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**INTEGRATION OF ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL UNITY IN THE TEACHING OF  
ORAL LITERATURE IN KISWAHILI IN KENYA: CHALLENGES AND  
POSSIBILITIES**

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**Abstract**

National unity has been an issue of concern in the Kenyan society. This paper examines the extent to which teachers of Kiswahili integrate elements of national unity in their lesson content and the challenges teachers face in their attempt to integrate elements of national unity in the teaching of oral literature. The research methodology adopted was qualitative approach and the research design was survey. Simple random sampling was used to select a total of ten (10) schools in Trans-Nzoia East sub-County and 10 teachers who were interviewed. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 10% of the students who participated in the focus group discussion. Stratified and purposive samplings techniques were used to select 20 lessons that were observed. Observation, content analysis, interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data. The analyzed data revealed that teachers do not integrate elements of national unity in their lesson content. In addition it was found that lack of adequate resources, influence of globalization, lack of proper training and in-service courses and lack of teacher commitment are some of the challenges that teachers face in their attempt to integrate elements of national unity in their lessons. It was recommended that teachers should be encouraged through training and seminars to integrate the elements of national unity in their lesson content since oral literature lends itself well in addressing societal emerging issues; interaction and cohesion and schools should provide adequate teaching and learning facilities also, parents/care givers and teachers should ensure that children thrive in their culture, mother tongue and other positive cultural factors should be encouraged despite the fast changes that are brought about by globalization.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Oral Literature in Kiswahili is meaningful and useful in many different ways. Oral literature is not only material from the past; it also contains a great deal of new materials which have been composed and performed today. People everywhere make up stories, jokes, sayings and songs about their experiences and they share them by performing them to one another. Both old materials from the past and new materials performed by oral artists are relevant and useful in a number of ways. Mirambo (2006) indicates that oral literature, whether recited, narrated, declaimed or sung has got specific purposes to serve in the society. Often, it is used to educate and entertain members of society. For example, people in traditional Sukuma (Tanzania) society and even now taught about their culture and truth of life through different genres of oral literature according to the occasions. Oral literature helps them to grow up according to societal expectations.

Oral literature embodies history, cultural values, philosophy and beliefs of a people. Through this literature, there is a lot to learn about societies. It is therefore safe to state that oral literature is an instrument of cultural education. This literature teaches what society likes and what it hates. For example, it is taboo to kill among most African communities. According to Bukenya et al. (2011), there is need for oral literature in that it serves a number of functions.

### **Statement of the problem**

In Kenya, one of the main objectives of teaching oral literature is to enable students to recognize the positive stream in their own culture so that they may look critically at their present day society and develop a true sense of nationhood and national pride. The introduction of oral literature into Kenya's classroom is also part of a reaction against colonial education which, as Tom Mboya criticized, was designed to "Belittle African traditions and customs and replace them with habits and attitudes developed in Western Europe" (Mboya, 1965, p. 27). Miruka (2005) also emphasizes that studying oral literature is an important way of going back to our cultural roots and understanding the values of our communities.

Mboya (ibid.) further stresses that this understanding is of crucial importance for people who underwent a period of colonization during which the cultures of their communities were suppressed, distorted and denied the opportunity to develop. Thus they must know who they are in order to know how to relate to people of other cultures. They can only know who they are through the study of oral literature. Therefore, the study of oral literature today in Kenya can be used to correct the false image and distortions of certain community's culture, self image and history that were distorted by colonialism or may have been distorted by the most recent 2008 post election violence. Kabira and Mutahi (2002) put it this way:

For communities like many Kenyan communities whose culture, self image and history were on the verge of total distortion and destruction by colonialism the study of oral literature becomes very important. Through oral literature people can correct false image and distortions of their past that have occurred through colonial experience. From there they can recreate and create a more positive image of themselves and their culture. Through the same medium, people can create faith and self confidence, in themselves and become better nation builders. In the Kenyan situation, the study of oral literature offers the students and researchers ample opportunities to understand the values of different communities. It is on these values that our nation can cultivate and enhance the creation of unity (p. 3).

Before the 2008 post-election crisis, Kenya was known as home of peace in Africa ever since independence but the post-election crisis impacted severely on Kenya's cohesion. The self image of most communities has been distorted and people now seem to love their languages and identify with it. Barryl (2008) states that they not only use their languages as a mark of identity but also exploit it to help one another and do favours to their own people. This has been made worse with the quota system policy in Kenyan schools. This situation presents many challenges for schools which are expected to cultivate a common national spirit and unity.

