served to fuel conflicts among students.

The study also discussed the forums that are used to impart life skills in secondary schools to enable students manage conflicts among themselves. Various forums such as G & C, peer counselling, guest speakers, C.U/YCS, house/class meetings, open forums, classroom lessons, straight talk club, assembly talks, pastoral care and notice boards were rated more highly by students as forums that relay LSE as contrasted with the ratings of the teacher. The outlook given to LSE by the various stakeholders was divergent.

9.1. Conclusion of the Study

The study evaluated strategies used in teaching LSE for conflict management. It emerged that students showed preference for heuristic methods such as discussions, question and answer, debates, while the teachers preferred expository approaches like case studies, brainstorming and lecture method. Many other participatory methods which are recommended for use such as miming, song and dance, role play, poetry/recitals, games and storytelling were associated more with other subjects like oral literature, Fasihi, and drama festivals than with acquisition of life skills. In most schools the teachers lacked interest in participating with the students in LSE so as to help students acquire the life skills. There was incongruence among stakeholders; the administrators, the LSE and G & C teachers who ought to implement LSE did not rate Guidance and counselling forums and class lessons as best forums for relaying LSE as believed by the Sub County Director. The interview with religious leaders revealed that religious institutions concentrated mainly on teaching their religious tenets and life skills came in often by coincidence.

9.2. Recommendations of the Study

The study recommends that: the LSE teachers, who are at the core of teaching LSE, should be trained so that they are equipped with adequate skills in lesson presentation and evaluation. They should be conversant with emerging issues so that they can ably prepare the students to apply the varied life skills appropriately. They should maximize student involvement and participation in LSE through use of the diverse teaching methodology so that the students internalize the skill rather than merely retaining the knowledge on LSE. The G & C teachers should choreograph programs in the school that will ensure that LSE is imbibed in learners. They should spearhead peer activities in the school while ensuring that the information the peers have is accurate, clear and free of misconceptions that may derail fellow students.

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