

The Impact of Secondary School Teachers' Attitudes and Challenges on the Teaching and Learning of History and Government in Wareng District, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence of teachers' attitudes, among other challenges, on the teaching and learning of History and Government in secondary schools based on a study in Wareng District in the North Rift of Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive design, using a population that comprised History and Government teachers of selected secondary schools in the region. Simple and stratified random sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 120 respondents. Questionnaires, interview and observation schedules were used to collect data, and data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results confirm the relationship between attitude and teachers activities. The findings show that the attitude of teachers towards the subject affects their interests, pride, preference in the subject, and allocation of time for the subject, use of instructional materials in teaching, catering for individual learner differences in class and generally enhancing the achievement of objectives of teaching and learning of the History and Government subject in secondary schools. There is therefore need for teachers to develop a positive attitude towards the subject. The study is significant to scholars and other readers as it lays emphasis on importance of the History and Government subject in the social, political and academic development of the learner. This will create a positive perception of the subject by the teachers and learners and enable them to appreciate the subject just as they do with sciences and technical subjects. It will also make teaching of the subject more effective and efficient.

Keywords: impact, secondary school teachers, attitudes, teaching, learning, history, government, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

History and Government has been identified as an important subject in the education system in Kenya. Its usefulness cuts across society in terms of promotion of development socially, economically and politically. It is essential in development of international consciousness and enhances appreciation of cultures of people of different societies. It is a career subject as it is a pre-requisite to joining professions like Law, Teaching, Anthropology, Political Science, Social Work among others. There is, therefore, a need to lay emphasis on the subject in our schools. However, there are a number of challenges facing the teaching of History and Government. According to Kochhar (1994), one such challenge is the accumulation of facts with little significance attached to these facts in respect to the learner. The History teacher is faced with a challenge of linking knowledge in history to character formation and socialization of the learners (ibid.).

Tonne, Popham and Freeman (1998) have emphasized the failure by History teachers to master communication and consider the target group in their teaching of the subject. The more homogenous the

target group (class), the more participative the group will be. If the group is heterogeneous, the teacher may have to use less participative methods and lean more on formal teaching methods (ibid.). Eshiwani (1992), in a research on quality of secondary education in Kenya, has noted the challenge associated with the teaching of subjects (like History), which are perceived by learners as having a minimal contribution to the job-market. History is thus perceived by many students as having little hope for the future of the students since it is not a mandatory subject to courses like medicine, engineering, computer science among others. The writer therefore concludes that it is difficult to convince students that History is essential to their future career development. The History teachers thus find it hard to convince students that the subject is a prerequisite for entry to highly ranked professional courses.

According to the 1988 Presidential Working Party Sessional Paper No. 80 (Republic of Kenya, 1988) on the guiding philosophy on education, the key principles of the education system is to provide skills for effective economic development and foster

attitudes for self-employment. In this respect, the philosophy does not take into account the teaching of subjects like History and Government which have no direct contribution to economic development and self-employment. However much the syllabus incorporates the contents in areas relevant to economic development and self employment, the contribution of the subject to nation-building is still not recognized. Nevertheless, it is equally difficult for people without income to contribute positively to nation-building amid joblessness.

The national perception that History is subsidiary to the job market, economic development and entry into technology and medical professions has also compounded the teaching. The number of students enrolled in the subject is low due to the perception that the subject is not essential to entry into high-flying careers like Medicine and Engineering. Even in professions like Law where it is directly relevant, English as an important requirement has overtaken the History subject. The teachers thus find it hard to convince more students to continue taking the subject beyond two levels that is primary and secondary.

The Attitude of Teachers and Students towards History and Government

Hawes (1979) underscores the need to change people's negative attitude to favour implementation of any particular innovation when he points out that in the very simplest analysis the task of curriculum implementation can be said to involve changing the attitudes of policy makers, administrators, parents and ultimately the learners. In addition, Gross *et al.* (1971) emphasize the need for the staff to be willing to spend their time and effort in implementation and that this condition must be operative.

According to Taba (1962), initiating a curriculum change encompasses human experience, a strategy of modifying attitudes and feelings which often is a task of producing competence for curriculum development. To Taba (*ibid.*), professional skills and attitudes go hand in hand, each affecting the other. Positive attitude towards innovation not only influences the willingness of people involved to implement but also the learners willingness to learn. Therefore, the right attitude for History and Government teachers will influence the willingness of the teacher to impart the learner with knowledge.

