

Students' Health Matters and the Implementation of Strategic Health Plan in Public Secondary Schools in Machakos County, Kenya

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Abstract

Aware of the right to good health as being established as fundamental right, it is disturbing to realise that, the effectiveness of implementing students' health in line with national strategic plan in public secondary schools remains largely unclear and speculative. Subsequently, this study aimed at determining the influence of the teachers' skills on the execution of national strategic plan in public schools within Machakos County. Descriptive survey design was employed for the study. Heads of secondary schools and teachers were the target population. By stratifying schools into mixed, day schools and single gender, each strata produces 15% of respondents to the sample. As such, 633 tutors and forty seven heads of secondary schools were included in the study. Then teachers were sampled using simple random method particularly from all the three strata. Then simple random sampling was used to select teachers from each sampled strata. Purposive sampling was also used to select principals in the study. Principals from the sampled schools were sampled purposively. Questionnaires and interview guides were used in the data collection procedure where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. Expert advice and judgement was used to establish content validity, while split half method was used to establish reliability of quantitative data. Presentation of data was done by use of tables. Descriptive statistics (mode, mean and standard deviation) was used for analysis of data. Inferential statistics (regression analysis) was also used and inferential statistics (regression analysis) was used in data analysis. Qualitative data was analysed thematically. It emerged that there was limited competencies of teachers on how to attend to students' health matters. Indeed, it also became clear that, teachers skills on students' health affect the implementation of national health strategic plan in Machakos county. The government is therefore recommended to provide in servicing of teachers on ways of handling students' health affairs in Machakos County.

Key words: Teachers' training level, students' health matters, implementation of national health strategic plan (NHSP).

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I. Introduction

Access to quality health care is not only a basic right, but also a critical component for both economic development and social (World Bank, 2018 UNESCO, 2015), as such, learning institutions have been accelerating efforts to ensure health standards are met adequately for all learners. It is not surprising that, many learning organizations at global spend enormous budgetary allocations to actualise access of health matters in schools (Jonathan, 2014 and Geregei, 2017). Considering that, Jonathan (2014) asserts that, for an organization to be proactive in its activities, strategic plan is unavoidable, then schools have to inevitably enhance effective strategic planning if they are to realise efficiency in health goals. As an effect, the republic of Kenya remains at the fore front in its efforts to ensure students in secondary schools enjoy such a right (Republic of Kenya, the national strategic national health, 2018).

Interestingly, what is then health? Fusch (2015) perceives health as a situation where a person has good health in terms of physical wellbeing. It's noteworthy to indicate that, the aforementioned definition narrows only to the wellbeing of the body, ignoring social aspect. Nonetheless, Jonathan (2014) observes that health as a situation of not having a disease. Agreeably, both definitions have value, the definition by Fusch (2015) was mostly appropriate for its definition owing to its holistic view of health as completeness of social and physical state of a person.

Despite a significant positive correlation between learners' health and academic performance (Kahiga, 2018), it's troubling to indicate that, the extent of teachers' skills and competencies on students' health matters

remains largely unclear and speculative. Interestingly, the sustainable development goals on access to quality health care can only be actualised if health strategic policies in schools are given their due recognition.

The assertion by Kahiga (2018) that, in Machakos county, public primary schools lack professional resources persons like nurses to address their health concerns raises the question as to whether the government has been getting right information on the implementation of Students affairs. In view of the republic of Kenya being in the fore front, accelerating economic development, which is closely affected by health nation (Jonathan, 2014), inevitably, there could only be one way of ascertaining efficacy of expertise among teachers, in order to promote students' health in schools. Such findings may therefore present the ministry of education with requisite knowledge on the provision of in servicing programmes to teachers on students' health issues.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Fundamentally, health has been regarded as primary right to all people globally (UNESCO, 2018). As such, a healthy learner is two to three times likely to perform better academically, than their counterparts, who are unhealthy. Additionally, a healthy students community and in extension the ensure citizenry, boosts economic development, not only at regional, continental, but also at global level. Nonetheless, in Machakos county, the level of teachers' skills regarding students' health matters reduced from 67% to 58% from 2018 to 2021 (County education office report, 2022). Ignoring the competencies of teachers' on students' health risks the said county from attaining access to quality education and improved economic status.

