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Research Article

## **Social Studies Curriculum Content, and Respect among Preschool Children in Nairobi County, Kenya: Focusing on Relevance.**

**Ganira Khavugwi Lilian, Odundo Amollo Paul, Gatumu Jane.C & Muasya Njeri J.**

Department of Educational Communication and Technology, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

P.O BOX 30197-00100 Nairobi, Kenya.

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**ABSTRACT:** Social studies curriculum content develops opportunities for learners to interact and address multiple and diverse perspectives for enriching respectful and personal lives for a democratic society. Formation of social interactions and engagements enables learners to acquire and apply dispositions for shaping character as respectful citizens. Recognizing people and activities in school, and care for property cultivates sense of respectfulness among preschool learners for nurturing social integrity. Respectful citizens are self-regulating, aware of other's opinions and communicate effectively as liable citizens. The study adopted an evaluation research model based on both quantitative and qualitative interpretative paradigms. The social constructivist theoretical framework was used to determine relevance of social studies curriculum content in enhancing the value of respect among preschool children in Nairobi County. Themes on neighborhood, my school and health practices were singled out to determine how learners develop respect as a value. The target population was 98 preschool teachers purposely sampled from 211 preschools. Questionnaire for preschool teachers were used as the main data collection instruments. Quantitative data was summarized and organized according to research questions and arranged into themes for analysis. The findings indicated that social studies curriculum content is relevant in enhancing respect among preschool children. The study recommended that teachers should create a learning environment for learners to listen to each other's point of view, contribute own ideas and appreciate diversity as respectful citizens. For policy the study recommended that structures that encourage respect as a value should be included in school missions and visions for learners to imitate from formative years to adulthood.

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**Key words:** Content; Curriculum; Learner; Preschool; Relevance; Respect; Social studies

### **[1] Introductions**

Social studies curriculum content assists learners to nurture respect as a societal value relevant for class interactions and effective citizenship. Relevant interactions would develop sensitivity, awareness, values and behavior expectations for learners to acquire respect for social cohesion and survival in life. According to Morris (2017) respectful learners speak politely to one another, refrain from harsh remarks, and support standards of dignity for societal existence. Respect is achieved when learners develop an awareness of other's emotions and view points, ability to regulate feelings, appreciate others, and use courteous words in communication. Agreeing with these sentiment Zimmerman (2009), considered social studies a powerful tool for inculcating right values of the society by enabling children emerge as respectful citizens. Based on this realization, relevance of social studies curriculum content should strengthen learners' interaction focusing on respect as a vital life skill for survival in school, home and society. However, Risinger (2012) observed that social studies content has not been appropriately implemented to equip learners with essential skills for enhancing respect as a positive value. In supporting of this assertion, Ghazi (2018) affirmed that issues in social studies in creating respectfulness as a value emanate from content and implementation, teacher knowledge, curriculum alignment, crowdedness in class, time

on task and school policy. Drawing from this assertion, teachers should create a learning environment for learners to listen to each other's point of view, contribute own ideas and appreciate diversity as respectful citizens.

Social studies curriculum content relevance is dependent on existing societal knowledge, skills attitudes and values for encouraging learners develop respect as a prized value. Akumanyi (2007) stressed that acquisition of sense of being courteous and considerate of others is dependent on what is learnt in early stages of life. Courtesy and being considerate defines respect to family and community members, seniors in the surrounding, friends, and care about rights, beliefs and well-being. Further, Nickerson (2011) indicated that social studies curriculum content focuses on development of transferrable values learners need to demonstrate acts of respectfulness in a democratic society. In instances where social studies curriculum content is implemented effectively, learners are likely to empathize with others, practice tolerance, recognize seniors, be courteous and polite, and make decisions independently as respectful citizens. Further, Seefeldt, Castle and Falconer (2010) stressed that learning values assist children to avoid insults, cruel remarks and rude or crude language. To achieve this, Shuttleworth, and Marri, (2014) proposed the need for redirecting social studies curriculum

content to a powerful tool for inculcating respect as a positive value among learners. In support of this argument, Ganira, Odundo and Mwanda (2015) indicated that knowledge and skills imbedded in early childhood education curriculum enables learners to develop values vital for survival in modern world. Based on this realization, the study examined relevance of 'neighborhood, my school and health practices' in enhancing respect among preschool children in Nairobi County.

