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E2012-20: A Study of the Effects of Home – Based Lunch Provision on Child Retention in Primary Schools in Mbita District, Kenya

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Abstract

Child retention rates in the Public Primary Schools in Mbita District has dropped to 70%. The 30% attrition rate is quite a concern among the Education officials and the community in the district. The purpose of this study therefore is to establish the effects of Home – Based lunch provision on child retention in the public primary schools. To achieve this, the study is focused on determining the problems, effects and intervention measures to curb the declining child retention rates in the primary schools in Mbita District. The study adopts a descriptive technique and utilizes a combination of Stratified Random Sampling and Precision rate and Confidence level derivative $n = z^2 \cdot P \cdot q / N / e^2 (N-1) + z^2 \cdot p \cdot q$ to define the study sample size of 42 schools from a target population of 98 public primary schools. The data is collected using closed ended questionnaires and interview schedules sent to Head Teachers, Class Teachers and Class Prefects to standard six class. Two post graduate research assistants have volunteered to assist in the distribution, interviewing, collection and editing of the responses. Data analysis involve descriptive statistics done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme. The study findings will be presented using tables, frequencies, percentages and charts.

E2012-22: The Plight of The Kenyan Male: Searching for a Pedagogy that is Relevant to the Nature of the African Male Child

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Abstract

The plight of Kenyan men is a major social concern that needs urgent attention. This paper does not address deeper social issues with regard to the status of men in the Kenyan society, but rather attempts to describe what is happening to men in respect to their social roles and responsibilities, and how their female counterparts are reacting. In this paper the researcher diverts blame from the males, and puts responsibility on the education system which through its feminine characteristics has socialized the males into a state of role conflict and ambiguity. Attention is drawn to the contradictions between the nature of the males, the cultural expectations and the characteristics of the Kenyan education system- specifically the school setting, the curriculum, classroom environment, expectations in terms of behavior and rules. A new pedagogy, inclusion, which considers the nature of the male child, social-cultural expectations, and the changing roles of the male in the society, is proposed. This pedagogy embraces the concept of inclusion, critical and constructivist theories. Implications for curriculum planners, education policy makers, teachers and

social workers are also discussed. The paper stresses the importance of understanding the nature of the male child, societal expectations versus the globalizing culture in male socialization. In this context educators must particularly respond to the question “Why do the Kenyan males fail to take up their roles and responsibilities as expected?” This question is asked to challenge the role of the school as a social agent, and arouse educators to get on board with the researcher on a marathon search for a new pedagogy that will resolve the issues of the male child.

Key words: *Male-child, education, African men, socialization, culture, constructivism, critical-theory, pedagogy, inclusion.*

Introduction

Over several decades gender activist have focused on women, particularly in Africa. In many minds today, the word gender is synonymous with female not the males. Most governments have declared affirmative actions in favor of women, with the assumption that the males are still in very dominant positions socially, economically and politically. Now that there are alarms about the men of the society failing to fend for their families, could it be that there has been an over emphasis on women empowerment and the pendulum have swung so hard against the man? Could we have feminized important institutions of socialization like the school such that the male child instead of repose is entangled in deep confusion? Could we also be oblivious of the waves of globalization contributing to the evolving gender roles? These questions are addressed in this paper. Particularly, educators are persuaded to address the Kenyan male problem by adopting the pedagogy of inclusion. Its merger with critical pedagogy and principles of constructivism makes it a most viable method in finding solutions for the problem of males in the 21st century African society.

What is happening to the Kenyan Men?