Evidently, the effect of teacher competency on students' health matters has been addressed at both primary and tertiary levels of education (Ayier, 2016; Jonathan, 2014 and Geregei, 2017). However, the said study at secondary school level remains scarce, particularly in Machakos County. Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive study was to establish the efficacy of teacher's knowledge level regarding learners, health matters on the implementation of national strategic plan, in Public secondary schools in Kenya.

At a world level, numerous students are currently enrolled for learning purposes. If Michelle (2019) assertion that there were 602 million students by 2020 is something to go by, and such a number ought to be guaranteed basic right to quality health care (UNESCO, 2018), then requisite measures on execution of healthy related policies need to be reconsidered. Further, the significant limitation of competencies on healthy affair among nurses in secondary schools in USA begs the question as to whether learners were getting quality health care or not? Considering studies addressing this topic were largely limited in Kenya and in particular in Machakos County, this study was deemed appropriate.

II. Theoretical Framework

There are various theories which explain the manner in which strategic policies are executed in schools. This study adopted first and second generation theories. Just like Orodho et al., (2016), reveals, the use of two theories boosts the robustness of the theories and understanding. Affirming, the said theory was deemed appropriate for the study because it was largely validated in Europe by Jonathan (2014), and therefore, it would be more illustrative if the first and second generation theory could be tested in an African context study and reveal the suitability of this theory in this vital study.

This theory states that, any effective output can only be actualised when there is trained and competent work force. As such, this scientific inquiry established the level of awareness of teachers on students' health matters and whether such awareness influenced the implementation of national health strategic plan (Dunn, 2015). Consequently, in light of this theory, insufficient knowledge among teachers regarding students' health affairs was taken to signal low implementation of national health strategic plan.

III. Methodology and research design

Research Design

In order to accurately describe the state at which, the execution of national strategic plan is being implemented descriptive survey design was utilised. Interestingly, Kothari (2004) favours descriptive design by revealing that, besides explaining the phenomena under study, it also helps in the generation of robust theories relating to the constructs being studied. The scientific inquiry will in particular describe explicitly the level of knowledge teachers have towards learners' health competencies, and determine as to whether it influences the execution of the said strategic plan.

Response Rate

As a matter of course, 748 informants were targeted for the study as the sample size. The said sample consisted of 48 heads of secondary schools, and 633 teachers. Owing to schools responsibilities outside the school as an institution, 47 head of secondary schools and 511 tutors responded to the questionnaire. Subsequently, the response rate emerged to be 83.89%. Considering that Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) guides 75% of response rate to a very good threshold for any study. As such, 84% was considered appropriate and adequate for the study.

4.2.2 Demographic Information of respondents

In view of the fact, educational qualification of the respondents can be seen in terms of the skills and competencies, this study investigated educational qualifications and their gender.

4.2.3 Gender of respondents

Table 4.1: Gender of respondents

| Gender | Principals | % | Teachers | % |
|--------|------------|-----|----------|-----|
| Male | 26 | 55 | 286 | 55 |
| Female | 21 | 45 | 225 | 45 |
| Total | 47 | 100 | 511 | 100 |

Importantly, UNESCO (2018) reiterates the need for at least, a third of any gender to be in the leadership position, As a consequence, this study determined the gender of the principals in public secondary schools in then locale. It emerged 26 (55%) of the principals were males, compared to their counterparts who were 21 (45%). The aforementioned findings revealed that, although males dominated the principal position, the two third gender rule had been complied with. Similar pattern of results were attained by Jonathan (2014). On the side of teachers, (286, 55%) were males, compared to their counterparts who were (225, 45%) females. Such findings seemed to reveal that, majority of teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos county were males. Interestingly, similar findings were also arrived at by Kahiga (2018).

4.3 Teachers' skills on students' health matters and implementation of national strategic plan

The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreeing as to extent with which teachers had attained competencies related to students' health. 1 represented strongly disagreeing (SD) while 5 represented strongly agreeing (SA).

