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Challenges faced by Teachers in Implementing agriculture curriculum. The case of Teachers in secondary schools in Baringo County.

Shadrack Cheplogoi

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*Corresponding Author

Shadrack Cheplogoi

Abstract

Implementation is a critical stage in curriculum process. It requires coordination of various human and material resources necessary for the successful curriculum implementation. This study sought to establish the challenges faced by teachers when implementing Agriculture curriculum in secondary schools. Descriptive survey design was used by the study and 12 teachers were sampled using simple random sampling from a population of 50 agriculture teachers in 18 secondary schools in Baringo North district, Baringo county. The results indicate that lack of administrative support by school administrators in the provision of required resources for curriculum implementation, coupled with use of school farms for punishments were among the key challenges hindering the implementation of the agriculture curriculum.

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Introduction

Curriculum Implementation is a critical stage in any school curriculum. This stage demands co-ordination of various human and material resources necessary for successful curriculum implementation. Theorists like Oluoch (1982) and Shiundu and Omulando (1992) concurs with Gross et-al (1971) that the befitting conditions for any implementation requires changing attitudes of people involved when implementing any programme, providing adequate materials, facilities and equipments, training teachers and providing sufficient and continuous, reliable administrative support to teachers.

Although some materials are available in some schools, it is at times difficult to obtain them for use due to bureaucratic nature of some schools adopted in obtaining these instructional materials (Rotumoi, 2005). In the catalytic role model in combined schools, Gross et-al (1971) reported that implementation was hindered by the lack of resource materials and facilities. Orora (1997) also named several elements such as physical facilities, qualified and competent lecturers, curriculum and instructional materials and equipments, teaching and learning strategies, comprehensive and continuous evaluation, and effective management as the main determinants of quality success.

Wafula (1990) in his investigation of the teaching of geography at ordinary level in Harambee schools in Bungoma District noted that the lack of proper text books, teaching Aids and libraries affected the teaching of Geography. According to Tum (1996), unequal supply of educational facilities in the various regions of Kenya is prevalent. In some schools teachers are in adequate while in some, untrained teachers are utilized to teach vital subjects like Agriculture.

The lack of human and material resources, poor attitudes towards agriculture and lack of administrative support poses great challenges in implementation of technical & vocational subjects like agriculture (Koros, 2008). Curriculum implementation must therefore be assessed in terms of its effectiveness. There is need therefore to find

out the challenges faced by agriculture teachers while implementing Agriculture curriculum and this study sought to establish the challenges faced by agriculture teachers in curriculum implementation.

Materials and methods

The study surveyed 12 agriculture teachers from 10 secondary schools in Baringo North District in Baringo County selected using simple random sampling from a population of 50 teachers. A pilot study was carried out at Baringo central district to ensure the reliability of the research instruments. Self-administered Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Data was analyzed using statistical package for social science and presented descriptively by way of frequency tables.

Results and discussions

The findings showed that majority 6(50%) indicated that the content in agriculture syllabus did not contain complex technical issues. However, overwhelming majority 10(83.3%) indicated that agriculture had too wide content on topics of agriculture. On the support by the head teachers, 7(58.33%) agreed that there was lack of support by school head teachers hence affecting implementation of the curriculum. The support here includes availing resources for effective teaching and general motivation on the agriculture teacher.

On frequent changes in Agriculture syllabus, 6(50%) agreed that the changes had negatively affected the implementation of the curriculum while 6(50%) said it had no effect. On workload on Agriculture teachers, 8(66.67%) agreed that there was too much workload for agriculture teacher.

Regarding in-service for agriculture teachers, 10(83.33%) agreed that there was a general lack of in service course for agriculture teachers hence a challenge in the implementation of agriculture curriculum. With regard to current research information, all the respondents 12(100%) agreed that there was lack of current research information which hampered curriculum implementation in Agriculture. On the teachers and students attitude towards Agriculture, the majority 8(66.67%) agreed that there were poor attitudes towards the subject by teachers and students hence hindering the implementation of agriculture.