As the year 2012 was ushered in, the pendulum had swung so hard against the Kenyan men, especially in the central province. One rhetoric question that hung in the country’s tropical air was “What is happening to the Kenyan men?” Through out the early months of the year up to June, media headlines flashed multiple incidences of wives battering their husbands for what they termed as “neglect of domestic roles and responsibilities”. The climax of this male crisis was heard from the voice of BBC’s Network Africa program on 20th February, 2012 when the leader of a Kenyan men’s lobby group called for a six-day food boycott to highlight what he said was increasing domestic violence against men. The organization termed as “Maendeleo ya Wanaume”- Kiswahili phrase translated as “development of men”, called upon men to refuse eating meals cooked at home by their wives and partners as a move to protest against the emotional abuse by women. The move

that was deemed as an opportunity to sensitize men, and have them share their experiences of emotional and physical abuse fueled more violence than was expected.

Three months later media floated satirical comments on men by women. A typical one was Genga's (2012) article in the Standard news paper entitled "Kenyan men and their annoying habits". In this article women criticize men for selective hearing and memory, being the villager and mamas' boy and co-dependence on the "Boyz"- hanging out with peers and relying on their opinions to make major decisions. The question is, why should the 21st century Kenyan male go through such humiliation?-the kind that has sent a wave of shock the world over. Say he deserves this because he has absconded from his responsibilities, but what has happened to the social institutions that are mandated with responsibility of ensuring proper socialization of individuals into their expected roles, especially the family and the school? In order to address this question there is need for a deeper understanding of the contradictions that seem to exist between the biological nature and the societal expectations of males in Kenya and Africa in general, and the feminine characteristics of the Kenyan Schools.

The Biological Nature and Societal Expectations of the African Males in Kenya

Biologically men are physically stronger, and engage in more active roles than women. The African male child is, especially, expected to be active, brave, adventuresome, curious, dirty, robust, disheveled and rough. Under normal circumstances socialization into these characteristics begins at the cradle, and is evident in the way the mother handles the male child. It is common for her to let her baby boy cry a little longer, than she would do to her baby girl, before his needs are met so that he gets hardened. Unlike the girls young boys are let to engage in rough play so that they become tough and brave. As they get weaned from the mother's care, traditionally they are socialized by their fathers and peers into male roles and responsibilities. Beyond the African culture Kail and Cavanaugh (2009) observe that fathers are most likely than mothers to treat boys and girls differently. For example, they encourage gender related play and are more likely to urge a frightened son to jump off the diving board ("Be a man") p. 198, but not insist on the daughter to do so.

As mentioned by Tyrell and Jurgens (1983) the African boys learnt special skills from their "father's Knees". Peers also played an important role, in the book "Not Yet Uhuru", Jaramogi Oginga Odinga (1967) (father of the prime minister of Kenya now) reminisces about the lessons he learnt from his peers in the boy's cottage (simba); lessons which groomed him into manhood. This

close nurturing by peers and fathers was to ensure that the young boy was properly initiated into his future roles which include providing for the family in terms of protection, food, shelter and other basic needs. In most cases learning by practical involvement reached a climax during initiation. There are various initiation rites by different African societies in Kenya. The Bantus mainly circumcise the males at adolescence. The Luo and Kalenjin remove the lower teeth (incisors), while other communities such as the Turkana tattoo their bodies. Tolerance of the pain experienced during initiation is used to gauge male attributes of endurance and valor. At the same time the initiates engaged in practical experiences like hunting to learn survival skills and prepare for various social institutions upon their graduation from the initiation schools (Ayisi, 1997).

As the boys get weaned from their mothers' laps and handed over to their fathers for masculine training, the girls continue to be nurtured and trained by their mothers, grandmothers and aunts. Feminine characteristics such as neatness, cleanliness, orderliness, quietness, obedience, gentility, humility and sensitivity are instilled. Traditionally, the girls engaged in learning pottery, basket weaving, firewood gathering, food preparation and child care. As long as this type of socialization was maintained in the African society, the social grid remained intact, with every member of the society fitting into their appropriate roles and reciprocating whenever possible. Unfortunately the social grid is now falling apart!