**a. Social Studies Curriculum Content, Neighborhood and Respect**

Social studies curriculum expands learners' awareness beyond family and school into the neighborhood and wider society for communal cohesiveness. This is in line with Hadzigeorgiou and Skoumios (2013) affirmation that awareness of nature and importance of immediate environment gives real meaning to appreciation of diversity and development of respectfulness among learners. Knowledge on awareness of the surrounding should empower learners to engage in personal and social responsive behavior that can nurture respect. This position is further supported by Rahim and Rahiem (2012) assertion that knowledge on community outside home is founded from social interactions where learners form mutual relationships and develop skills and attitudes for imparting moral integrity and participating in decision making as respectful individuals. Beginning with interactions in family, neighborhood and schools, learners are likely to establish foundations for developing appreciation for others by listening and accepting ideas and feelings of individuals within the environment. Hence, Odundo, Ganira and Milimu, (2017) acknowledged that in schools where value system are entrenched in all curricular, learners demonstrate independence, increased motivation for learning, and improved social interactions for nurturing respect. Improved social interactions are likely to provide learners with capacities required for succeeding in school and throughout life. In an earlier observation, Lisa and Willibald (2015) argued that respectfulness is developed from knowledge on activities and appreciating what others do within the neighborhood. Drawing from this, the study considered knowledge on persons living in the neighborhood, work activities in the environment and recognizing seniors in community as vital in enhancing respectfulness among learners.

**b. Social studies Curriculum Content, My School and Respect**

Social studies curriculum content develops knowledge and skills for informed and reasoned decision making, interactions for appreciating diversity and consideration for others. Nickerson (2011) suggested that social studies curriculum help learners in developing respect as a transferable value. Knowledge about people in school, activities and care for school property should instill sense of respect among learners. According to Risinnger (2012) social studies curriculum content helps learners to become part of the society, sensitive learners need to be critically literate in order to synthesize

to community challenges, demonstrate high order thinking and demonstrate mutual respect for self and others. Sense of respect would empower learners to emerge as functional and responsive citizens. However, Oluwagbohunmi (2013) noted discrepancy between the stated social studies curriculum content objectives and behavioral disposition of learners in society. Supporting these sentiments Odundo and Ganira (2017) in an article on teacher position in spurring value based education, affirmed that although teachers develop values to children, both deliberately and unconsciously, there is inadequate planned education programme established on formal learning. Inadequate planning for value education impede realization of social studies curriculum goal of producing informed and responsible citizens from early childhood period. Based on this realization, content on 'my school' should be effectively implemented to enhance respect as a positive value. This can be achieved through equipping learners with essential skills for practicing respectful processes of engagement, and developing passion for contributing to the common goal of social studies curriculum.

**c. Social studies Curriculum Content, Health Practices and Respect**

Social studies curriculum content provides opportunities for learners to practice hand washing, table etiquette and toileting for developing appropriate habits during formative years. According to Copple and Bredekamp (2009) relevance of pre-school social studies curriculum content is crucial in developing learners' sense of appropriate health practices. Appropriate health practices is achieved through cultivating right dispositions for reinforcing respectfulness among preschool children. Agreeing with this argument, Gleddie (2011) noted that words used by learners in class when in need of using the toilet is the beginning of respectfulness acts that should be nurtured during early learning years. To achieve this, teaching and learning health practices should focus on nurturing skills, knowledge and attitudes that support behavior for developing respectfulness. Dalyop (2014) outlined that pre-school learning on health practices should enhance hygiene and pro-social behavior that prevent learners from diseases. Thus, Ganira and Odundo (2017) suggested that teachers should integrate content on value creation skills into learning experiences for strengthening class interaction and communal co-existence. In concurrence, Adamowitsch, Lisa and Wolfgang (2017) suggested that school should be committed to implementing health practices through authentic content for developing skills, attitudes, values and competencies that cultivate abilities vital for decision making. When this is implemented, learners are likely to adopt a healthy lifestyle during schooling for the rest of their lives. In this regard preschool teachers were requested to state the extent knowledge on hand washing; table etiquette; and toileting could enhance respectfulness among learners.

