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Revitalizing Assignment Pedagogy to enhance Teaching and Learning of Social Sciences in selected Secondary Schools in Nzau Sub County, Makeni County, Kenya

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Abstract

Assignment is a teaching and Learning method that involves the teacher giving the learners a piece of work to be done outside classroom time but the work is within content learned and within learners' ability. This study seeks to investigate how assignment method is used in Teaching and Learning of Social Sciences and ways of revitalizing it. The study was to be guided by three objectives that is; to establish the purpose of Assignment in Teaching and Learning of Social Sciences, to establish the extent of use of Assignment in Teaching and Learning of Social Sciences and to explore ways in which Assignment can be effectively used in Teaching and Learning Social Sciences. The design of this study was descriptive Survey of the selected Secondary Schools in Nzau Sub County. The target population was all Secondary Schools in Nzau Sub County. The sample size was arrived at through systematic sampling where every 10th school was selected from a list of all schools in the Sub County. Data for this study was collected using two research tools constructed by the researchers a checklist for document analysis and questionnaire for Social Science teachers in sampled schools. Only subject heads were given questionnaires to respond to. The Data generated was organized per Social Science subjects studied, summarized into themes and analyzed. The study findings indicated that 95% of respondents agree that assignment serve purpose in teaching and learning process, however, only 38% of teachers reported giving learners assignment and Revision assignment was the most frequently given assignment at 20%. The study concluded that there is urgent need to revitalize assignment pedagogy.

Key Words: *Revitalizing, Assignment, pedagogy, Teaching and Learning*

Introduction

Assignment is part of internal evaluation process in the teaching and learning process. Assignment has been defined in various ways for example Agumba et al (2009), defines it as a method which involves the teacher giving learners a piece of work to be done, individually or as a group. Both teachers and learners have had hostile attitude towards assignment as involving and taking away their free time and serving no useful purpose in the teaching and learning process. However, studies have shown that assignment properly done have immense value as an additional learning tool. Assignment increases knowledge, create habits of self learning, develops skills along other benefits. Therefore, the need to develop positive attitude towards assignments and embrace them as a learners' instrument of the 21st Century as observed by Adair (2008).

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) introduced Teachers Performance Appraisal and Development Tool (TPAD) in (2016) to enhance teachers' professional performance of duties. The TPAD has Teacher's class attendance schedule which makes giving assignments mandatory in every lesson. This study investigated the purpose of assignment, the extent to which teachers give assignment and ways of making assignment effective and concluded that assignments are part and parcel of teaching and learning and should be revitalized for effective learning to take place. The 21st Century Pedagogy should focus on Teaching and learning that develops thinking Skills, encouraging collaboration with others, use of enabling technologies, assessing students and developing problem solving, encouraging reflection and use of project-based learning where assignment falls.

Schools are places where learning is expected to take place. However, as noted by Thomas G (2017) learners have the perception that it is not their own responsibility to learn on their own it is teacher's responsibility to teach. The teacher has many responsibilities such as discipline, class management, accounting to various

stakeholders among other as observed by Leonard M. (2015) such that the teacher has no time and interest to give assignments as a learning tool. Assignment, studies have revealed is viewed as massive unhappiness to both learners and teachers, yet assignments are designed to increase learners' knowledge, create habit of self learning which leads to high learning out comes as noted by Davis B (2009).

This study set out to explore ways in which assignment pedagogy can be revitalized for effective teaching and learning of Social Sciences in selected Secondary Schools in Nzau Sub County, Makueni County in view of the fact that Teachers Performance Appraisal and Development Tool (TPAD) requires teachers to give assignment in every lesson as per their schemes of work.

This study was guided by the following three specific objectives, to establish the purpose of assignment, To investigate the extent of use of assignment in Teaching and Learning social sciences and to propose ways of making assignment effective in teaching and learning of social sciences. The overall purpose was to facilitate revitalization of assignments pedagogy in teaching and learning of Social Sciences as an effective learning instrument.

Methodology

Description survey was adopted in this study which according to Wills and David (2016) enabled explanation of purpose, extend and ways of revitalizing assignment pedagogy in teaching and learning of Social Sciences. The location of the study was Nzau Sub County, Makueni County. The study location was selected because one of the researchers is based in the Sub County and as pointed out by Osoro et al (2013), this was conducive for the study as data was collected from respondents who were not uncooperative and suspicious as the researcher was one of their own. a view supported by Kothari (2013).

The target population was 55 Public Secondary Schools in Nzau Sub County according to Nzau Sub County vital Education statistics (2019). There are no Private Secondary Schools in Nzau Sub County. The study sample was obtained by use of systematic sampling procedure in which every 10th Secondary School of the total 55 secondary schools from a randomized list was picked. This gave a sample size of 6 secondary schools. Every Secondary School had equal chance of being selected as noted by Kothari (2013), the size amounted to 11%.

Data was collected using self designed questionnaire which facilitated collection of data which could not be directly observed, such as views, opinions, perception and feeling of the respondents as observed by Will and David (2009). This data was supplemented by use of a checklist on learners' exercise books where frequency of given assignments and marking of the assignments was established. The checklist which was a document analysis enabled the researcher to obtain un obstructive information at the pleasure of the researcher and without interrupting the study as noted by Will and David (2016). The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentages.

