

Abstracts from the conference

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING – Mathematics in the Historic Environment

The presentation is based on the premise that there exists a relationship between Mathematics and the local history or environment and that the community around a local school can be used as a resource in teaching of Mathematics. The paper is part of a project Known as Mathematics in a historic environment which tries to improve the teaching and learning of Mathematics both in Kenya and Sweden.

The presentation starts by illustrating that although Mathematics is a very important subject in the curriculum its performance has been dismal in the two countries partly because of poor methods of teaching and negative attitude towards the subject. A new method of teaching Mathematics is proposed which tries to make the subject concrete and a live to the learners by using their immediate environment. The paper postulates that the teacher of Mathematics must not only be familiar with Mathematics content at a given level but must also understand local community where the school is located. This will enable him/ her to relate the content to what is familiar and available in the child's environment and therefore teach from known to unknown.

The presentation goes further to identify and explain how some topics in Mathematics syllabus at primary level can be taught using local heritage. They include but are not limited to operations (additions, subtractions, multiplication and subtraction), measurement, geometry, fractions, mass and time. The paper notes four categories of community resources which are available in the community and could be used in teaching. They are resource people (experts in Mathematics concepts, patterns, and shapes); places (avenues of Mathematical value where students can visit); events taking place in the community and specific objects and models. The paper emphasizes that in order to use the community as a resource there is need for support, goodwill and cooperation from the following stakeholders: Local community and its leadership including parents; Mathematics teachers who should be sensitized through seminars/workshops; head teachers of learning institutions who will provide finances and permission for both teachers and pupils to be a way from school; National Examination Council which should incorporate local environment in their assessment; curriculum developers to ensure the curriculum is in line with the new methodology; Quality Assurance Officers to check on whether the new approach is being used and teacher training institutions to train the teachers in the new approach .

The presentation also discusses the benefits of using the local heritage which include making learning interesting, real, relevant, and easy to understand and apply not only at the classroom level but also in everyday life. This will eventually lead to improved performance and preparing learners for effective role in the society. It also improves school- community relationships, develops the community and preserves its resources. The implementation of this approach is likely to face these challenges : Inadequate time for covering the wide syllabus ; large classes which might hinder organization and conveying of field trips and effective utilization of resources in the classroom; lack of expertise on how to use the local environment by Mathematics teachers ; an examination oriented curriculum which emphasizes passing of examination instead of understanding and application of concepts and lastly lack of cooperation from parents, heads of school and education stakeholders who might not see the value of the approach.

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THE ROLE OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Life skills can be defined as skills or tasks that contribute to the successful independent functioning of an individual in adulthood, Cronin (1996). They are also defined as behavior that enables individuals to adapt to and deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life. Research demonstrates that possessing life skills may be critical to young people's ability positively adapt to challenging lifestyles. Through life skills education individuals have been found to, a) make decisions, solve problems and think critically and creatively b) clarify and evaluate values c) communicate be assertive and negotiate d) cope with emotions and stress e) are compassionate. Life skills education have long term benefits to the society which include educational benefits, social benefits, cultural benefits, health benefits and economic benefits.

The secondary school curriculum is largely focused on academics that it is becoming a puzzle to incorporate teaching the youths the skills needed to function in and succeed beyond school. Harper (1993; 1994b) argued that the transition curricula be based on some balance between social norms and societal adult expectations on one hand, and the personal preferences, needs and choices of transition-aged youth on the other. This balance should then guide the development of both objective and subjective criteria for selecting what skills, methods and settings to teach youths with the goal being providing an individualized interpretation of, and promoting life quality.

Various studies have linked life skill education with the community developments. This has been supported by various scholars, in an evaluation study by Gibbs, (1992) he noted that education integrated with Life Skills will make participants learning about themselves and the world of work very important and relevant leading to informed choices on their careers choices. This is further supported by Colon-Wagner (1999) who addressed the need for social workers to provide programs that combine life skills with employment training as part of case management services as she notes in her study on New York City's Work Experience Program (WEP).

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My Language, My heritage

Language as a social tool of interaction is the best natural heritage that a society or individual can inherit. As a major tool of communication and socialization, language exhibits itself as a means by which people express their likes and dislikes, it communicates people's beliefs, feelings, it expresses the "way individuals situate themselves in relationship to others, the way they group and regroup themselves, the powers they claim for themselves and the powers they stipulate to others." A single utterance can reveal much about a speaker, his/her background, place of birth or nation of origin. Such features could be revealed in the use of dialects, accents, ideologies and idiosyncrasies. Because of the relationship between language use and group membership, language, can inspire deep group loyalties. It can serve as a symbol of unification on several levels both individual, local, national, international, political, community and religious. Such like functions express language loyalties, social interaction and societal solidarity. In this context then it is imperative to note that without language, then the human being's survival would be very limited. It is my conviction that the most distinctive factor between a human being and an animal is the intellectual use of language in a more artistic and creative way. Thus language preservation is inevitable.