The author believes that the teaching of oral literature in Kenyan schools can enable students to recreate and create a more positive image of themselves and their culture and also have faith and self confidence in themselves and become better nation builders. This will also enable them to understand the values of different communities and it is on these values that our nation can cultivate and enhance the creation of unity. Kenya's social diversity has brought a collateral concern for preservation of cultural heritage, social justice, human dignity, and multicultural education. Fafunwa and Aisiku (1982) indicate that African nations should strive to preserve their traditions of cooperative, communal and extended family culture that provides a foundation for human relations and social security in a changing world and further explains that schools can assist this process by teaching oral literature which enables students to value and honour tradition as well as modernity. Therefore, with Kenya's cultural diversity, education should create a basis for a common culture where each community's culture must be respected and preserved. This is seen as one way to achieve national cohesion and unity. Fafunwa and Aisiku (1982) contend that cohesion can only succeed if the citizens share a common set of values and standards.

Kabira and Mutahi (2002) further emphasize that "many people recognize that the development and the future of a nation depends on the ability of that nation to create a people firmly rooted in the best of its traditions" (p. 1). Akivaga and Odaga (2003) support this view and state that:

Since Kenya is a nation of different peoples, a study of the oral literature of our different peoples gives us a sympathetic understanding of each other's cultures, such inter cultural understanding is very important if we are to prosper together as one nation. Also through the studies of various Kenyan peoples, we shall be able to identify and develop values that unite us as a nation. Only through such studies can a true Kenyan identity and a truly Kenyan culture be nurtured (p. 4).

Ngessimo (2001) further supports this view and states that the diverse language situation in Africa can be used as a unifying factor if Kenya promotes and develops their oral literature and use it as a way of buttressing the cultural identity of the people of Africa. He further indicates that people are what they are educated to be. Thus education is perhaps the surest and most enduring means for ensuring attainment of national unity. Therefore, those who support the study of oral literature view it as a means to national unity, but this main objective of oral literature seems unachieved because of the way oral literature is taught today in Kenyan secondary schools. Akivaga and Odaga (2003) argue that the teaching of oral literature in most African countries is either totally neglected or haphazard where it has been introduced. Okumba (2005) while commenting on the teaching of oral literature in Kenyan secondary schools also says that:

Teaching and learning of oral literature in secondary schools is beset with many problems experienced by both students and teachers. One of these is the feeling that students do not find the subject relevant, if indeed this feeling is justified, we then must ask the questions why it is not relevant. Is it a question of teaching the wrong subject for the right objectives? The right subject with the right objectives but using wrong methods, or getting everything from the subject, the objectives to the methods wrong? (Okumba, 2005, p. 1)

### **Oral Literature and Nation Building**

The study of old literature has a bearing on nation building. Kenya was a colony until the early 1960s when it became a sovereign state. As a colony its destiny was not in the hands of its people but in those of foreigners. Foreigners made all the decisions about how the government would be run and about what kind of economy the country would have. When decisions were taken the interests of the colonial power were regarded as more important than those of the people in the subject country. That is why colonial education sought to turn them away from themselves; it emphasized the study of the History, Government, Geography, and culture of the people who belonged to the ruling power and with the coming of independence the destiny of the country was restored in the hands of the people of the land. The people of Kenya would now talk about nation building, meaning that they now wanted to develop themselves in a free country.

Nation building would involve, among other things, the development of methods of government best suited to themselves, an economic system that benefited all the people of Kenya, as well as an educational system that equipped the people of Kenya with knowledge to solve their problems and improve their lives steadily. Samper (2000) argues that the people of such decolonized countries like Kenya feel no national or proto-national sentiments and do not form a shared sense of nationhood. Leaders of African countries emerging from former British colonies sought ways to forge patriotic bonds between diverse ethnic, religious and political communities in order to construct a sense of nationhood. The study of oral literature in Kenyan schools is an important part of education that plays a role in nation building.

Education in an independent country emphasizes most the study of what is important for the country and its people. As oral literature reveals the nature of the social, political and economic institutions of the people of Kenya, it enables us to see how we can use the ideas of our people in building institutions that are most suitable for their needs. This is yet another way in which the study of oral literature may assist in nation building. Kenya is a nation of different peoples and the study of the oral literature of the different peoples gives a sympathetic understanding of each other's culture. Such intercultural understanding is very important if Kenya is to prosper together as one nation.