The phenomenon of globalization has caused cultural lag in family socialization, especially of the male child. The whole world has been invited into our homes through the internet and the TV screens, which are now replacing parents as socializing agents. What the African traditions portray as attributes of maleness is in sharp contrast with media portrayals of extreme femininity in terms of dress, grooming, and roles. Whenever masculinity is emphasized it carries with it chauvinistic overtones. Cases of homosexuality and unisex have also created a mix in understanding boundaries of socialization in terms of maleness. Another dimension of globalization that is affecting socialization of the male is new demands of the job market; parents work longer hours and are therefore absent from home. The fathers are particularly gone away from home for longer hours. In this case the boys stay longer with the mothers, if they happen to be home, and are bound to be more feminine if not totally confused (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2009).

The Feminine nature of the Kenyan Schools contradicts the Biological Nature and Societal Expectations of the Male Child

In the book *Reading Rights for Boys* Austin, Clark and Fitchett (1971) warns about the feminine nature of the school system that contradicts the male nature. After working with hundreds of teachers the three researchers observe that the masculine virtues stand diametrically opposite those viewed as desirable in a typical school system. They argue that “standards of conduct, restricted environments for learning, staffing, academic and social expectations, and the physical setting for the school are all substantially feminine, with little regard to the male culture presented within the social structure outside of schools”(p. 1). Terms such as “quiet”, “orderly”, and obedience that are used to describe a well- functioning school system are directly in contrast to the societal expectations of the male child. The Western form of education- that gives a foundation to the modern Kenyan education stresses more on intellectual development as opposed to the needs, goals and expectations of the African society (Clarke, Bray & Stephens, 1986; Wane, 2009). Having been a colonial tool for imperialism this type of education is likely to be more enslaving than liberating (Bogonko, 1992).

The very pattern of uniform, dresses for girls and shorts/trousers for boys, at school reveal contradiction of conduct expected of the boys – why sit so quietly as though in a dress? The shorts/trousers spell more freedom to be active and be the boy that the society so desires; yet doing so defies the schools’ expectations. In addition, the masculine conversations that are used to socialize the boy from home and the exploration traits developed among boys outside school are inconsistent with the formal structure of the school learning environment (Austin, Clark and Fitchett, 1971). Kenya, like other countries in Africa is still influenced by the colonial models of the school and will by no means reinforce much of the traditional African views about expectations of the African male child. Bray, Clarke and Stephens (1986) in the book *Education and Society in Africa* gives a typical example of the impact of such schooling on the African male child outlook - when he quotes what Kofi Busia , the prime minister of Ghana between 1969-1972 , confessed about his experience in the following words;

At the end of my first year at the secondary school I went home to Wenchi for the Christmas vacation. I had not been home for four years, and on that visit, I became painfully aware of my isolation. I understood our community far less than boys my own age who had never been to school. I felt I did not belong to it as much as they did. It was a traumatic experience (p. 29).

This quotation reveals the divisible effects of the Western education that cuts deeper into the social fabric of the African male personality. As way back as two decades ago Bray, Clarke and Stephens had sensed that this divisible effect was not only going to be an educational problem, but an extended economic problem that would come with a whole set of contradictory values. The trio point out that traditional economy and modern economy have distinct opposite values, and since education has set preference for the modern economy, the educated “individuals sometimes consciously reject the values of society they hope to leave behind” p. 30. Implying that the educated African men are more likely to abandon their traditional role and identity expectations, and embrace the new values prescribed by the new economy. The contemporary term in Kenya “the Metro man” (one who over-grooms himself with cosmetics) is used to describe this ambiguity.

From African perspectives this is a case of social dislocation. “Social dislocation is particularly acute when individuals have not succeeded in crossing the bridge” (p. 30) from the traditional economy to the modern economy, and when they are unemployed (Bray, Clarke and Stephens, 1986). Recent research has not only indicated high rate of unemployment among Kenyans, but a failure of the educational system to create a bridge that should have enabled a smooth transitioning from the traditional economy, through industrial to post industrial economy (Amimo, 2012). As predicted by Bray, Clarke and Stephens I can see a situation where the majority of the Kenyan adult males seem to be confused about /or are abandoning the traditional values that expect them to be the providers and opting for the modern economy values that suggest equal participation with the female partners. Hence, a case of “social dislocation”, that is likely to result into “role conflict” and “role ambiguity” between couples.

