

Parental engagement in development of values in pupils through grade four social studies curriculum in Vihiga County, Kenya

Abstract

Parental engagement in learner's learning process is credited with benefits of improving children behaviour and development of moral values. This study explored parental engagement in the development of values in pupils through grade four social studies curriculum. Through the application of grounded theory research design, 25 parents were interviewed for this study. Data analysis was done inductively using grounded theory techniques through the constant comparative technique. The study revealed that parents engaged in a wide range of activities while developing children's values through grade four social studies curriculum. These activities included: Assigning duties to their children; Setting moral standards; Role modelling; conducting moral conversations; Provision of basic needs to deter social crimes; Correcting bad behaviour through punishment; and Offering praises for good behaviour. Further, parents utilised the institutions of: family, peer group, religious organisations and media in the development of children values. The study recommends for parental sensitization programs on their roles in the development of their children values. It also recommends for closer collaboration between parents and the institutions of: family, peer group, religious organisations and media in the development of children's values.

Keywords: parental engagement, competency based curriculum, social studies curriculum, values development, citizenship education

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Introduction

Social studies has been adopted in many countries around the world as a curriculum vehicle for the instruction of values.¹ For instance, the subject is part of education curriculum in; USA, Ghana, Nigeria, Botswana, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Namibia, South Africa, and Malawi.² To Dwamena-Boateng³ the subject stands out as the best medium for instruction of values as it provides a multidisciplinary subject matter in its study. In particular, the subject has the ability to have a coordinated and systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, economics, geography, history, law philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content for the humanities, mathematics, and the natural sciences.

Further review of social studies syllabi from countries such as; Botswana, Ghana, and Nigeria reveal the mainstreaming of values such as; cooperation, loyalty, peace, equity, justice, good governance, patriotism, moral and spiritual values, honesty, compassion, open-mindedness, integrity, diligence, trustworthiness, obedience, commitment, tolerance, responsibility, democracy, sustainable management of the environment, human rights, and gender equality.⁴⁻⁶ In the same vein, Kenya's social studies syllabus⁷ aims at instilling learners with the eight core values. The values include; love, responsibility, respect, unity, peace, patriotism, social justice and integrity.

The developing of learners values is not a new phenomenon in the education system. For instance, review of literature on the education system in Kenya during pre-colonial period reveals emphasis on impacting children with values relating to; co-operation, dedication to duty, obedience, compassion, kindness, justice and fair play, decency and morality, patience and endurance, honesty and transparency, benevolence, courtesy, generosity, respect for elders, and hard-work or diligence.^{8,9}

According to Ngozwana,¹⁰ learning in pre-colonial period was both formal and informal. He expounds that learning was formal for it was offered through initiation schools and informal as it was offered through peer-to-peer transmission, parental education and incidental education through ceremony and festivity attendance. Ubong and Ukpong⁹ further observed that the main transmitters (instructors) of Citizenship Education were mainly parents (family) and elders of the community. A child belonged to the community and any parent could discipline a child if they saw him/her doing anything perceived to be against the societal norms.¹¹

Similarly, the new curriculum emphasizes parental engagement in learners' education. According to the guidelines on parental empowerment and engagement⁷ parental engagement is the active participation of parents in their children's learning and holistic development in collaboration with teachers and other stakeholders. According to KICD¹² parents get engaged in their children's learning even before they start school. This is because they are children's first and most important educator.

Parental engagement in learner's learning process is credited with benefits of enhancing the child's; academic performance, adherence to school discipline procedures, regular school attendance, self-esteem, improved behaviour and moral values development, better communication skills and increased interest in education.¹³⁻¹⁵

In Kenya, review of literature by; Chemagosi,¹⁶ Kibaara and Ndirangu,¹⁷ Koskei¹⁸ and Njeru¹⁹ report of the crucial role of parental engagement in the learner's educational outcomes. Mwarari, Githui and Mwenje²⁰ further note that some of the demands of the new curriculum (Competency Based Curriculum) transcend boundaries of school and thus require collaboration of teachers and parents for successful implementation. KICD⁷ thus recommends parental engagement in children's formal schooling process with the learning experiences at home reinforcing what is learnt in school.