### **National Unity and Multicultural Identity in Africa**

There is need for African schools to acknowledge diversity in African societies as strength and not as a threat to national unity (Berman et al., 2004; Ntarangwi, 2003). Dei et al. (2006) argues that there is scarcity of information on how schools in African countries can serve diverse students in an equitable way. According to Dei et al. (ibid.), recognizing and respecting differences will ensure long lasting solutions to some of the social and political problems in Africa. With reference to Ghana, a country similar to most African countries in terms of multiethnic and multilingual character, Dei et al. (2006) found that ethnicity still privileges some groups over others in terms of access to educational opportunity. They therefore argue that emphasizing nation building without considering differences can make the dominant group fail to admit its privileged status.

Woolman (2001) admits that national unity is still an important goal for African countries. According to Woolman (2001), national unity can be achieved through education that teaches "African Economics, Geography, culture and History, cultural heritage of dance, music and visual arts, oral literature, and natural resources" (p. 41). Woolman (ibid.) further noted that social studies should balance the understanding of different cultures and the acknowledgment of similarities among the cultures in order to facilitate unity. Okafor (2004) recommends the integration of various ethnic groups in Africa. According to Okafor (ibid.), education needs to use "oral literature." Okafor (ibid.) further argues that because oral literature is common among various African communities, it is the best approach to instilling relevant citizenship competencies. He asserts that African traditional/pre-colonial society

contained forms of civic education that were practiced through the use of various forms of African oral literature. Consequently, the oral literature in Kiswahili that is taught in secondary school can be used to enhance national identity and unity among students in Kenyan schools.

Multicultural education has been viewed as one way of acknowledging diversity and encouraging social stability among African students (Woolman, 2001). Multicultural education has been defined in various ways by different scholars. According to Banks and Banks (2004), multicultural education should ensure that all students irrespective of their gender, social class, ethnic or racial group have equal opportunity to learn in school.

Pai (1990) discusses four aims of multicultural education. First, multicultural education nurtures respect for, and appreciation for cultural diversity. The appreciation of different cultures enables us to effectively deal with our problems by learning from other cultures. Secondly, it promotes the inherent worth of each person and interest in the well being of the society. This second aim is based on the assumption that people's identity is rooted in their culture. Third, multicultural education equips one with multicultural competencies that allow one to function effectively in culturally diverse settings. Last, multicultural education is instrumental in ensuring educational equity for all regardless of ethnicity, race, age or other exceptionalities.

Dei et al. (2006) note that ethnicity is relevant in discussing education in the African context. With reference to Ghana, Dei et al. (ibid.) argue that it is problematic for students to view themselves as Ghanaians without considering their ethnic identifications (which is the same for Kenyan students) because focus on national integration without considering ethnic differences blurs the reality of uneven power relations that exist in a society, which in turn, maintains power inequalities among ethnic groups.

Berman et al. (2004), while looking at citizenship in diverse nations in Africa, argue that although it is not easy to develop a feeling of common citizenship and loyalty to the state among people who are different in many respects, countries that are multi-ethnic can still successfully address the challenge. Most African countries have sought to use the assimilatory type of citizenship that seeks a common identity. Nyamjoh (2004) notes that after political independence from colonialism; most African countries were preoccupied with nation-building and shunned the acknowledgement of linguistic and ethnic differences. For example, in Kenya, the government used education goals to promote national unity among its people. Most of the goals outlined were concerned with the role of education in fostering unity in one way or another with the focus on achieving harmony among the divided ethnic groups.

Most of the new African nation-states did not give attention to the ethnic diversity present in their countries. Although national unity is crucial in pluralistic African states (Woolman, 2001; Okafor, 2004), the lack of recognition for diversity in African nation states has been criticized (Dei et al., 2006). Some scholars have in turn advocated multiculturalism. Adejumobi (2001) argues for multiculturalism that necessitates the recognition of different identities, other than one single notion of national identity. According to Adejumobi (2001), different identities can still co-exist with national citizenship. Similarly, in the Kenyan situation, the teaching of Kiswahili which includes the teaching of oral literature from the varied Kenyan cultural backgrounds can enhance multiculturalism since students share the folklores from these diverse communities.

Mluma (2004) emphasizes that Kiswahili must be developed as a vehicle for promoting Kenyan culture. Thus Kenyans and the government have the obligation to promote the language as an important heritage. This can mainly be attained by the nature of the content in the Kiswahili textbooks.