According (Austin, Clark and Fitchett, 1971) the school has become the agent of social dislocation for the males, since its feminine set up distorts and contradicts the biological nature and societal and expectations on male behavior and roles. Once the males experience conflicting expectations they are more likely to experience role ambiguity, as they get confused about their duties and responsibilities in the family and society. No wonder the Kenyan males, especially from Central province, are allegedly accused of abandoning their responsibilities. Carloni, (1987) and Chesaina (2012) support this argument by a claim that Kenyan women who form slightly over half of the country’s 35 million people are the tillers of the land; food processing and marketing resource people; and the psychological and physical nurturers of families. In other words, when we talk about the position of Kenyan women in the global village, we are referring to the half of the population on whose shoulders the country stands. Who is to be blamed for this imbalance? Is it

the school? Unlike the indigenous education that focuses more on transmission of attitudes, values, skills, social understanding and customs of the society the modern Western education in Kenya is more intellectual, and pays little attention to the needs, goals, and expectations of the wider society.

Currently the whole schooling process and socialization in Kenya is emphasizing empowerment of the girl child, to the extent that the boy has been forgotten. Girls are promoted and admitted for further education with lower points, are given more scholarships and are generally treated with more understanding than boys. The outcome is empowered women citizen with equal job opportunities and status in society versus frustrated male citizens who are not yet able to comprehend what is happening to their long cherished dominant position in the society. With training emphasis shifted to the girl child how do we expect the boys whose cases are less emphasized to grow up into responsible adult males?

Referring to social rank theory Gilbert, El-Bassel, and Rajah (2001) in their study on intimate partner abuse on African American women- found out that violence is used by the dominant or at times the dominated partner as an acceptable means of bolstering social status. In view of this theory the women in Kenya, having been so sensitized about their abuse and the need to gain their rightful positions in the society seem to use violence on male partners to realize this dream. This notion is further endorsed by Gilbert, McEwan, Bellew, and Mills (2010) research on “the dark side of competition” which reveals that competitive behavior and striving to avoid inferiority can lead to depression, anxiety, stress and self-harm- this last element, harm, can be extended to the competitor. Gilbert (1992, 1993) concludes that primates would display a pattern of involuntary subordinate strategy to yield to competitive behavior. Such submissive behavior includes a crouched posture, screaming, crying, retreating or avoiding eye contact. Perhaps this explains the observed behavior of the man in the central Kenya province.

Speaking about education in the African society Bray, Clarke, and Stephens (1986) in the book *Education and Society in Africa*, indicate that the small number of stories in which females are the main character are balanced, with half stressing positive characteristics, and half stressing negative characteristics. But in the case of boys, positive characteristics are portrayed as negative, thus confusing the boy about right behavior. In another international study, the researchers observed that all secondary education is molded on the traditional image of women, thus fitting the female child directly to vocational experience, guidance and training that prepares her for her traditional role as mother, wife, or housewife. On the contrary, boys are prepared for more academic career

oriented education that gets them away from home responsibilities-thus disadvantaging his participation in family.

Evolution in Gender Roles

We are informed by evolutionary developmental psychology that throughout history men and women have performed vastly different roles. While women are more invested in child rearing, men invest more in providing important resources such as food and protection for their offspring. In performing these roles men and women develop different traits and behaviors. For example men become more active and aggressive to ward off predators while women have a disposition for nurturing, sensitivity, care, and gentility (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2009). According to Kolberg (1966) children learn about gender roles after they have come into terms with gender constancy- the fact that gender is fixed across time and situation. In gender-schema theory, children will further decide if an object, activity, or behavior is associated with maleness or femaleness and whether they should learn more about the object, activity or behavior.