**[2] Statement of the problem**

The KICD (2017) social studies guide book recognizes that information and make morally informed decisions for societal

coexistence. Further, preschool social studies curriculum content should contain what learners need in terms of knowledge, skills, values and commitment to become respectful citizens. However, in an article on influences of pedagogical content knowledge of graduate social studies teachers, Quashigah, Eshun and Mensah (2013) revealed that due to the hurried nature of presenting content, teachers tend to focus on cognitive domain of learning and miss out on psychomotor domains which are crucial in developing values among learners. This position was supported by Wayne Ross, Mathison and Vinson (2013) in an article on social studies education and standards-based education reform in North America who criticized the subject for failing to produce responsible citizens. Social studies curriculum content is considered relevant when learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and commitment to be informed and responsible citizenship. Further, Wayne Ross, Mathison, and Vinson, (2013), criticized the subject for failing to produce responsible citizens. Much of the criticism surrounding teaching of social studies are its commitment to promoting civic responsibility therefore leaving a gap between what learners achieve in class and behavior dispositions exhibited. This study considered hand washing, table etiquette and toileting as crucial developing mutual respect among learners.

**[3] Purpose and objectives**

The purpose of this study was to determine relevance of social studies curriculum content for enhancing respectfulness among preschool children in Nairobi County, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study is to determine how relevant social studies curriculum content on neighborhood, my school and health practices enhances the value of respect among preschool children in Nairobi County.

**[4] Theoretical Perspectives**

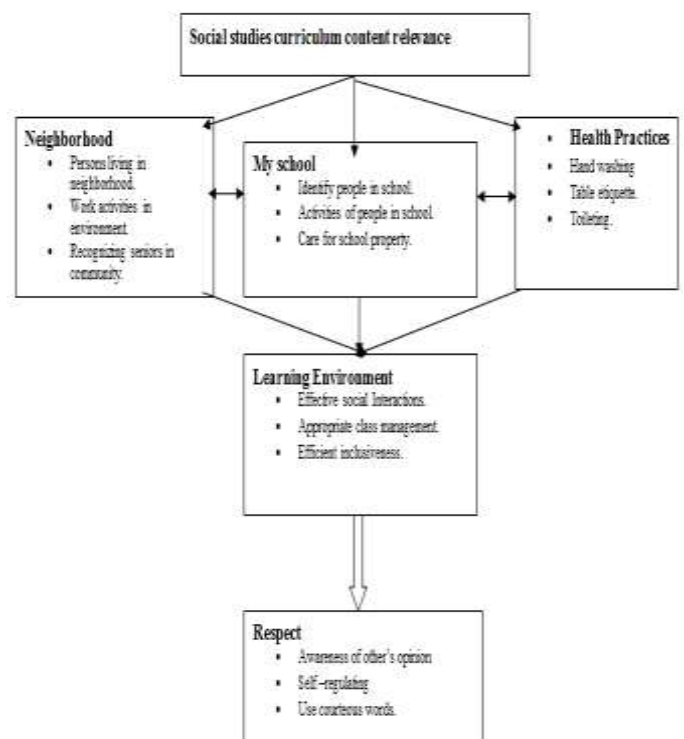
The study was anchored on social constructivist approach Vygotsky (2005) as its theoretical framework. Social constructivist perspective emphasizes learning through societal interaction and values placed on cultural background of the learner. According to Vygotsky (2005) effective learning depends on learner interaction structured and designed by the teacher. To achieve this, teachers should design the learning environment to nurture and enhance thoughtful engagements that help learners develop effective interactions that contribute to problem solving and mutual respect for surviving in life. In support of this position, Bracken and Fischel, (2007) acknowledged that social constructivist approach emphasizes modern values through active learner participation. Through active learner participation, social constructivist approach provide a better opportunity to link learner knowledge, skills and values taught in class to personal and practical life experiences. Thus, the study considered preschool learners as an essential value in the learning process as posited by Vygotsky (2005), who thought knowledge acquisition process an interactive communication.

**[6] Methodology**

Drawing from these, teachers should structure learning activities to support learners develop skills that enhance positive interaction geared towards receptiveness in society. In concurrence, Vygotsky (2005) and supported by Kukk (2010) affirmed that value education is more successful when teaching and learning takes place in social situations. In practice social constructivists approach knowledge exchange has gained importance in the social environment. Agreeing with Bracken and Fischel (2007), this study was designed on the basis of social constructivist principles that value education depends on social environment and the ability of teachers to provide learners with competencies which would empower demonstration of effective citizenship. In this regard, neighborhood, my school, and health practices were singled out as crucial in enabling preschool learners develop mutual respect.