### **The Teaching and Learning of Oral Literature in Kenyan Secondary Schools**

Oral literature is a spoken, acted (performed) art whose media, like that of written literature is words (Akivaga et al., 2003). The spoken word and performance are the important features of oral literature. It is through the spoken word that oral literature has been kept and continues to be kept alive, and is transmitted from one person to the next, and from one generation to the other. People use the spoken word to reflect on their everyday experiences and concerns. Oral literature is an everyday enriching experience of life, for there is daily entertainment and teaching from the stories, proverbs and riddles told by people as well as from the songs they sing. Akivaga et al. (2003) further reiterate that oral literature is a new field of study in Kenyan schools in the sense that it is being taught in schools for the first time.

Suter (2008) also indicates that the introduction of oral literature in the new Kiswahili syllabus was impromptu and the teachers feel they were left out and were not consulted. She states that leaving teachers out of the whole process delineates them with the education process which they are supposed to be critical players. Similarly, Okumba (2005) also laments that:

The teaching and learning of oral literature in secondary schools is beset within many problems experienced by both students and teachers one of these is the feeling that students do not find the subject relevant. If indeed this feeling is justified, we then must ask the questions: why is it not relevant? Is it a question of teaching the wrong subject for the right objectives? the right subject

for the right objectives? the right subject with the right objectives, but using the wrong methods, or getting everything from the subject, the objective to the methods wrong? (p. 1)

Okumba (2005) further indicates that related to this are problems students face because they have not developed literary abilities. In this sense, it should be emphasized that, literature requires of the student abilities to comprehend, interpret, analyze and apply. And because literature is a verbal art, it also presumes the students exquisiteness in linguistic expression: ability to articulate oneself completely so as to convey the meaning intended in the best possible and most efficient way.

The secondary school curricular prescribes that the students should understand the nature and types of oral literature; they should also be aware of the social environment (community) that gives rise to oral composition and be aware of the varieties of oral literature and cultural links between different peoples as expressed in their oral literature. The curriculum also expects the students to know the major genres of oral literature, namely oral narratives, poems (sung, recited or declaimed), proverbs, riddles, tongue-twisters and children's games (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE] Syllabus, 2002). Wamitila (2003) further emphasizes that by Form Four, the students are required to develop a critical response to oral literature, be able to respond to literature as a reflection of every day experiences, enjoy literature and its pursuit as a general cultural activity, understand the texts in terms of plot, narrative techniques, themes and characters and their relationships to one another, and develop a critical appreciation of form and style, language use, imagery, creation of atmosphere, mood and tone, and other literary devices used in oral literature. Essentially, this is the kind of knowledge the student is expected to exhibit in the KCSE examination.

For students to achieve all these they need to be exposed to a wide variety of oral literature from their immediate environment (communities) and other sources. This can only be effectively done if fieldwork is undertaken so as to expose students to live performances and enable them acquire and utilize various fieldwork techniques and skills such as transcription, translation and analysis of materials.

Akivaga and Odaga (2003) argue that it is very important that students view oral literature as an art that they draw from the field, their observations and experiences. If they develop the impression that oral literature is to be found in books, then they will not experience the intrinsic joy that it brings, and the purpose of the study of oral literature will be defeated. Hence teachers should strive to see to it that students look back to their own communities for sources of materials. The teaching of oral literature in Kenyan schools is done with the hope that during the study, sufficient interest in oral literature will be aroused to enable the students to be independently creative to begin to appreciate the richness of the subject. The teaching of oral literature also enables students to understand the culture and environment of their own society before proceeding to learn about other cultures.

Akivaga and Odaga (2003) further emphasize that a sound grounding of the student in his people's culture helps him to become a useful member of his society. If a student has a sympathetic understanding of the way his people look at the world, for instance, in deciding what is right or wrong, or their sense of justice, he is better able to be involved in the evaluation of good social institutions which uphold the values of just. Proper education should give the student confidence in the human values of his people and should strengthen the students understanding of his people's needs and aspirations so that the student may play a positive role in seeking ways of meeting those needs and satisfying those aspirations.

The study of oral literature is seen as an important way of gaining understanding of the people, for oral literature is the peoples own means of expressing the way they see the world, their values and aspirations. Oral literature has a lot to teach about institutions; the teaching of oral literature in Kenyan schools should inspire teachers and students alike to make a creative enquiry into the ways Kenya's oral arts relate to and reflect Kenya's social, economical and political institutions. Oral literature has a an important role in the Kenyan society in enhancing unity among students from diverse backgrounds and the study sought to find out the extent to which the teaching of oral literature in Kenyan schools can enhance nationalism.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Kiswahili oral literature lacks sufficient literature. Therefore, literature on English oral literature was borrowed to supplement that not available on Kiswahili oral literature. Due to inadequate resources, the study went as far as observing, investigating and analyzing data given by the sources. Barasa (1997, p. 83) corroborates these views that the study will have no control over the exact information learners and teachers of Kiswahili will choose to give or withhold.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study was carried out in Tranz-Nzoia County, which is one of the Counties in Rift valley province. This County borders West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet and Uasin Gishu Counties. The area was chosen because of its cosmopolitan nature and the researcher was contented that this area is rich in oral literature in that almost all the Kenyan