Frequent use and cultivation of language is one way that enables cultural and heritage preservation in the context of community building. In my local community the term language is referred to as "tongue", this is a reflection of the English reference to "mother tongue". Being a physical part of the body, the interconnectedness of the tongue implies that language is and could be treated like any other part of the human body. Language consciousness is by no means an integral component in our cultures and histories. The cultural bounding of a language enables its users to derive and conceptualize sense out of the repertoires employed. In this sense then, studying a language (s) is symbolic to studying the respective communities. In their research and studies, the ethnographers and ethno-culturist reactivate this consciousness. This presentation is grounded on the fact that Africa displays a multi-cultural linguistic framework. Kenya has over 42 tribes. The recognition, appreciation and preservation of these languages should be treated as an asset and not a liability.

This presentation takes into cognizance the integration of the studies of oral literature in the Kenyan schools and university curriculum as a major step in rethinking of the scientific study of oral literatures. Collection and preservation of oral artifacts is a major means of language preservation and language enhancement. The scientific importance of the cultural heritage and the impact of cultural exchange among different communities, and the educationists is a fact that need not be overemphasized. Research by exchange through collection of oral artifacts draws the educationists closer to the rural communities. For instance, the oral literature research component is an integral part of the Kiswahili program at Maseno University. The field exposure creates a link between the university and the community. The sense of recognition of the local communities by the educationists and vice versa is a fact that cannot be underscored. The utilization of the motifs from folktales, folksongs, proverbs and other ethno-moral texts help revitalize the consciousness and hence the reconstruction and reshaping of the past and future not only of the language in question but the community at large.

This presentation critically analyses the use of poems and sayings in praise and placement of language as a community heritage. Supportive data is drawn from poems and sayings from various communities. In conclusion, it is envisaged that the presentation adds a voice to the theoretical and practical thinking on how time travel forums can be used to recollect peoples stories, poems, songs and dances, sayings and proverbs as a repository to language praise and revitalization in the context of cultural heritage.

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Community Heritage Centres – Visual Interpretation adds value

Heritage sites have hidden histories whose value is misplaced and often ignored due to inadequacy of visual strategies and their management. Most interpretive strategies in creating site values focus on human to human interface. The use of art and design media can be employed to add value and attract sustainability of our heritage sites through local resource appropriation.

This study could not assume the inadequacy of the use of visual interpretation media. An attempt is made to analyse existing practices and forecasts on the social and intellectual forces that cause, approve and support the use, management of local heritage sites and their values to the visiting publics. The integrated approaches explore the harnessing of local talent, locally available resources, in the policies, design, production of media that brings out the otherwise hidden meanings of the sites. Media focuses on simple panels with site information, signage, content and design forms.

The use of specific cases in Kenya, other situations in Africa demonstrate that despite the shortcomings to achieving sustenance, available expertise, that social and intellectual settings is sufficient to improve current practices, processes and increase site value and its wise utilisation. It also prescribes the design of new strategies with integrated approaches in order to realise growth and self-sufficiency of the sites in responding to local community needs.

The purpose of this presentation is therefore to put into perspective the obstacles posed by inadequacy of design professionalism and prescribing use of local resources, capacity building of local artistic talent for site documentation and education, training and harnessing of local skills. Most of the research examples and general information are sited in demonstrating the challenges and their potential solutions.

A glossary at the end defines commonly used terms arranged broadly by subject and linkages.

Keywords; Visual interpretive media, site value-addition, integrated local cultural and professional resources, societal needs, sustainability, profitability.

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Intergeneration Knowledge Transfer – Revisiting past experiences

Community elders are very important Educational resource persons because of their experiences within their respective communities. At a certain point in time they were young men and women who actively participated in the community's well structured traditional Educational system. The traditional system of imparting knowledge is holistic with each and every stage in life well covered with appropriate learning activities. Some of the stages were marked with ceremonies/initiations to mark the individuals' graduation to the next stage of development. Today our society is facing a number of challenges in using this effective method in transfer of knowledge due to dynamics in our social development. Formal education system has little room for children to spend time with their grandparents. It is only during these interactions with elders that the children can learn to appreciate their heritage sites. Today we know that most community's heritage sites have lost the reverence and values they used to be held with. The reason for this is because our youth have not been enlightened about them. It is time for our education policy makers came up with policies on how Heritage Education can integrate elders so that certain moral values can be imparted onto the younger generations.

It may be practically challenging to think of conserving our heritage sites without making use of them. One way we can 'exploit' them is by using them not only for tourism but also as outdoor experiential learning laboratories for our youths, an opportunity to make them interact with elders (Wazees). This way we shall interest them. In effect this interaction will foster conservation of heritage sites from knowledge imparted from the Wazees to the youth on values of the sites.

Interactive sessions between the knowledge holders are very important in transmission of this knowledge. A number of methods were used in knowledge transmission, though mostly, it was done orally. However, the media used varied from idioms, participation, plays dances, poems and many more.