A study carried out by Masinjila (1996), on the availability of resources for teaching Social Education and Ethics, has revealed that teachers having a positive attitude towards the subject has a bearing on its successful implementation. Positive attitude towards an innovation not only influences the willingness of people involved to implement but also the learners willingness to learn. The study, on which this paper is based, therefore, investigated the

attitudes of teachers and its influence on the teaching and learning of History and Government subject in secondary schools.

The study was informed by the fact that History and Government teachers in secondary schools face a number of challenges. These challenges range from the teaching methods, the teaching resources, their availability and the managerial support (Tonne *et al.*, 1998; Eshiwani, 1992). Students regard the subject as a subsidiary when compared with others like Mathematics, English, Kiswahili and the sciences. This creates a situation in which the History and Government lessons are never taken seriously by students who believe that the subject is not essential to the current job market. Lack of direct relevance to the job market is compounded by the fact that the History and Government teachers rarely impart practical skills to the learner. This makes the teacher to rely on theoretical skills. The greatest challenge in this case lies in how practical skills can be incorporated in the teaching of the subject and their unwillingness to invest in the teaching and learning materials. Funds from the government are allocated more on technical and science subjects compared to humanities on the pretext that humanities are subsidiary.

There has been a shortage of text books and other teaching and learning materials in most of the schools where studies have been done. Management support to the teaching and learning of History and Government has been found to be lacklustre. The support given to History and Government teachers is wanting. These challenges, coupled with the negative attitudes of teachers towards the subject, have affected the teaching and learning of History and Government.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to understanding the challenges facing the teaching and learning of History and Government in Wareng District in Kenya only. With respect to this paper, the attitudes that teachers have towards the subject may be informed by many other factors which can only be limited to their respective institutions and regions. As such, the findings discussed in this paper may not be generalized to all schools. Nevertheless, the study provides a framework based on which similar studies could be replicated in other schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Kesses and Kapseret Divisions of Wareng District in Uasin Gishu County. Wareng District is a cosmopolitan region in which almost all Kenyan ethnic groups are represented. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, which investigated and made a detailed examination of selected phenomena. The design allows for the use of

descriptive statistics as a method of data analysis. The research design was adopted as it permits research to go beyond the statistical data gathered. The target population for the study was the teachers of History and Government in Forms Three and Four in the 33 schools in the District, an average of 3 to 4 per school since other schools have double streams. The teachers were earmarked for the study since they are the ones who teach History and Government and are aware of the challenges they face. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select schools and subjects that participated in the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 33 out of 42 schools which were categorized into public and private. Non-probability sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents.

For data collection, questionnaires interview and observation schedules were used to collect data for the study. Interviews were conducted with the teachers and heads of departments. The designed questionnaire was divided in two parts: part one consisted of statements seeking information on respondent's background. This was necessary in describing the nature of respondents who participated in this study (Mwaniki, 1984). Part two consisted of statements soliciting information regarding teachers' preparation, instructional approaches, development and administration of instructional media, attitudes and managerial support to teachers. The author also made observations of lessons in randomly selected History and Government classes in the sampled schools. This enabled the author to cross check the information given through the questionnaire and interviews on the availability and use of instructional materials, instructional products, procedure of teaching content and the methods and approaches used. To facilitate the analysis, the raw data from the tests were summarized in tables and coded before they were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were then used to describe and present the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Attitudes and its Influence on the Teaching and Learning of History and Government. The study sought to establish the influence of attitude on the teaching and learning of History and Government subject in the secondary schools which participated. The results are as indicated in Table 1.

As shown in the table, a majority of the teachers, 116(97%), asserted that the subject is interesting to teach as compared to only 4(3%) who disagreed. This shows that the subject is perceived by most teachers as being interesting to teach. On whether or not the teachers preferred teaching the other subject, a majority of the respondents, 72(60%), disagreed while only 40(33%) agreed. Most of the teachers are proud to be associated with the subject. This was shown by a positive response by 116(97%) of the teachers. Most of the teachers, 104(86%), also expressed willingness to motivate and encourage students to take History and Government subject. On whether or not the subject is overloaded, 60(50%) agreed while 48(38%) disagreed. The teachers who felt that the subject is overloaded with more topics also had a feeling that the time allocated for the subject was insufficient. Most teachers agreed, 64(54%) while a number, 52(43%) disagreed. As shown in the findings, 4(3%) of the respondents were undecided.