communities are found in this area. The paradigm underpinning the study is the qualitative approach. The study employs a qualitative research paradigm in order to be able to investigate the use of oral literature in Kiswahili in Kenyan classrooms to enhance national unity. Qualitative research involves detailed, verbal descriptions of characteristics cases, settings, people or systems obtained by interacting with, interviewing and observing the subjects. The paradigm was adopted for the study because it consists of an investigation that seeks answers to questions, systematically uses predefined set of procedures to answer questions, collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance and produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study.

The use of survey was appropriate for the study because surveys provide a great deal of information, which is accurate (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Thus this descriptive survey design enabled the author to extensively explore the teaching of oral literature in Kiswahili and how it could be used to enhance national unity. Descriptive research has the capacity to describe the present status of phenomena, determining the nature of the prevailing conditions practices and attitudes and seeking accurate descriptions of activities. The study is based on a social constructivist perspective since the teaching of oral literature in Kenyan schools is seen as a social activity. Basically learning is seen as an active process of acquiring, assessing and producing knowledge in a conducive environment.

The target population for the study was all students and teachers in Kenya but because it was not possible to reach all secondary schools in Kenya, a sample was taken from Trans-Nzoia East Sub County. According to the Ministry of Education data bank, there were thirty-four (34) secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia East sub-county (DEO's Office Trans-Nzoia East, Sub-County, 2010). Therefore, the target population was all the teachers and students in Trans Nzoia East Sub-County; all teachers of Kiswahili and all students of Forms Two, Three and Four.

Simple random sampling was used to select ten (10) schools which formed approximately 30% of the total 34 (100%) schools in Trans-Nzoia East District which were used for the study. This technique was also used to select 30% of the teachers who were to be interviewed. Hence, a total of 10(30%) teachers of Kiswahili out of the total 30(100%) were sampled for the interview. Stratified sampling was used to stratify the lessons into those lessons of the lower forms (Forms 1 and 2) and those of the higher forms (Forms 3 and 4). Purposive sampling was then used to select oral literature lessons hence 2 lessons were selected in each of the sampled schools. Simple random sampling was used to select 20 teachers 2 from each school and their oral literature lessons were sampled for observation. Since the research was carried out in January most of the schools had not started teaching the Form Ones and Form Two lessons were sampled for the lower forms and Form 3 and 4 lessons were sampled for the higher forms. A total of 20 oral literature lessons were observed.

Simple random sampling was used to select 50% of the schools that participated in the focus group discussion and a total of 5 schools were sampled. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to select the student focus groups. The instruments for data collection in the study were interview and observation schedules and content analysis. Before data analysis, the author gathered all of the data from interviews with the teachers and the student's focus group session(s): topic guide(s), audio tapes, transcripts of the session(s) and observation notes and conducted a thorough review of all the data. The tapes from the classroom sessions and those from each focus group session were transcribed verbatim (word for word) in order to capture the exact words, phrases, and views voiced by the participants. The author then reviewed the transcripts, notes and listened to the tapes from the classroom sessions while coding the elements of national unity every time they were used using the earlier prepared code. The transcripts from the focus groups were also coded as per the questions asked and reported in writing.

The data obtained from the Special Strategies Observation System format (SSOS), as developed by Merrill et al. (2004) on classroom observation, was also coded and analyzed. Descriptive methods were used and the data was presented on frequency distribution tables and graphs.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Integration of Elements of National Unity in Oral Literature Lessons**

Data from the classroom observation on the extent to which teachers integrate elements of national unity in the oral literature lessons in Kenyan secondary schools showed that most of the lessons 12(60%) were rated as low in integration whereas 7(35%) were rated as moderate in integration, none of the lessons was rated as high and only 1(5%) was rated as very high. This indicates that teachers do not integrate the elements of national unity and the national goal of national unity in their oral literature lessons, a state that Brown et al. (1980) condemns and advises that teachers should be aware of the nation's overall goals in the educational process so that they can better appreciate how their efforts contribute to those goals.