The study reviewed related literature as follows, Assignment has been defined by Florence et al (2008) as giving specific tasks to learners in order to enhance their learning. This can be done at home or in school during study time. Teachers Service Commission introduced Teachers Performance Appraisal Development tool (TPAD 2016), with aim of enhancing teachers to prepare proper Teaching documents.

These documentaries include schemes of work, lesson plans and lesson notes. The schemes of work have a section of assessment/evaluation where teachers indicate how their lesson will be assessed and assignment is considered one of the assessment modes and should be reflected on lesson plan. The TPAD also has a checklist which includes Teachers lesson attendance supposed to be filed by class representatives and requires that teachers' give assignment at the end of every lesson.

Teacher Service Commission recognizes the importance of assignment that is why they required it from teacher at the end of every lesson. However, no studies have been done to evaluate teacher's compliance with giving of assignments as per TPAD requirement, this is a gap which the current study intends to fill by investigating the extend of giving learners assignment by teachers in the teaching of Social Sciences.

Assignments to be good need to meet the following criteria According to Jane. et al (2012), be related to topic being investigated, brief and easy to comprehend, clear in purpose and aims flexible, simulative, appealing and suitable to learners age and ability. Teachers need to be aware of the causes and effects of employing variety of tools in delivering knowledge, paying attention to the fact that every learner learns in a personal way as observed by Kiongo, (2013).

The new Competency Based Curriculum (2017) outlines written assignment as one of the Key Assessment Mode. Therefore, it can be concluded that assignment pedagogy needs to be revitalized in teaching and learning of Social Sciences to meet the need of the new curriculum, it will create critical thinkers who will search for answers to the most pressing questions of humanity as noted by CEMASTE A (2017).

Findings and Discussion

The data generated was organized and summarized into themes. The findings of the study on purpose of assignment on objective one reveals that 95% of respondents agree that assignments serve purpose in teaching and learning process. The following were cited as purposes served by assignment.

Table 1 Purpose of Assignment

Purpose of Assignment	Percentage of Respondents
Develops self-study habits	50%
Interest in a particular subject	60%
Building self confidence	40%
Time management	65%
Develop scientific attitude	30%
Self-discipline	50%
Opportunity to work on own	45%

Other purposes highlighted are, 6 learners learn to collaborate, links schools and community, promote good relationship between the teacher and learners and suits diverse abilities of learners. From the above findings, assignment serve great purpose in teaching and learning in preparing the 21st learners for challenges of daily life. The extent to which teachers adopted assignments for teaching and learning, the results are summarized in the table below.

Table 2 Comparison of Subject Frequency of Giving Assignments

History 30%	C.R.E 27%	Geography 24%
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From the above results History is the Social Science subject that gives high frequency of assignments; however, it is below average and expectations.

Table 3 Extent to which Teachers give Assignments as Evidenced by Teachers’ Schemes of Work and Learners’ Note Books

	Types of assignment	Percentage	Frequency per week
i	Preparatory assignment	8	Once per week
ii	Study assignment	12	Once per week
ii	Revision assignment	20	Twice per week
iii	Remedial assignment	18	Once per week

From the above findings, revision assignment is the most frequently given assignment in Social Studies and respondents cited mastery of content already covered and to indicate gaps in learning as reasons for giving revision assignments frequently. However, the above percentage is below expectations as they are below average and below Teachers Performance Appraisal and Development tool requirements of an assignment in every lesson taught.

Ways of Revitalizing Assignment

The respondents stated the following as what they considered when giving assignment in order to revitalize them be appealing to learners, within learners’ abilities, flexible and requiring reasonable period of time to complete, be definite, clear and related to learning objectives or the topic under discussion. The respondents at 60% felt that assignment was an effective teaching tool and proposed the following as ways of making it effective: choice of task to be done either by the teacher or the learner. The assignment should be made appealing to learner and related to content objectives, the time frame for completion should be reasonable and flexible. The teacher should direct learners where to get information and properly supervised the learners in carrying out the assignment and offer appropriate feedback.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn; Assignments are important teaching and learning instrument, majority of teachers 62% do not give their learners assignment. Revision assignments is the commonly administered assignment at 20% frequency and as Educators and Government pay attention to international comparisons in order to reform and transform education, special attention should be paid to assignment pedagogy by revitalizing it to enable the 21st learners be a doer in learning rather than recipient of content. In conclusion this study affirms that assignment though useful as teaching and learning tool is not being utilized by most teachers.

Recommendation

Based on findings and conclusions of this study the following recommendations can be drawn

- i). With the current Curriculum reforms and skills-based approaches, learning expected is to give Kenya the ability to incorporate knowledge, technology, creativity and innovation, in daily work, assignment, and pedagogy should be emphasized as daily work is an assignment that must be accomplished.
- ii). Teachers need to be retooled on how to administer, supervise and evaluate assignment pedagogy.
- iii.) Studies need to be carried out on why only 38% of teachers in Social Sciences gave assignment.

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