On the use of teaching and learning resources in teaching the subject, a majority of the respondents, 88(73%), confirmed use of the available resources in their tasks. However, it was emphasized by most teachers that the students who took History and Government were not weak-minded as may be perceived by others. The results show that only 28(23%) of the respondents believed that the History and Government students were weak-minded. This is against the notion that most of the students take the subject because they cannot cope with the other subjects, which are perceived as difficult or challenging.

Table 1: Attitudes of Teachers towards History and Government Subject

Statement	Agreement		Undecided		Disagreement	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
The teaching of History and Government is interesting	116	97	0	0	4	3
Although I teach History and Government, I would prefer my other teaching subject.	40	33	8	7	72	60
I am proud to be identified with the teaching of History and Government.	116	97	4	3	0	0
I encourage & motivate students to choose History and Government in Form 3 and 4	104	86	8	7	8	7
The History and Government syllabus is overloaded.	60	50	12	10	48	38
The time allocated for teaching is not sufficient.	64	54	4	3	52	43
The students who choose History and Government are weak academically.	28	23	12	10	80	67
I often use teaching /learning resources in teaching History and Government.	88	74	16	13	16	13
The school has sufficient textbooks for History and Government.	72	60	4	3	44	37
The Administration has a positive attitude towards History and Government.	84	70	16	13	20	17
The use of instructional materials helps to better my teaching.	104	87	16	13	0	0
The instructional materials cater for individual differences.	84	70	20	17	16	13
I still achieve my lesson objectives without using the instructional materials.	40	33	20	17	60	50
Total	1000	64	140	9	420	27

The students were thus perceived as capable of performing well in the subject. On the other hand, when asked to state whether or not schools had sufficient text books for the subject, most of the respondents, 72(60%), agreed as opposed to 44(37%) who disagreed. This shows that in most of the schools, the managers have concentrated more on the purchase of text books which are commonly used by teachers in teaching the subject. The administrators were found to have a positive attitude towards the History and Government teachers. This was noted by about three-quarters of the teachers, 84(70%), who agreed to the sentiment. Only 20(17%) reported their managers having a negative attitude towards the subject and this posed a challenge to the teaching and learning of the subject in their schools. On whether or not the use of instructional materials helped better the teaching of History and Government subject, majority of the teachers, 104(87%) agreed. As the results indicate, none disagreed on the sentiment and this shows that the use of instructional materials is crucial and aids in the teaching and learning of the subject in secondary schools.

The use of the instructional materials also caters for the individual differences of the learners as noted by a majority of the teachers, 84(70%), who indicated agreement. In relation to the achievement of lesson objectives by use of instructional materials, the results confirmed the influence of instructional media on teaching and learning. A half of the respondents, 60(50%), disagreed against only 40(33%) who agreed. As indicated in the findings, 20(17%) were undecided. This confirms the positive impact of use of instructional materials on the teaching and learning of the subject.

The findings confirm that the use of instructional materials in History and Government tally with the availability, sufficient supply, and the perception of teachers on the usefulness of the instructional materials in making the subject easy to teach and interesting. Instructional materials also enhance the attainment of objectives and enable teachers to cater for individual learner differences in class. The teaching of History and Government goes with the interest of the teachers as they are the ones who encourage learners to choose the subject, instructional materials and avail them to motivate the learners of different abilities. The teacher uses all means to make sure that they achieve the stated goals. As shown in Table 1, there is a relationship between attitude and teachers activities. The study sought to

find out the challenge associated with teachers' attitudes towards History and Government subject and the teaching and learning of the subject in secondary schools. Most of the respondents who participated in the study confirmed the relationship between the variables. The findings show that the attitude of teachers towards the subject affects their interests, pride, preference in the subject, and allocation of time for the subject; use of instructional materials in teaching, catering for individual learner differences in class and generally enhancing the achievement of objectives of teaching and learning of the History and Government subject in secondary schools.

Other Challenges Affecting the Teaching and Learning of History and Government

There was need to explore other factors, apart from teachers' attitudes, affecting the teaching and learning of History and Government in secondary schools in order to seek ways of alleviating them. In order to identify the challenges, the study sought opinions of both teachers and heads of departments on what they perceived as factors that militated against the teaching and learning History and Government subject. The findings are as presented in Table 2.