Ideally, Kiswahili being the national language in Kenya, its teaching should emphasize national unity which is one of the main goals of education but it was established that teachers seem to emphasize vocabulary, language rules, and techniques of answering questions in their classes and very little emphasis on national unity. This means that

this trend must change if Kiswahili is to achieve its purpose in the Kenyan schools/society. Mluma (2004) recommends that Kiswahili must be developed as a vehicle for promoting Kenyan culture. Thus the Kenyans and the government have the obligation to promote the language as an important cultural heritage.

Information from the interviews with the teachers established that teachers never planned to integrate elements of national unity in their lessons. They only use the terms as they are used in the textbooks or in their notes. They explain that the syllabus has not clearly outlined the issue of national unity in its content and the teachers relied on the content in the text books to make notes. They also reported that some of the used books highlighted the issues of national unity in some topics while in some topics these issues are not mentioned at all. The study showed that the teachers relied mainly on the available textbooks for teaching content. This aspect was also established by Wafula (2009) who observes that teachers over-relied on textbooks as a source of information and the learners were also getting stories, poems, songs, proverbs and riddles from published sources a condition in which she states that has distracted the attention of teachers of literature from unpublished sources such as resource persons and the community at large.

On establishing whether or not these elements of national unity can be integrated in oral literature lessons, it was found that it is possible to integrate these elements of national unity in the Kiswahili lessons as it has been the case for the emerging issues like HIV/AIDS, gender disparity and children rights. The integration of these emerging issues seems to have been very successful in creating awareness among the students. The teachers demonstrated that it is mainly because of the in-service courses that they have attended that enabled them to integrate these emerging issues and also emphasize them in their lessons. The teachers also explained that these emerging issues are well captured in the syllabus and in the recommended textbooks. Majority of the teachers suggested that if the same can be done for national unity it can improve the levels of integration in class and also the students' patriotism in later life. Ominde (Republic of Kenya, 1964) indicates clearly in the Ominde report that "unoriented teachers (those not exposed to current issues and ways of teaching) tend to teach as they were taught."

Concerning the extent of the use of multicultural or monocultural examples, the study found out that most teachers used examples in the textbooks which were mainly in Kiswahili (monocultural) than examples from the diverse Kenyan communities (multicultural). The author also noted that some teachers used multicultural examples, especially when students were asked to give examples from their ethnic backgrounds then translations were done. Such lessons were very interactive as students talked and shared ideas freely giving examples from their cultural backgrounds. The results of the study are consistent with the findings of Rebecca, Rosemary and Mary (2007) who found out that multicultural book that are read in the classroom enable students to appreciate multicultural elements in their lives. These multicultural elements enable students to understand each other, appreciate each other's culture and learn to co-exist in their diversity.

Aluda (2009) emphasizes that teachers should encourage students to bring oral literature into their classrooms. They should practically engage them into telling stories, singing and dancing and exchanging jokes. KIE prescribes that by the time a student is sitting for the form four examinations he/she should be aware of the varieties of oral literature and cultural links between different peoples as expressed in their oral literature. This objective can only be achieved if the text books give more examples from the varied Kenyan communities and if the teachers also use instructional methods like fieldwork, drama, and use of resource persons that allows students to interact with the community. Okumba (2005) reiterates that oral literature resides in the field (community) thus oral literature cannot be taught in class since it is a performed art and is an embodiment of the cultural worldview of a community. Hence teachers ought to improve on the integration of issues of national unity in their lessons. This can be done through in-servicing and revising of the Kiswahili books so as to integrate issues of national unity as it is vital in nation building.

### **The Challenges that Teachers face in their attempt to Integrate Elements of National Unity in Oral Literature Lessons**

The challenges that teachers face in their attempt to integrate issues to do with national unity in their teaching of oral literature were stated as:

Lack of adequate teaching and learning resources was stated as a challenge. The teachers reported that the textbooks were not adequate, and they also lacked other resources like audio and visual media, artefacts, real objects and other relevant resources. Due to lack of these resources, their lessons were passive as students listened to the teacher and there was very little interaction. Over-reliance on textbooks also was seen as a challenge since the students were advised to read but not to get more information on oral literature from the elder members of the community.