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A reflection Mpophomeni Community in South Africa

Oral History a possible solution to an effective teaching and learning of local history in the Classroom:

Local History which is sometimes called indigenous knowledge is that type of knowledge that is unique to a particular culture or society. Local history usually is passed from one generation to the next orally or through cultural rituals. It has been proven beyond any shadow of doubt that local history has been a corner stone of most of the rituals, customs and activities of most indigenous societies today. These societies have stood the test of time because they have been holding on to what was passed down to them by their elders. It is such heritage that has sustained these societies hence they seem to thrive while the rest of the globe is struggling to survive under fluctuating environments. However, formal education systems have disrupted the practical everyday life aspects of indigenous knowledge and ways of learning, replacing them with abstract knowledge and academic ways of learning. Today, there is a grave risk that much indigenous knowledge is being lost and, along with it, valuable knowledge about ways of living sustainably. The purpose of this paper is to find a solution of re-introducing indigenous knowledge into our classrooms, and be part and parcel of the modern curriculum so that learners and teachers can learn not only the western education but both local history and modern approaches of learning and teaching. Mpophomeni is a wetland, there is a lot of live and natural resources that are at stake as we speak, and they will disappear if the environment is neglected. Although Indigenous Knowledge Systems are not formally part of the South African National Curriculum, it can be still taught through oral history.

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TRADITION AND HERITAGE – A CASE OF THE HELLS KITCHEN IN THE KENYAN COAST

Cultural studies have become a major pre-occupation of literary critics. The contemporary society has a feeling that such heritage needs to be preserved to enhance communities socially and economically. Given that tradition is a mirror through which societal contents are viewed, then it's important that any aspect of culture in a given society is found in the language. It's also evident that oral literature found in all communities is the oldest form of word art and it outlines the members' values, attitudes, interactions and perceptions towards one another. It also shows how people interact with the environment. All these activities are a product of a given culture and they give direction and educate society's members whenever need arises. This study seeks to discuss the heritage of hells kitchen and it's social –economic value to the society.

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Library, Education and Conflict management

This paper discusses the role of Libraries in promoting education and solving conflict in our society. It look at the possibilities of using libraries which play a vital role in education and conflict management in our society. Libraries being a store house of knowledge and knowledge as we know has always implied power. The story of civilization indicates that libraries have been an essential part of the civilized society. These come into being to serve the needs of the society. Libraries have played an important part in the social, political economic and cultural development of the society. The paper concludes with recommendation for libraries to support education and conflict management in our society.

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EDUCATION, HERITAGE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION – THE CASE OF THE RENDILLE AND SAMBURU OF MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA

Marsabit County is the largest and driest county in Kenya and the home of about twelve (12) ethnic communities some which are either friendly or hostile to each other. Hostility is a result of competition over limited resources in the hostile environment. This presentation focuses on two of the communities; Rendille who live in Kaisut desert and the Samburu who occupy Laisamis, Karare and Korr and attempts to highlight how conflicts could be minimized among them using a variety of strategies. The first strategy is where one can focus on is the local history of the communities in conflict e.g the history of the origins of the communities, their interdependence over time and traditional conflict resolution strategies which the communities have applied over the decades. The saying among the Rendille that the Samburu are “enemies we can talk to” unlike the Turkana whom they refer to “enemies we cannot talk to” can be used to foster peace and reconciliation in case of conflicts. Another strategy proposed is using what is common among them or what unites them e.g Samburu language is used as a means of communication among some Rendille and the Samburu.

Although the Rendille are Cushitic and the Samburu are Nilotic, a number of them can communicate using one local language. They also have common rites of passage for both male and female, some similar clans and institution of the morans. One can also appeal to the existing alliances and close relationships among individuals, sub-clans and clans. Old marriage alliances can be used or new ones created/ promoted among members of the two communities. The use of traditional belief systems and customs such as it is a curse to murder or even raid a neighboring community and belief in one God can be another strategy to be put in place. Lastly one can appeal to their Christian faith and Christian teaching of brotherhood, equality, love, peace and forgiveness since a number of them has been converted to Christianity. Formal education can be a tool of peace and reconciliation. This will entail using the present primary school social studies syllabus to inform and empower children as future leaders and adult players in their communities. From class 4 to 8 some topics keep on recurring which if taught with examples and illustrations from the local community will enhance peace and prevent conflicts. They include law, peace, and reconciliation with sub- topics such as: The importance of peace, causes of conflicts, ways of solving conflicts, importance of law and order, factors undermining law and order and effects of lawlessness in society.

Other topics are citizenship, democracy and human rights and the Kenya constitution. Addressing issues of conflict in the classroom using local examples prepares the children on how to handle conflicts in their communities. Non formal education can also be an additional strategy which uses popular education concept and calls for community participatory approach in addressing its issues. All community members should be actively involved in solving their problems. Last and not least conflict and reconciliation can be addressed by applying pre and post combustion measures where people are called upon to analyze and reflect on the possible effects of the conflict before its onset and after.

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