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Strengthening Teacher Capacity for Effective and Sustainable Implementation of Peace Education Programs in Kenya- A Policy Brief

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Introduction

The quest for sustainable peace and national unity continues to be one of the most pressing and persistent problems of the Kenyan state, the country which has had its social core and the state-building process repeatedly destabilized by ethnic conflicts, political violence, and societal clash (1). As a direct response to the devastating post-election violence of 2007-2008, the government strategically chose to use the education sector as one of the main ecosystem for social transformation, enshrined in the landmark Education Sector Policy on Peace Education of 2014. This policy framework, which is in line with the social pillar of Kenya Vision 2030, presents a clear and ambitious vision to use the formative space of the school to grow a new generation of citizens who will have the values and critical thinking skills, emotional competencies that will help them to be tolerant, responsible citizens, and find ways of resolving conflicts without violence (2, 3). To fulfill this vision, the programming strategy is rationally organized around a twin-pronged approach, consisting of systematic integration of the concept of peace-building and its skills throughout the formal curriculum, especially in the architecture of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), and active encouragement of co-curricular engagement, in particular, Amani Clubs launched by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) (4). Nevertheless, even following this consistent policy focus and ten years of programmatic effort there remains a deep and troubling disjuncture between the lofty aspirations identified by policymakers in Nairobi and the daily experience in most Kenya classrooms. Policy transformation into practice that is meaningful and eventually leads to quantifiable effect on student attitudes and community cohesion has not been achieved (5).

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The main thesis of this policy brief is that the root cause of implementation gap is not only the ineffectiveness of curriculum design or political will, it is also, an explicit failure to invest in the human infrastructure that would deliver this complex policy. Peace education is a remarkably challenging pedagogical process that demands the ability to mediate, dialogue, ask critical questions, and provide psychosocial support that extends well beyond the traditional academic training (6). At this point, the Kenyan teacher who is burdened with this daunting challenge, is badly prepared, with limited support on an ongoing basis and operating within a system which offers limited tangible rewards in this area.

The negligence on systemic capacity building of teachers is the critical choking point of the whole peace education programming (7). It is the main area of leakage wherein policy aspiration disintegrates before it reaches the learner. Unless Kenya is subjected to a decisive, large-scale, and integrated systemic intervention to effectively support the competency of teachers, the peace education policies and its policy projects (initiatives) in Kenya will remain remembered by many as apparently good but rhetorical in terms of its inability to help Kenya overcome deep-seated biases and actually break the intergenerational cycle of conflict (8). This policy brief carefully outlines the targeted policy and programs' failures that have led to this capacity gap, evaluates the practical implications of this capacity gap on peace-building and national cohesion, and suggests an integrated, operational model of teacher capacity building that is not just an educational necessity, but a systemic requirement to the long term stability and prosperity of the country.

The Policy-Programming Disconnect in Teacher Preparedness

Critical analysis of Kenya peace education ecosystem has shown the existence of a wide gap between the intentions and clarity in the national policy-directives and the infrequent, under-financed reality of teacher professional development (9). According to the policy framework, as authoritatively presented by the Ministry of Education, it is clear that schools through classroom teachers have the ultimate responsibility in the implementation of peace education. The policy document itself proposes the integration of peace education in Teacher Training Curricula and the capacity building of teachers and other education officials. However, the practical translation of this directive into a consistent, mass-scale, and a sustained programming reality has been disjointed and quite inadequate.

On the basic level, there is no mandatory, standardized, credit-based pre-service training course on peace education in the basic curriculum of the Teacher Training Colleges and in the schools and faculties of education in the universities (10, 11). It is a deep-seated institutional gap. Whereas thousands of new teachers graduate every year, get deployed in schools around the country without having ever received formal training on how to facilitate a conversation about sensitive subjects, yet they are required to resolve complex conflict issues between students from different backgrounds, to incorporate local peace-building stories, and to utilize participatory conflict resolution methodologies, all of which are imperative to values-driven education (12). Teachers get into the profession to deliver a curriculum of which they have not been given any form of training, a situation that cannot be imagined in other subjects like Mathematics or Chemistry.

The capacity building programming burden is thus nearly solely placed on in-service training that are ad-hoc initiatives, or dependent on donors, and lack systemic coordination. Peace education

in-service training has largely occurred within project cycles of non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and short-term governmental partnerships, as opposed to a centrally coordinated ministry of education and whole of government approach (13). Although these programs tend to be intrinsically beneficial, they are plagued by severe constraints of scale, sustainability, and depth of pedagogy. A typical teacher capacity building model in Kenya is one that would entail a teacher going to a one-to-three day workshop, usually focusing on theory, with little or no follow-up coaching, classroom observational opportunities, or continual mentorship. Studies on teacher professional development continuously indicate that a single, workshop intervention has little effect on the long-term practice in classrooms. Without ongoing support and reflective practice, newly acquired knowledge soon becomes redundant (14). Moreover, such project-based solutions produce evident inequities of access. Urban teachers or those in other areas that NGOs target will be subjected to frequent training, whereas teachers in the most remote, arid or conflict-ridden counties where peace education is arguably needed the most are often left out, which reinforces geographical inequality in education and social service delivery (15).