**[5] Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework illustrates relationship between independent and depended variables in implementation of preschool social studies curriculum content. Relevance of social studies curriculum content is dependent on implementation of ‘neighborhood, my school and health practices’. Specifically knowledge on; Persons living in the neighborhood; work activities in the environment; recognizing seniors in the community and people in school; activities in school; care for school property; hand washing and table etiquette toileting would nurture development of respect among learners. In instances where social studies content is implemented effectively, learners are likely to develop an awareness of other’s emotions and view points, ability to regulate feelings, appreciate others, and use courteous words in communication as illustrated in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual frame work on relevance of social studies curriculum content and respect**

The study adopted an evaluation research model based on both quantitative and qualitative interpretative paradigms. According to Scriven (1991) and supported by Stufflebeam (2000) evaluation determines the merit, worth and value of a programme for purposes of decision making. Quantitative approach as described by Creswell (2009) is a means for examining the relationship among variables in a study. The variables are measured so that the data generated can be analyzed using statistical procedure. Qualitative approach on the other hand enables understanding and interpretation of situations, events and meaning from people involved. Agreeing with this argument Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, (2011), explained that in qualitative interpretative paradigm words are emphasized when collecting and analyzing data instead of frequencies and distributions. In this study, quantitatively concepts and issues that influence value of responsibility among preschool children in Nairobi County was examined precisely. At the same time concepts emerging from the data were worked on iteratively between the themes to establish a comprehensive conclusion.

Using stratified random sampling, preschools were selected from each of Nairobi's 11 sub-counties. Stratified random sampling was systematically carried out to ensure each of the 11 sub counties were represented on the basis of the percentage number of preschools (Saunders et al, 2009). From the selected schools, preschool teachers were purposely sampled to provide information. Data collection instrument are used in securing information under study from a selected number of respondents (Creswell and Piano Clark, 2011). Data collection for this study employed the use of questionnaires for preschool teachers. The researcher depended on supervisors and two expert statisticians in verifying the content validity of the questionnaire, interview schedules, observation guide, and documentary analysis guide. In concurrence with Ghauri and Grenhaug (2010) improving validity of instruments involves identifying vague questions and deficiencies then make improvements plus providing clarity of instructions. In this study, assistance and suggestions from the supervisors was used to make clarify questions where necessary and slot in new items. In order to establish reliability, the questionnaire was administered to the same pilot sample twice in an interval of two weeks. As noted by Creswell and Piano Clark (2011) the two week interval was appropriate to avoid the impact of repetition and to disuse by respondents.

**[7] Study Findings and Discussions**

**Relevance of Social Studies Curriculum Content on Respectfulness**

*Nickerson, (2011) suggested that social studies curriculum should focus on development of transferrable values children need to be respectful citizenship. In this study, reinforcing values of respectfulness through teaching social studies curriculum was viewed as a way of laying foundation for effective citizenry. In this regard, preschool teachers were asked how*

*relevant themes of neighbourhood, my school and health practices enhance respectfulness among children in Nairobi County.*

**Neighbourhood**

Social studies curriculum emphasizes integration of **positive values modelled** for the purpose of well-being of learners within their neighbourhood (Tirri, 2011). **Among the positive values that need to be integrated in social studies is respectfulness among preschool children. In this study preschool teachers were asked the extent to which teaching on persons living in neighbouring area, work activities in the environment and recognizing seniors in the community would enhance respectfulness among children in Nairobi County. The results were presented in Table 4.10.**

**Table 4.10 Response on Neighbourhood and Respectfulness**

	<b>Persons Living in Neighbouring Area</b>	<b>Work Activities in Environment</b>	<b>Recognizing Seniors in Community</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	91.8	86.7	89.8	89.4
<b>Uncertain</b>	8.2	11.2	8.2	9.2
<b>Disagree</b>	0	2.0	2.0	1.4
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100	100	100

From the findings in table 4.10 preschool teachers, 91.8% agreed that teaching children on persons living in neighbouring area enhances respectfulness. This is an indication that teaching children about persons living in the neighbourhood **provides learners with capacities that equips and supports social relationship skills and attitudes to make them respectful in life.** This is in tandem with Rahim and Rahiem (2012) assertion that social relationship skills and attitudes to impart moral, integrity and character in children. Table 4.10 also indicates that 86.7% of preschool teachers agreed that teaching work activities in environment enhance respectfulness among children. Good character and positive behaviour as revealed by Lisa and Willibald (2015) can be instilled from learning surrounding activities and appreciating what others do within the neighbourhood. Apart from appreciating what others do, respect could be build by recognising seniors in the neighbourhood (Rahim and Rahiem 2012). As indicated in Table 4.10, 89.8% of preschool teachers agreed that knowledge about recognition of seniors in the community assists in inculcating respect among learners. These findings imply that social studies curriculum content is relevant in enhancing respect among children in Nairobi County.