According to Mwarari et al.,²⁰ parents are expected to play a very vital role in the success of their children's education. For instance, they are required to: create an environment that is conducive for learning, motivate learners to fulfil their potential through completion of assigned tasks; recognize and encourage special talents; discuss the value of good education and possible career options; monitor and guide children in doing their homework; participate in the collection and sending of evidence of children completing tasks assigned by teachers; provide required aids and materials for practical activities; model the value of learning, self-discipline and hard work; and attend school meetings when called upon;^{14, 21-23}

Epstein cited in Mwarari et al.,²⁰ summarizes parental engagements as: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. To KICD⁷ parental engagement under CBC is categorized into the following dimensions: Participatory decision making; Communication and collaboration; Learning and development process and; Resourcing, volunteering and linkages.

Closely linked to parental engagement and related to the development of children's values is the dimension of Learning and development process. Through this dimension KICD⁷ argues that quality learning should facilitate holistic growth and development. To achieve this, parents are called upon to actively get involved in monitoring and providing support to their children as they negotiate the developmental milestones of; physical, social, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual growth. For KICD⁷ this can be done through introduction and developing of values in the child to facilitate moral and social development. Parents are further required to model values and character they desire in their children since values are caught rather than taught. In addition, they are expected to take their children to places of worship and encourage them to share their experiences with their teachers.⁷

Parents can participate in the developing of their children's values by engaging in activities which include; conducting moral conversations with their children in which they deliver moral messages to their children, explaining effects of their children's actions on others, expressing their disappointment towards their children's behaviours and motivate good behaviours.²⁴ They are also required to spend more time to bond with their children in order to ensure good moral development. This can further be enhanced by making time to visit grandparents who may utilize their vast experience in instilling moral values.²⁵ To Jessie and Singarakottai²⁶ parents can further engage in their children's moral development by; setting strong moral ground rules and expectations for their children, appreciating children's achievement and rewarding them, and managing their children's pocket money. Parents should also learn to be firm in decision making (saying Yes and No at the correct time), and engage their children in activities that instil values like getting them pets to nurture the sense of responsibility.

The afore-reviewed literature emphasizes parental role in the introduction and developing children's values. However, limited empirical research exist on how these parents are involved in these duties. This study therefore, addresses the question: 'What is the parental engagement in the development of values in pupils through grade four social studies curriculum?'

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore parental engagement in the development of values in pupils through grade four social studies curriculum.

Objectives of the study

This study sought to: Establish activities parents engage their children in, while developing values in them using the grade four social studies curriculum.

Research question

This study aims at answering the following research question: What activities do parents engage their children in, in developing values in them using grade four social studies curriculum?

Research methodology

The study adopted the qualitative research approach, and a grounded theory research design. It focused on grade four social studies learners' parents. It employed the maximum variation strategy²⁷ with parents from both; rural and urban, schooled and unschooled included. The number of participants in the study was limited to 25 parents. This was in line with the recommendation of Creswell and Poth²⁸ that the inclusion of between 20 and 30 participants in a grounded theory study results in the development of a well saturated theory. Purposive sampling and snowballing techniques were used to select the participants for this study. The participants' real names were not used for this study, instead, pseudonyms (P1; P2; P3) were used to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents.

In this study, data collection and analysis was developed together in an iterative process so as to allow for research findings that were more grounded on empirical evidence.²⁹ The main instrument of data collection was interview schedule. Data collected was first transcribed, coded and categorized before further data collection was undertaken. Data analysis was done inductively using grounded theory techniques through the constant comparative technique.³⁰

Finally, the quality assurance of the study was established through: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.³¹ Specifically, techniques such as; member checking, triangulation and peer debriefing were used to establish credibility while transferability was attained through thick description of the phenomenon. An audit trail was kept in order to guarantee dependability as the research journal ensured conformability.

Results and discussion

Activities parents engage their children in while developing children's values through grade four social studies curriculum.

This study established that parents engaged in a wide range of activities while developing children's values through grade four social studies curriculum. These activities included: Assigning duties to their children; Setting moral standards; Role modelling; Conducting moral conversations; Provision of basic needs to deter social crimes; Correcting bad behaviour through punishment; and Offering praises for good behaviour. Moreover, the parents controlled their children's exposure to various media platforms and their social interactions with peers. They also involved religious organisations and extended family members like grandparents in reinforcing good values in their children. These findings are in line with the recommendations of KICD⁷ on the parental engagement in their children's development of values. Specifically, parents are required to model values and the character they desire in their children since values are caught rather than taught. In addition, they are expected to take their children to places of worship and encourage them to share their experiences with their teachers.⁷

Further analysis of the findings revealed that parents utilised four main institutions in the development of children values. These institutions were; family, peer group, religious organisations and media. In agreement with these findings, Gozum and Sarmiento cite school, media, government, religion, friends, and family as key social institutions that integrate values and beliefs in an individual.