Another challenge was the use of teacher-centred methods of instruction. It was established that due to lack of enough time, lack of resources and finances, teachers mainly used lecture method to teach oral literature. Thus the selection of proper instructional methods was a big challenge to the teachers. Ongunjimi and Abdul-Rasheed (2005) explains that one of the most difficult things to do for a teacher of African culture is to teach African oral

performances within the four walls of a classroom. He further asks: how can a teacher present a people's culture to students, especially when that culture has performances based on spontaneous renditions, community involvement and daily performances of life manifesting in social, political, economic, religious, scientific, metaphysical and other areas of human and cultural endeavours? Someone might say, 'Use video, audio tape or computer simulation'. It is not as simple as that while spontaneous video transmission of oral performances from one setting to another may prove particularly advantageous to the teacher of African oral forms, the audiovisual transmission neither convey the total sense of the spontaneity of the moment nor does it allow the type of participation that the teacher might want of his/her students. From this explanation, it is clear that the teaching of oral literature in the classroom is a difficult task and teachers need to be well trained, experienced and motivated so as to choose the relevant methods of instruction.

Smith (2001) emphasizes that effective teaching requires individuals who are academically able and who care about the well-being of the learner. Too and Kafu (2009) also indicates that in spite of the seriousness attached to planning during training in Kenyan institutions, reports about teachers in the field have raised concern on teacher competence, especially with regard to planning and teaching.

Globalization was also found to be a major challenge in the attempt to integrate elements of national unity in oral literature lessons. It was seen that the teaching of oral literature to the present group of students in Kenyan secondary schools is problematic. It was emphasized that students are completely out of touch, in fact far removed from the proverbial forest of folklore. Samper (2000) also notes that until recently, oral literature as a discipline tended to favour the older, rural story-teller. He further states that age has a certain feel of authenticity and that it is ironic, then that students are asked to look to their elder for wisdom and the resources upon which to build a future by an institution that physically removes them from their family and community. Other than schools in the major cities, most of the secondary schools in Kenya are boarding schools where students live for most of the year. This is a logistical necessity; nonetheless, it removes children from the base which educational ideology positions.

Ongujimi and Abdul-Rasheed (2005) also reiterates that globalization and rapid socio-economic changes exert complex pressures on smaller communities, often eroding expressive diversity and transforming culture through assimilation to more dominant ways of life. This situation needs to be corrected in Africa considering the important role that is played by oral literature in the society. Bacchus (2006) notes that because of the impact of globalization on African countries, there is need to encourage students to embrace their cultural identities and also learn intercultural skills of working together. He further explains that educating students to be culturally sensitive will enable them to interact and work effectively with those from different countries to achieve a just world.

Lack of training, confidence and experience was also found as a challenge. The data revealed that teachers had not attended in-service courses. Six (60%) of teachers had never attended any in-service course on oral literature, 2(20%) had attended 1-2 and 2(20%) had attended 3-4. In-service courses help acquaint the practicing teacher with the latest innovations in the curriculum of his subject. In this way, the teacher is most able to cope with these demands in his area of specialization as well as new approaches and methodology intended to enhance teaching and learning (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992). Hence, no teacher can claim to be fully equipped throughout his/her teaching career. Basing on these views, it is imperative that teachers of Kiswahili should attend in-service courses so as to update their knowledge on oral literature. Barasa (2005, p. 30), while commenting on teacher training, indicates that in-service courses should help teachers re-appraise their work in the classroom, and identify the areas which they need help in the form of training or decision-making.

Furthermore, research carried out by Murunga (2006) and Suter (2008) on oral literature in Kiswahili indicates that there was need for in-service courses for teachers of Kiswahili especially on oral literature. Thus the study reveals that in-service courses for oral literature should be organized. Ipara (2004) argues that the courses for training oral literature in Kiswahili do not emphasize on oral literature, instead aspects of language and grammar together with written literature are emphasized.

Majority of the teachers also stated the content in the syllabus as a challenge to integrating issues to do with national unity. It was found that the syllabus did not outline clearly the integration of the national goals and specific objectives of teaching Kiswahili (oral literature). The teachers reported that they teach oral literature for examination purposes hence they do not emphasize issues of national unity in their lessons. One of the primary goals of education in Kenya has been to foster a sense of nationhood and promote national unity (Eshiwani, 1993). Aluda (2009) asserts that the introduction of oral literature in Kenyan schools and university syllabus was conceived of as a fitting response to the need to Africanize the literature syllabus and in the process orientate the students towards a positive apprehension of their cultural heritage which had suffered under colonialism. Hence the Kiswahili syllabus should be reviewed so that Kiswahili language through its various genres can be used to enhance national unity. The syllabus should also be reviewed in such a way that issues of national unity are well outlined and the concept of Africanizing the literature syllabus should be conceptualized.