The whole process of adopting gender appropriate behavior depends on the socialization process, and this is where the society and school come in (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2009). If the society and school send conflicting messages to the boy (see figure 1), as is the case today, he is likely to be more confused about his roles in the society (even as a future husband and father). From this figure we can see that where as the girl gets a double reinforcement from both the society and the school that sitting quietly is good for the girl, the boy receives conflicting messages- while the schools affirms that sitting quietly is good for both girls and boys, the society says not for boys, thus the boy gets confused as shown in figure 1.

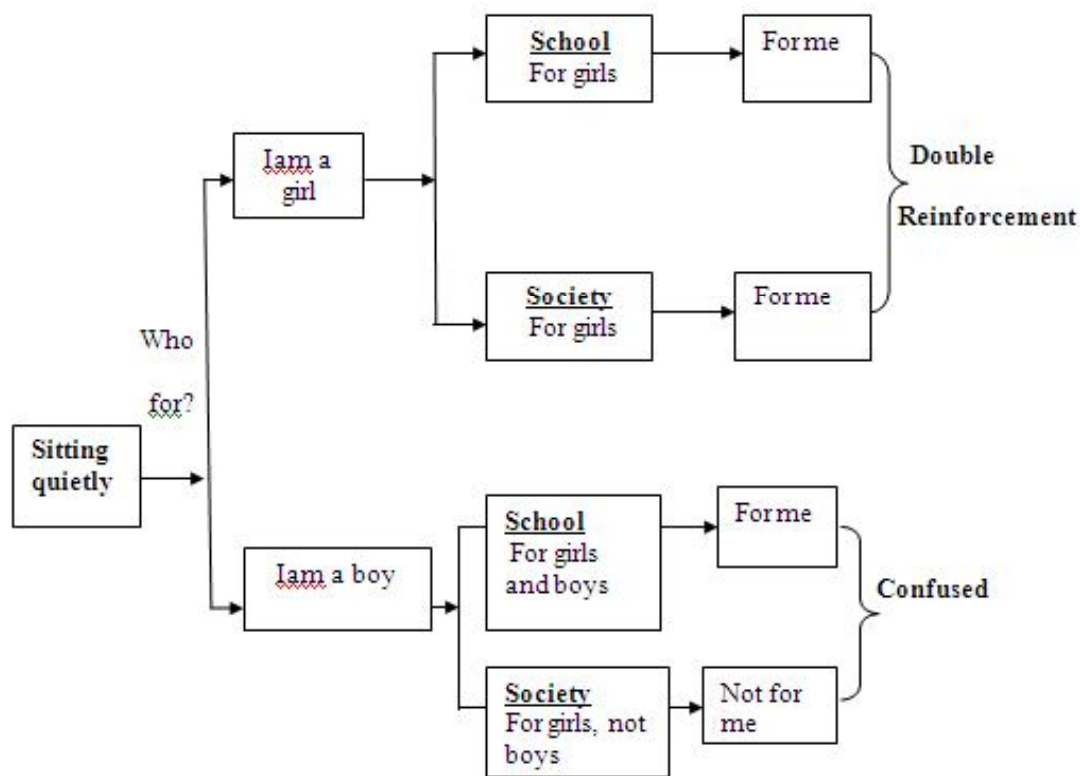


Figure 1: A Schematic Processing Model depicting Conflicting Messages on Male roles as Portrayed by School and Society

Views on Evolving Gender Roles

Men and women view gender roles differently. While men are satisfied with equitable division of labor based on the amount of time spent, women are often satisfied when men are willing to do women’s traditional chores (Saginak &Saginak, 2005). There are also ethnic differences regarding gender roles. For example, African American men and Latino men tend to spend more time in domestic chores, like washing dishes and cooking, than European American men. However, the participation is more in cases where the couple is in regular employment- even so women still perform the lion’s share of housework. Where as there is a growing change in gender roles in the 21st century in all cultures, it is more evident in the American society where some fathers stay home primarily as care givers of children while some mothers take up full time work to support the family.