Regarding the teaching resources, overwhelming majority 11(91.67%) said there was lack of teaching resources for agriculture resulting in the challenges that teachers of Agriculture were facing while implementing the agriculture curriculum. This is in line with what the respondents earlier made on the lack support by head teachers in the provision of the teaching resources. Finally, a majority 9(75%) indicated that agriculture teachers lacked motivation leading the challenges facing implementation of agriculture curriculum.

The study finding clearly highlighted the various challenges in the implementation of Agriculture curriculum. The current poor performance in KCSE would be as a result of these challenges. The key challenges in order of priority in the implementation of agriculture curriculum include; lack of current research information, lack of teaching resources for agriculture, lack of in service courses for agriculture teachers, too wide content on topics in agriculture, lack of motivation for agriculture by teachers and students, too much work load for agriculture teacher, lack of support by principals and frequent changes in agriculture syllabus.

The key challenges influenced the effective teaching and learning situation which consequently influenced performance in the KCSE exams. There is need to address the key challenges by the relevant personnel at the teachers' level, administrators' level, and policy and curriculum development levels in order to effectively implement Agriculture curriculum in secondary school.

Numerous challenges were highlighted as facing teachers while implementing agriculture curriculum. In service courses for teachers was reported to be lacking, yet Brian (1975) says everyone should from time undertake retraining so as to equip themselves with new knowledge or skills that may be needed for implementation of a new programme. New information, practices and technologies in agriculture was felt could be achieved through regular in service courses for teachers. School farms/projects were used by most schools to punish indiscipline students. Again this has had devastating effects on students' interest in agriculture because of its association with punishments. Ongeti (1986) also found out that schools used school farms to punish pupils which have far reaching effects including the development of negative attitudes towards agriculture.

Administrative support was reported to be a critical challenge that teachers were facing. Theorists like Oluoch (1982) and Shiundu and Omulando (1992) while supporting Gross et-al (1971) says that the befitting conditions for any implementation requires changing attitudes of people involved when implementing any programme, providing adequate materials, facilities and equipments, training teachers and providing sufficient and continuous administrative support to the teachers. If teachers are not provided with the necessary teaching/learning resources, then implantation of the curriculum is hampered and this could lead to negative attitudes of teachers towards

Agriculture. According to Koros (2008), poor attitudes towards agriculture and lack of administrative support pose great challenges in implementation of TVET subjects.

Other challenges highlighted in the study include wider content comprising numerous topics which according to this study could lead to boredom on students leading to negative attitudes towards agriculture. Frequent changes in syllabus were also found to be influencing attitudes towards agriculture. While this is a policy issue beyond teachers and administrative control of school, it is important that agriculture teachers' involvement in the revision of the syllabus be considered since they are the implementers. The lack of involvement of teachers in curriculum in syllabus revision was seen as a challenge since it creates unnecessary resistance on the part of the implementers which may go a long way in influencing their attitudes and that of students negatively.

Other challenges established in the study include lack of motivation by teachers, too much workload for teachers and lack of current research information on practices and technologies that would captivate students and create interest in learning. These challenges are viewed according to this study as influencing attitudes of students negatively towards agriculture. There is need to review these findings by policy makers and curriculum developers with a view of bridging the gap that exists at the moment in order to change the attitudes of students positively towards agriculture since it remains a vital sector to the economy of Kenya.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Provision of adequate materials, facilities and equipments to agriculture teachers by school's administration is crucial for effective implementation of agriculture curriculum. Curriculum developers should also consider reducing the long topics of agriculture and instead orient the curriculum into the vital topics of technology and practices that would result in self-reliance for school leavers. Finally, schools and agriculture teachers should not use school farms for punishing students as this tends to influence the attitudes of students negatively hence affecting the curriculum implementation especially for practical topics that require student participation.

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