Table 4.4: Responses relating to the extent of teachers' skills on students' health matters and its effect on implementation of National health strategic plan.

| I obtain training as a tutor on: | N | Mean rating | Standard Deviation |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-------------|--------------------|
| Security matters for learners | 511 | 2.2 | 0.45 |
| Life skills for learners | 511 | 1.7 | 0.23 |
| How to relate well with community | 511 | 1.4 | 1.22 |
| First aid for students | 511 | 1.5 | 0.52 |

Firstly, informants were to respond as to whether they constantly received training on security matters for the learners. Interestingly, the study suggested that, teachers strongly disagreed to that fact with a mean of 2.2 and a standard deviation of 0.45. The aforementioned finding may be interpreted that, in servicing of teachers on students' security matters was extremely minimal. One of the principals in Mavoko Sub County indicated that: *In servicing of teachers on general students' security affairs has never been given proper Consideration. Interestingly, academic matters for learners seems to be prioritized than any other affair.*

It emerges to be clear that, teachers are not capacity build regarding learner's security issues, an issue which is largely ignored. The inquiry by Dangara (2016) obtained the same pattern of results. Further, the study determined any possibility of existence of influence of training teachers on students' health matters on implementation of national health strategic plan (NHSP). Regression analysis as indicated on table 4.5 revealed that, 19.7% of the implementation of NHSP was significantly determined by training teachers on security matters of students. Similar pattern of result were obtained by Kahiga (2019).

Table 4.5: Values of Regression analysis of teachers' training regarding students' health on the implementation level of NHSP.

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | -.258 | .645 | | -.298 | .007 |
| security | .197 | .254 | .087 | -.311 | .002 |
| Life skills | .214 | .182 | .262 | 1.445 | .003 |
| community | .147 | .122 | .218 | -.658 | .004 |
| First aid | .254 | .311 | .478 | 1.47 | .007 |

Further, training of teachers on how to enhance life skills was sought for the study. Additionally, teachers were also requested to indicate whether they were trained on how to enhance students' life skills lessons. It therefore emerged that, respondents who were teachers disagreed with such an assertion. Surprisingly, with a

mean of 1.7 and a standard deviation of 0.23 as revealed by table 4.4. The aforementioned finding may be taken to mean that, life skills among the teachers is not well grounded and teachers may be having limited skills to address it. Sadly, one of the principals in Masinga Sub County indicated that:

The inability of teachers to teach life skills is evidenced by the limited text books in their schools. In fact the syllabus remains largely unclear for all practicing teachers.

Furthermore, it became clear that, 21.4% of the implementation of NHSP was influenced by teachers being trained on students life skills, $F(5, 506) = 0.27, P < 0.001$. The same findings were arrived by Dangara (2016).

Additionally, the training of teachers with regard to relating with community members was sought. Interestingly, it also emerged out that, teacher were not trained on the said matter. Indeed, the respondents strongly disagreed to this assertion, with a mean rating of 1.1 and a standard deviation of 1.44. Sadly, it even became clear that, most of the teachers did not know some of the community members particularly to address health issues for the learners together. Such limitations as explained by one of the principals in Mwala Sub County indicated busy school calendar to have contributed to such. Moses (2017) obtained similar results in his earlier study. Several studies have obtained similar results earlier (Moses, 2017 and Jonatan, 2014). In an attempt to determine whether training of teachers on healthy collaboration affected implementation of NHSP, it became clear that, 21. % of the execution of NHSP was influenced by training of teachers on collaboration with community members with $F(5, 506) = 0.18, P < 0.001$.

The findings by Kahiga (2019) revealed conflicting findings of training of teachers on collaborating with community members. The differences in those study findings may be explained by the fact that, Kahiga (2019) used relatively a smaller sample size of 425 compared to this current study, which adopted 511 informants. Kombo and Tromp (2006) cautions that, relatively a large sample size may present generalizable study findings.

Lastly, the revelation as to whether respondents trained on first aid was established. Again, teachers disagreed that they got training on the mentioned first aid skills. A mean of 1.5 and a standard deviation of 0.78 suggested that, this particular skill was never regarded in the students' health programmes. A teacher from Kathiani Sub County stated that, even attending a student who had fainted was hard for her, since her skills were extremely limited on that regard. In an attempt to determine any existence of influence of teacher training on first aid skill and implementation of NHSP indicated that 25.4% of the implementation of NHSP was influenced by training of teachers on life skills with, $F(5, 506) = 0.457, P < 0.001$. Same results were obtained by Aveyard (2014).

V. Conclusion

From the study findings, it became clear that, training of teachers on community collaboration, students' security matters and execution of first aid affairs influenced the implementation of NHSP.

Nonetheless, these findings should also be interpreted in the light of the fact that, the generalizability can only be within Machakos county and not any other county within Kenya. The article recommends government and the Teachers service commission in Kenya, to engage teachers with constant trainings, on how to attend students first aid and also collaborating with community members with respect to health related matters.

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