A research carried out by Weisner and Wilson- Mitchell in 1990 (reported in Kail & Cavanaugh, 2009) indicated that American couples are more adaptive to opposite sex roles, and their own children have fewer sex-typed attitudes- as they tend to enjoy many sex-typed activities- “Boys and girls are equally using... a shovel, a hammer and nails and a needle and thread” p. 201. This is far from the experience of the typical African family, especially in rural Kenya. There are still taboos about women engaging in masculine activities like riding a bicycle (among Luhya and Nandi communities), constructing a house, cutting a tree, eating a hen’s gizzard (Luhya); A Luhya woman is not supposed to whistle, this is compared to having a hen crowing in stead of the cock. Subsequently, having men act as care givers to children or just being present in the kitchen is still an abomination in the African culture. By and large the majority of women globally still want husbands who are sole breadwinners (Hale, 2010).

With the wave of globalization sweeping across Africa, the membrane of the African culture protecting gender roles will not remain impermeable. In the words of Genga (2012);

We need to understand there has been a change in dynamics...a change in the norm of our society. For the longest time, this has been a society where the men were used to being the sole providers, treated like kings, well-educated and their word was the law. Times have changed and enter the breed of Kenyan women who have become well educated, well spoken, well paid and very competent leaders.

While women are struggling to assert their new found independence, men are struggling to understand what happened. According to Genga, the current situation calls for compromise, understanding and adjustment from both parties. Women need to understand that men’s habit of hanging out with the Boyz is a natural trait that begins in early child hood, in form of play, and is a constant throughout the life span (Moller, Hymel, & Rubin, 1992). Further, that their dominating habit is a response to the crucial need for procreation and getting access to resource for offspring- and should not be counteracted by women (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2007). The larger picture of this is accommodation, which spells out inclusion. As a social agent for change, the school needs to take up the challenge of embracing the pedagogy of inclusion to solve this looming crisis in Kenyan society.

Inclusion: Embracing a New Pedagogy that Reconciles the Nature of the African Male Child, the Traditional Expectations and the Modern Culture

In the book *Education at Crossroads* Maritain (1978) long predicted that the most important yet most difficult task is to become a man (in plural) , and “the chief task of education is above all to shape man, or to guide the evolving dynamism through which man forms himself as man” p. 1. This implies that the school has a crucial function to help man deal with the dynamics of the socio-economic and political elements that shape his life. From the foregoing discussion, the looming crisis of the males in Kenyan, seem to be a function of combined socio-economic and political changes resulting from globalization.

The concept of globalization points to a universality of cultures, economies and politics (Roth, & Gur-Ze'ev, 2007); and is best discussed in educational sphere based on the pedagogy of inclusion- more so in this paper, as a way of reconciling the nature of the African male child, the traditional expectations and the modern culture. According to UNESCO (2005) report (Acedo, Ferrer, & Pamies, 2009) inclusion is;

a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. Inclusion is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings

The key elements of inclusion are the identification and removal of barriers to learning; having ALL students achieve results in attendance, participation, and quality learning; and emphasis of those groups of learners most at risk of exclusion and marginalization- in this case boys. Inclusion goes beyond a simple integration in mainstream education, by embracing concepts of transforming education systems and other learning environments to respond to the diversity of learners. It is a new paradigm that aims at changing the organizational structure of the school system, its culture and practices with a view of spreading its agenda to the entire society (Border, Barnet, & ,Baver, 2010). One major requirement of inclusive education is a broad spectrum pedagogy that is characterized by critical and constructivist models that integrates all students into

the school-not only girls. This type of training propels teachers to adopt a more holistic approach to their work as they work hand in hand with other professional educators such as educational and cognitive psychologists, counselors, school doctors, and social workers.

