

**How Teachers Understand, Respond to, and Implement
Values Education in Kenyan Schools**

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Summary

My study brings to the fore the individualistic and contextual nature of values and values education. The variance, as is largely argued in this study, is embedded in deep-rooted beliefs and experiences, and the environment that the respective teachers find themselves in. Values and values education has been a sticky issue since time immemorial. The challenge continues to surround the questions of definition, whose values, which values, and how best to promote them.

This study specifically investigates the seemingly sensitive political/religious, but critical question of how teachers, in the midst of a complex and non-homogenous society, respond to values. The study, through a retrospective analysis of the development curve of values education in Kenya, unearths the dilemma that teachers and policy makers experience as they attempt to get to grips with the concept of values and appropriate pedagogical methods to apply in the promotion of such values.

Through a broad based literature review combined with primary data collected in Kenya, I attempt to explain the intricacies of the stark and stubborn disparity that exists between policy stated aims and actual practice. This disparity, I argue, is largely because issues that affect teachers' personal lives have not featured adequately in the policy arena. The findings suggest that such issues are considered "messy" and inappropriate for scientific analysis. Secondly, they are delicate convictions, belonging to the private realm, and thus a challenge to unravel as scholars fear intruding on the personal lives of teachers.

In order to unearth the intricacies of teacher beliefs and practices, I adopted a participatory approach in this study. The direct contact and discussions with teachers enabled me to untangle the web surrounding the meanings teachers attach to values as a concept. Through observation sessions, I began to appreciate how teachers negotiate these meanings simultaneously with their hectic classroom practice.

This study contributes to the discourse on values education by confirming a subtle framework used by teachers. Previous studies have identified two mindsets that teachers use in their professional practice; i.e. rational and emotional. In this study, I add that there is a subtle consideration that teachers constantly refer too, which I call the "survival framework". I found that teachers, due to the loss in the paternalistic pattern of home, school and church

with regards to values, have less confidence in deciding what values to promote. Due to the volatile emotions that values can elucidate, teachers have devised individual ways of interpreting values whilst ensuring that their professional assignment is not jeopardised. It is due to this individualistic approach, that experiences in values education were manifold.

I conclude the study by stating that the “survival” interpretive framework confirms three basic principals. Firstly, values will constantly be in a state of construction and reconstruction. Secondly, there is no direct correlation between holding a value and acting upon it; and lastly, values education efforts can only hope to reduce the gap in interpretation and implementation, but will never accomplish a standardised democratic system across the board.

Key words

Values, curriculum, education, Kenya, teachers, understanding, interpretation, practise, morals, beliefs.

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Declaration of originality

I, Maggie Okore, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work, and has not been submitted previously for any degree at any university.

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Maggie Okore

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