Among the mentioned institutions, family emerged as the major institution used by parents in the development of children's values. Similarly, Medina emphasizes this idea by asserting that, "Through its socialization function, the family plays an important role in the transmission of cultural values, beliefs, and customs; in the molding of the personality and character of its members; and in ensuring conformity to norms." Additionally, Tagle states, "It is within the family that personality, character, emotions, sexuality, attitudes, values and opinions are formed."

Further analysis of data revealed that it is at the family level where moral standards and expectations were set, parents conducted moral conversations with their children about what they were expected to do and what not to do; role modelling; and basic needs were also provided. The foregoing discussion is best captured in the following excerpt.

P2: As a parent I take nurturing of values in these kids very seriously. And unlike other parents who wait for adolescence stage so as to shape behaviour, I start early.

Researcher: And how do you do that?

P2: To start with, in my house there is set moral standards which is to be adhered to by all family members.

Researcher: How do you ensure that the set moral standards are followed?

P2: I always involve each member when coming up with these rules. For instance, if it is a value like love or lets say honesty. We often have times when we sit together as a family and I talk and explain to them why it is important to always tell the truth. I also make sure as the father of the house I lead by example. I am usually honest with them (children) on what I can afford to buy them. Therefore, what is out my reach they have to go without. But I also always ensure that I provide the basics so that no one has an excuse of stealing.

Comparably, another parent while sharing on the same made the following comment:

P23: In my house I have a very strict moral code which is supposed to be followed by my children. For instance, I cannot allow my kids to have some funny behaviours. They already know they have to show respect to the elderly and greet them.

Researcher: And what if they do not behave the way you would like?

P23: Of course they will be punished.

Researcher: How do you administer this punishment?

P23: The most common punishment is several strokes of the cane. But at times I vary. I may decide to deny them a certain privilege such as; watching cartoon, visiting friends or if she has refused to do the work I assigned her then she won't eat that day.

Researcher: Hey, what do you mean!

P23: Yes, it is even written in the bible, "those who do not work should not eat." But that only occurs under extreme cases... there

are also instances where if she does something good I do praise her, buy her gifts, take her out to visit nice places among other things.

In the same vein, Wainryb and Recchia²⁴ opined that parents should participate in the developing of their children's values by engaging in activities which include; conducting moral conversation with their children in which they deliver moral messages to their children, explain effects of child's action on others, express their disappointment towards the child's behaviours and motivate reparative behaviours. Tan and Yasin²⁵ further expounded that parents are required to spend more time bonding with their children in order to ensure their moral development. According to Jessy and Singarakottai²⁶ parents can further engage in their children's moral development by setting strong moral ground rules and expectations for their children and appreciating children's achievement by rewarding them. Parents should also learn to be firm in decision making (saying Yes and No at the correct time).

Assignment of duties also emerged as an important activity through which parents nurture and develop children values. Examples of duties that parents reported to have assigned to their children included; looking after pets, drawing water from the river, looking after livestock; ensuring cleanliness of the house and taking good care of younger siblings. According to a majority of parents interviewed, such activities were suitable in developing the value of responsibility as the child was given an opportunity to role play adult duties. Similarly, Mbwake⁸ (observes that values such as; responsibility, unity, hard work, dedication to duty, patience and endurance were instilled in children during the pre-colonial period through assignment of duties. Examples of such duties included; fetching firewood and water, cleaning the compound and herding cattle for boys and cooking for girls.¹⁰

In Addition, other members of the extended family such as aunts, uncles and grand-parents were also involved in the development of children values. This was done through visitations to these relatives who were mainly based in rural areas. According to majority of parents interviewed, such activities offered the child a platform to learn about his or her culture hence enhancing self-awareness and patriotism. Also, children interactions with the elderly led to the acquisition of values such as respect and peace. Comparably, Ubong and Ukpong⁹ observe cooperation of parents and community in instilling of values in young ones in the society during the precolonial period. Also Mhlauli¹¹ notes that in the precolonial period, a child belonged to the community and any parent could discipline a child if they saw him/her doing anything perceived to be against the societal norms.