The ideological concepts of inclusion reside in the capacity for consensus among broad sectors of the population, including teachers, public authorities, families, private entities, socio-economic players such as employers and trade unions; all together involved in the education sector. For this particular case of the Kenyan men, inclusion implies encouraging schools to promote community dialogue that includes establishment of networks of mutual support among families, schools, and other members of the community. The school and social players should share inclusive values in a supportive and stimulating community setting in favor of both sexes (Acedo, Ferrer, & Pamies, 2009).

In particular the school setting, curriculum and pedagogy should embrace both the nature and societal expectations of both sexes. Instead of the dominant teacher centered curriculum characterized by stern and confining rules of quietness and passivity that contradicts the nature of the boys, a new pedagogy that encourage problem solving through critical thinking and construction of ideas should be encouraged to help male students to develop their natural potentials. According to Paulo Freires' "the pedagogy of the oppressed, critical examination of the real life as experienced by the oppressed followed by dialogue on the shortcomings and the expected, creates critical consciousness about the magnitude of the problem and prompts a search for a solution (Giroux, 2010). Using this pedagogy, the case at hand can be best presented in theatre performances and analyzed in debates organized by educational institutions for public deliberations and reflective solutions. Unfortunately, reflective thinking as an art of problem solving is currently very scarce in the Kenyan schools.

This mode of thinking works best when community members, especially families, collaborate and share responsibility with teachers by supporting education-related initiatives. Country wide campaigns should be carried out to find educational solutions, based on Kenyan male potentials—as opposed to their deficiencies. One such attempt was carried out by a Kenyan news reporter who visited Uhuru Park in Nairobi (the capital city) on Father's –day celebrations of 2012. He showed videos of fathers' participating in leisure activities with their families and commended this initiative. That day the FM radio stations in Kenya boomed with the song "dancing with my father again"- a reminiscent of good times one had with a father.

Further success of this new pedagogy will depend on positive depictions of family life in the text books. Specifically there is need for a masculine curriculum with male models, especially in lower primary school. This should include male teachers and aids, male counselors, and male resource visitors. The femininity of the current curriculum should be diluted by male curriculum elements such as activity centers (construction centers, art media centers, writing centers and library reading centers- of course with some adventurous stories); study trips that relate to both male and female functions in society- integrating the findings and experiences with male function and their biological nature (Austin, Clark & Fitchett, 1971).

The manner in which the teacher organizes the classroom should be inviting and not offensive to boys. In other words the organization should not be unnecessarily neat and too precise. While cleanliness is important to all children, precise order is not. Austin, Clark and Fitchett compare this nature of children, especially the boys, to the behavior of women at a store sale- that if items are dumped at a table the women are more attracted to it than when it is ordered; implying that teachers should give room for exploration and discovery in the process of learning.

All together this prescribed pedagogy will contribute to shaping desired male characteristics if parents and community members are fully involved. Social constructivist theory supports this model of learning that involves interaction with others in the society based on shared cultural objects, modeling and scaffolding. Its emphasis is situated learning, metacognition, higher order thinking, real world, learning process, the student, and intrinsic motivation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006). These are the methods that can be used to model important cultural ideals and expectations to the young male so that when they grow up they wouldn't depart from it.

Conclusion

This paper has articulated circumstances surrounding the plight of the Kenyan male. The fact is, the magnitude of this problem can be greater than what is reported, as most men- because of shame, will not come out publicly to say they have been beaten by their wives. Gilbert (1997), says that victims of harassment usually feels inferior, loss of status, suffer rejection and exclusion- all these feelings result in great shame. Instead of burrowing our heads in a mirage of deception that it is still the woman who suffers more than the man, the society and the school should collaborate to avert the awaiting time bomb of male exclusion from the Kenyan society. In particular, inclusive education should be stressed in schools for it provides a chain of pedagogies (including- critical reflection, modeling, scaffolding, situated learning, metacognition, higher order thinking, real world

experiences, dialogue, and intrinsic motivation) which correspond to formation of an inclusive democratic society that is based on a broader model of social equity. All factors constant, men have greater potential to contribute to the survival of the society, and must be equally empowered and esteemed!

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