**My School**

Relevance of social studies curriculum content should be demonstrated when it enables learners to learn to be respectful among other values. Risinger (2012) observed that social

studies curriculum should be appropriate in equipping learners with essential skills for enhancing respect as a positive value. In this study preschool teachers were asked the extent to which teaching recognition of people within the school, their activities and caring for school property could enhance respects among children in Nairobi County. The results were as indicated in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11 Response on My School and Respectfulness**

	Recognize people in school	Activities of people in the school	Care for school property	Average
<b>Agreed</b>	89.8%	75.5%	59.2%	74.8%
<b>Uncertain</b>	8.2%	8.2%	12.2%	9.6%
<b>Disagree</b>	2.0%	16.3%	28.6%	15.5%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

Analysis in table 4.11 show that 89.8% of preschool teachers agreed that teaching learners to recognize people within the school enhances respectfulness among them. Learning about people within the school in social studies as suggested by Nickerson (2011) help children to develop respect as transferrable value. Recognizing people in school gives children opportunities to address them by name and appreciate their contribution towards the welfare of the school. Secondly, results in Table 4.11 indicate that 75.5% of preschool teachers felt that teaching activities of people found within the school compound enhances respectfulness among children in Nairobi County. These findings agree with Nickerson (2011) that for children to be effective citizens, learning transferable values from others is vital. Further, Oluwagbohunmi, (2013) pointed out that learning transferable values reduce discrepancy between the stated social studies curriculum objectives and behavioural dispositions among learners. Further findings in table 4.11 shows that, 59.2% of preschool teachers agreed that teaching about care for school property enhance respectfulness. The fact that 12.2% of preschool teachers were uncertain and 28.6% did not agreed is an indication that compared to teaching about people within the school and their activities, caring about property is less significant in enhancing respectfulness among preschool children in Nairobi County.

### **Health Practices**

Relevance of pre-school social studies curriculum content is crucial in developing learners' sense of the appropriate health practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Appropriate health practices is achieved through cultivating right dispositions for reinforcing respectfulness among preschool children. Dalyop (2014) outlined that pre-school learning on health practices should revolve around hygiene, in addition this study considered table etiquette and toileting as crucial. In this regard preschool teachers were requested to state the extent teaching of hand washing, feeding and toileting could enhance respectfulness among children and results posted in Table 4.12.

### **4.12 Response on Health Practices and Respectfulness**

	Hand washing	Table etiquette	Toileting	Average
<b>Agreed</b>	64.3%	67.4%	68.4%	66.,7%
<b>Uncertain</b>	4.1%	0%	08.2%	4.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	31.6%	32.7%	23.4%	29.2%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4.12 indicates that 64.3% of preschool teachers agreed that teaching hand washing enhances respectfulness among children. It is also shown in Table 4.12 that 67.4% of preschool teachers agreed that teaching table etiquette as a health practice enhances respectfulness among children. Further, 68.4% said teaching toileting has a significant influence on respectfulness among preschool children. On average 66.7% of preschool teachers said teaching of health practices enhances respectfulness and this compared to neighborhood (89, 4%) and my school (74.8%) as topics is lower. This is an indication that teaching health practices has less significance in enhancing respectfulness among preschool children.

### **[8] Conclusion**

Social studies curriculum develops skills for learners to interact and develop ability for addressing societal conflicts and challenges. Knowledge on neighborhood, table etiquette and toileting assist learns in developing awareness of other's emotions and view points, ability to regulate feelings, appreciate others, and use courteous words in communication. Diversity in society requires teachers to deliberately lay a foundation that allow every child to acquire positive values of which respect for differences is central. These dispositions make children particularly sensitive to verbal and nonverbal messages which may indicate people in the community require respect. Social studies content empowers children to interact with the immediate neighborhood including daily experiences with people and work done in the vicinity. With such experiences and guidance from teachers, learners listen to others, contribute own ideas, and accept majority decisions that affect the group as a whole. Specifically, appreciating self and others, using courteous words and recognizing views of others enable learners to develop sense of respect.

### **[9] Recommendations**

In practice the study recommended that teachers should create a learning environment for learners to listen to each other's point of view, contribute own ideas and appreciate diversity. For policy the study recommended that structures that encourage respect as a value should be included in school missions and visions for learners to imitate. Further educational policy-makers should think about ways to implement value education through all curricular. In regard to further research the study recommended more research be carried out on how use of social studies curriculum and enhancement of values among children.

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