As indicated in the findings, most schools had History and Government students. However, the number of teachers was not commensurate with the number of students. Most schools (82%) had more than 2 teachers as some (18%) had only one. This shows that despite the subject being common in the schools, there is a limited number of teachers for the subject which contributes to the limited emphasis, negative attitude and poor performance in the subject. Table 2 indicates that a majority of the History and Government teachers have attended in-service training in History and Government. Most heads (64%) confirmed having sent their teachers for refresher courses. These courses are geared towards equipping the teachers with the necessary skills to improve the teaching and learning of the subject. Most of the heads of departments, 20(91%), asserted that their teachers had schemes of work and this shows that teachers adequately prepared for their work. On whether or not the schools had adequate staff, it was found that most heads, 15(68%), believed their schools were inadequately staffed with History and Government teachers. This confirms the inadequate support given to the teaching and learning of the subject by the managerial staff.

Table 2: Factors Affecting the Teaching and Learning of History and Government

Statements	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	%
Have the teachers attended in-service training in History and Government	10	46%	12	54%	22	100
Teachers have schemes of work to guide them in their teaching	20	91%	2	9%	22	100
My school is adequately staffed with History and Government teachers	7	32%	15	68%	22	100
Does your school have a library	11	50%	11	50%	22	100
The library has a section for history and Government reading materials	8	36%	14	64%	22	100
The materials are adequate for teaching and learning of History and Government.	5	23%	17	77%	22	100

The study found out that despite the schools having libraries, most of the libraries (64%) did not have sections for History and Government subject. In the schools that had libraries with sections for the subject, it was reported by most of respondents (77%) that the sections were ill-equipped with the necessary books and other instructional materials for teaching History and Government subject. This shows that little emphasis is placed on the teaching and learning

of History and Government subject in most secondary schools and this poses a challenge to the learning of the subject.

Observed Practices among Teachers of History and Government

The study sought to establish the challenges facing the teaching and learning of History and Government subject by observing the teachers’ classroom practices. The results are as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: The Teacher Practices as Observed

Statement	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Is there a scheme of work	24	86	4	14	28	100
Are the schemes having all sections	23	82	5	18	28	100
Is the lesson plan available and followed	25	89	3	11	28	100
Separate topics spelt out	20	71	8	29	28	100
Objectives achievable	25	89	3	11	28	100
Time allocated to different topics shown	15	54	13	46	28	100
Is the time enough	10	36	18	64	28	100
Do the skills/topics relate to the aims /objectives given	24	86	4	14	28	100
Suggested resources suitable for skills/topics chosen	17	61	11	39	28	100
Enough reference given	13	46	15	54	28	100
Instructional resources suitable for the content given	19	68	9	32	28	100
Teacher relating the current lesson topic to other areas of the subject	21	75	7	25	28	100
Lesson covers stated objectives	23	82	5	18	28	100
Teacher uses instructional resources to teach	21	75	7	25	28	100
Totals	280	71	112	29	392	

To establish the challenges facing the teaching and learning of History and Government subject, classroom practices of teachers were observed. This related to the preparation of teachers for instruction and use of instructional products such as schemes of work, lesson plans, and records of work covered. As indicated in the findings, a majority of the respondents (86% and 82%) indicated they had schemes of work and that they were spelt out clearly. Lesson plans were also available and followed as indicated by a majority of the respondents (89%). As observed, a majority of the teachers prepared lessons plans with separate topics spelt out, the time allocated to different topics shown and stated objectives achievable. However, a majority (64%) noted that the time allocated for the topics was enough. On whether t or not he skills/topics relate to the aims /objectives given, most of the respondents 86% agreed. However, the references given in the lesson plans were not enough as only 46% acknowledged against 54% who refuted the claim. The findings indicate that

in most of the schools, the teachers (75%) used instructional resources to teach the subject. It was found that the instructional resources used by the teachers were suitable for the content given. This was indicated by most of the respondents (68%). A majority 82% and 75% of the teachers observed related the lesson topic to other areas of the subject, and to a large extent their lessons covered the stated objectives respectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attitude is an important factor in the process of curriculum implementation in schools because a positive attitude contributes to successful implementation of that subject. Attitude held by teachers plays a vital role in teaching History and Government. It is clear that there is a relationship between teachers’ attitudes towards the History and Government and student’s academic achievement. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teacher’s

attitudes towards History and Government affects the teaching and learning of the subject.

The results from the study confirm the relationship between attitude and teachers activities. The findings show that the attitude of teachers towards the subject affects their interests, pride, preference in the subject, and allocation of time for the subject, use of instructional materials in teaching, catering for individual learner differences in class and generally enhancing the achievement of objectives of teaching and learning of the History and Government subject in secondary schools.

The study has established that most of the challenges related to the teaching and learning of History and Government in schools have to do with the attitude of teachers towards the subject. There is therefore need for teachers to develop a positive attitude towards the subject.

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