Lack of commitment on the part of teachers was also established as a challenge to the teaching of oral literature and the integration of issues of national unity. It was revealed that teachers do not go an extra mile to look for resources from the community or even bother to take students out to the community to collect oral literature materials. Those who were interviewed attributed this to the status of oral literature in Kenyan secondary schools in that teachers and students see this section as easy and needs no extra effort. Oral literature is also not compulsory in the Kiswahili paper 3 KCSE examination. Oral Literature has not been given equal footing with written literature which is compulsory in Kiswahili paper 3. Thus oral literature should be made compulsory in the Kiswahili paper 3, so that the teachers and the students can accord it the seriousness it deserves.

Suter (2008), in a research on oral literature, found out that in the past years, teachers handled Kiswahili oral literature without any seriousness and this could be because this section was not examinable at the end of the four years of secondary school program. The attitude of the teachers of Kiswahili towards Kiswahili oral literature was also negative. Furthermore, the teachers were not teaching using proper instructional methods to enable them achieve their objective. Farrant (2006) emphasizes that effective teachers make purpose and content explicit, plan carefully, use systematic assessment and feedback, make connections, encourage learners to think and model what they want the learners to do. This implies that teachers in Kenyan schools need to improve on planning, teaching and assessment and such an improvement comes as a result of training.

Limited time in terms of lessons was also indicated as a challenge. Seven (70%) teachers who were interviewed indicated that the six/five Kiswahili lessons were not enough to cover all the genres. Hence teachers took a lot of time to teach grammar and written literature because these areas carry high marks in the Kiswahili KCSE examinations. The teachers recommended that the Kiswahili lessons should be increased to 7 so as to be able to teach comfortably and cover all the areas. The teachers noted that the learning of language and literature takes as much time and practice as learning any other skill, therefore, adequate time should be given to ensure that all skills are taught and mastered by the learners.

This study provides the following suggestions in solving the challenges encountered by teachers in the teaching of oral literature in schools in Kenya:

- 1) The school administration should provide teachers with adequate text books and other teaching and learning materials whenever funds are available.
- 2) Teachers should try to adopt student-centred methods for the teaching of oral literature.
- 3) Parents/care givers and teachers should ensure that children thrive in their culture. Mother tongue and other positive cultural factors should be encouraged despite the fast changes that are brought about by globalization.
- 4) KIE should organize in-service courses for teachers on oral literature, especially on methodology and the role of oral literature in the Kenyan society.
- 5) The Kiswahili syllabus should be revised so as to integrate national unity as a national goal and also as an emerging issue in the Kenyan society. The syllabus should also clearly outline the issues of national unity that should be emphasized in Kiswahili as the national language.
- 6) Teachers should be committed to their work because the teaching of oral literature requires commitment especially in sourcing for resources.
- 7) School administrators should give teachers and the surrounding community a chance to interact freely to promote oral literature.
- 8) KIE should allocate more time/ lessons for the teaching of oral literature in Kiswahili.

## CONCLUSION

The teachers do not integrate the elements of national unity in their lessons as the findings indicate that majority of the lessons had integration at a very low extent. The teachers emphasized on vocabulary and examination techniques. This implies that the national goal of national unity is not integrated into the specific objectives in class. In addition teachers used mono cultural examples to teach oral literature instead of the multi cultural examples which are supposed to expose Kenyan children to the diverse culture and nature of the Kenyan community.

The teachers do face challenges in their attempt to teach oral literature in their lessons. These challenges are: lack of adequate teaching and learning resources, methodology, globalization and lack of training and in-serving courses. The Kiswahili syllabus is also not well outlined especially on the integration of the national goal of national unity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers and learners should be encouraged to integrate the elements of national unity in their lesson content since oral literature lends itself well in addressing societal emerging issues. This can be enhanced by utilizing community

resources and enabling the learners to interact with the surrounding community through fieldwork or use of resource persons. They should make use of their immediate environment to acquire knowledge instead of relying on textbooks.

Teachers do face various challenges in their attempt to integrate elements of national unity in the teaching of oral literature. In line with the established challenges, the following recommendations were made:

- Teachers of Kiswahili should be well trained and the teachers should attend more seminars, workshops and in-service courses so as to acquaint themselves with the latest skills and methodology on oral literature.
- The examination format should be revised so that oral literature is compulsory and given good coverage. In past examinations, it has not been compulsory and sometimes it is presented as one question in the form of a poem.
- The Kiswahili syllabus should be revised so as to integrate more content on national unity, patriotism and identity.
- The ministry of education should provide a network system that will assist schools set up cultural centers that will equip both teachers and learners with the required oral literature materials.
- Parents/care givers and teachers should ensure that children thrive in their culture. Mother tongue and other positive cultural factors should be encouraged despite the fast changes that are brought about by globalization.

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