The second institution used by parents to nurture and develop children's values was religious organisations. According to a majority of parents interviewed, religious bodies offered a suitable avenue for instilling values such as; love, honesty, peace and respect. This was through various religious teachings and stories. In the same vein, a study by Mulwa established that religious institutions played a major role in the inculcation of values. For instance, the pastoral programmes positively created a good environment for acquisition of good values by children.

Additionally, the parents revealed that they tried monitoring and controlling the peer groups which their children interacted with. For instance, one parent expounded that the values nurtured at family level were put in practice and further developed at the peer level. Therefore, the peer group was an important institution in accepting or refusing certain behaviours among children. For example, through playing together, children were able to put into practise values such as peace, love and unity. Similar findings were shared in a study by Sonia, Syeda, and Sadia³² in which they concluded that peer group

influence on children does have deep impact on moral values. They thus advised parents to have a vigilant eye on the friends their children interact with.

Finally, parents reported that they also monitored and controlled learners access to content shared through mass media. This included regulating watching of various television programmes, and children access to various social media platforms. According to a majority of parents interviewed, uncensored access to content shared on various media platforms was the main source of moral decadence currently exhibited amongst the youth. Among the media content that parents revealed to have restricted their children from viewing included content relating to violence, robbery, drug abuse, pornography, prostitution, cultism and indoctrination. Conversely, media also emerged as an important institution in the development of the value of patriotism. According to some parents, various television and radio stations had educative programmes from which children learnt their country's history which in turn inspired the spirit of nationalism and patriotism. In the same vein, a study by Sonia, et al.,³² recommends for a balanced policy among children on their access and use of media in order to ensure development of good moral values.

From this study, it was further established that parents mainly nurtured and developed five of the eight core values recommended by CBC. These values include; patriotism, love, responsibility, respect, unity, and peace. According to parents, these values naturally occurred in the day to day activities of the children hence easier to instil the values in them. Comparably, a study by Tay and Yildirim in Turkey revealed that parents gave priority to values such as patriotism, honesty, responsibility, and hard work. In particular, parents ranked the values of patriotism (13.2 %), honesty (12.1%), responsibility (7.6%), and hard work (7.2%) as the most important values, respectively. In Contrast, the values of social justice and integrity were the least cultivated. Some parents even complained of limited avenues for them to instil the values while others confessed that they had never heard of them.

Conclusion

Development of values in children involves more of modelling of character than instruction. This is so because values are caught rather taught. Parents are therefore required to collaboratively work with teachers in modelling values they desire in their children. In this study it was established that parents engaged in a wide range of activities while developing children's values through grade four social studies curriculum. These activities included: Assigning duties to their children; Setting moral standards; Role modelling; Conducting moral conversations; Provision of basic needs to deter social crimes; Correcting bad behaviour through punishment; and Offering praises for good behaviour. Moreover, parents utilised the institutions of: family, peer group, religious organisations and media in the development of children's values.

Recommendations

In order to further enhance parental engagement in the development of their children's values, this study makes the following recommendations;

- 1) Parental sensitization programs on their roles in the development of their children's values.
- 2) Closer collaboration between parents and the institutions of: family, peer group, religious organisations and media in the development of children's values Appendix.

Appendix a Semi structured interview guide for parents

Activities parents engage their children in while developing children's values through grade four social studies curriculum

1. What activities do you normally engage your child in to ensure that he or she develops into a morally upright person? (Elaborate using relevant examples where possible).
 - 1) Kindly, talk about how you instil and nurture the following values in your child.
 - a) Love.
 - b) Responsibility.
 - c) Respect.
 - d) Unity.
 - e) Peace.
 - f) Patriotism.
 - g) Social justice.
 - h) Integrity (If possible cite examples).
 2. Of what importance are the activities you have identified in question 2 above to the growth of the child's value system?
 - 1) Citing relevant examples, explain how you use the following activities to instil values in your child.
 - a) Role modelling of values and character.
 - b) Instilling of religious beliefs.
 - c) Conducting moral conversation with your child.
 - d) Involve grandparents in the instilling of moral values.
 - e) Set strong moral ground rules and expectations for the child.
 - f) Appreciate child's achievement and reward him or her.
 - g) Engage the child in activities that instil values (attending to pets).

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that they have no direct or indirect conflicts.

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