This capacity building and programming inconsistency is worsened by the absence of sufficient contextualization of training content. Kenya is a country of substantial diversity, with the causes of conflict in the Somali-dominated northeastern counties varying widely to those in the ethnically mixed Rift Valley, the cosmopolitan coastal belt, or the politically active Nyanza and Central regions (16). Consequently, there is no standardized, nationally-uniform training module that can prepare a teacher in Turkana to resolve resource-based struggles between pastoralist societies, or a teacher in Mombasa to work in historical resentment and extremist discourse. Successful peace education should train teachers capable of localizing content, of translating national principles of cohesion to local realities as they are lived.

The available capacity building and programming seldom equips teachers with the tools of conflict analysis or participatory styles that they can use to perform this contextualization with their respective students, and Kenyan teachers have been left to deliver abstract lessons that do not seem to resonate with the conflict undercurrents within and just outside the school gate. On the policy front, implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has presented a great opportunity and a new source of complexity to a system that is already tense. Although the CBC philosophical focus on competencies, values, and community involvement offers an inherent and potentially a potent channel for school based peace education, its application has imposed enormous new cognitive and practical burdens on teachers (17). A number of educators cite confusion and overload and a lack of understanding of how to explicitly teach, model and assess the unclear peace-related skills such as social cohesion, empathy, or peaceful conflict resolution in the structured but packed CBC learning domains.

The policy directive to incorporate peace education into the CBC has not been accompanied by a similarly substantial program of teacher retooling. Peace education is vaguely touched in larger CBC orientation programs, while more intensive and practical training on the pedagogical 'how' of imparting peace skills is irregular (18). This distortion is also strengthened by a systemic structure that does not incentivize or acknowledge peace education work. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) performance appraisals tool (TPAD) and career advancement schemes lack clear criteria that reward good performance in facilitating peace education or mentoring of Amani Clubs (19). A bad performance in nationally examinable subjects have an actual direct

consequence on the teacher, whereas poor performance in the non-teachable subject like peace education has no career progression and opportunities implications whatsoever. Equally, the county-based education offices that are the appropriate sites of decentralized, context-sensitive teacher support are undermined by the absence of allocated budgets, technical staff, and clear structure of peace education coordination. Thus, they cannot structurally offer the long-lasting localized mentorship and quality assurance that successful in-service assistance entails. The combination of these conditions, such as a gap in pre-service preparation, a disjointed and unsustainable model of in-service provision, insufficient contextualization, problems in the implementation of the curriculum, and poor systematic incentives produce a policy-programming gap of massive scale, and the poorly- equipped teacher is left alone in the middle of the peace-building (1, 20).

The Evidence of Capacity Gaps and Implementation Challenges

The prevailing implications of this policy-programming disconnection are not theoretical. They are simply reflected in empirical studies, program assessments, and observational data that are gradually developing a picture of hardship and deadlocks at the school level (21). The capacity gaps among teachers are directly translated into some observable issues that negatively affect the quality and effectiveness of providing peace education. Inadequate and low-quality training of teachers is always cited as the greatest obstacle to effective implementation. For example, an educational study in Nakuru County, where violence in elections has been witnessed, utilized statistical analysis to determine significant factors affecting peace education programs. This study concluded that teacher training had become a very strong variable with a majority of the participating teachers specifically mentioning the absence of relevant, practical training as one of the main limiting factors (21). This feeling is shared by reports by civil society organizations that observe peace education and regularly comment that teachers feel unprepared and unconfident enough to engage in the delicate and possibly divisive discourse that a transformative peace education would mitigate (22).

This limited pedagogy tends to lead to a retreat to ‘safe’, traditional, and, at last, ineffective peace education teaching practices. Observations in classrooms have often shown that peace education-lessons resort to chalk-and-talk presentation sessions in which students are blindly committing to memory the meaning of such terms as “tolerance, human rights or social cohesion.” There is a noticeable lack of learner-centered participatory, vibrant, and experiential approaches that characterize transformative peace pedagogical approaches like problem posing questions, role-playing, structured debates, community mapping, or service learning and problem-solving projects, largely due to teachers lacking training to conduct them and having no ready-to-use materials (17, 23). Such pedagogical limitations make the peace education boring and abstract to the students, and largely fail in activating their emotions or appeal to their own conditions of difference and conflict. This capacity gap also equally dilutes the potential of Amani Clubs. In Kenyan schools. Many schools in Kenya lack well-structured and coordinated Amani Clubs, with only a small percentage are active and thus do only superficial and ceremonial work. The Amani Clubs model is based on teacher mentorship of active student initiatives, community discussions, and peace initiatives. Yet, even teachers do not have the same facilitation and project-management skills needed to facilitate this guidance, which makes students feel frustrated, and clubs incredibly dormant (4).

The capacity deficit reaches way beyond generic pedagogical technique into even more challenging areas of mastery of content and emotional expertise. One of the most important gaps is the lack of skills in dealing with controversial subject matter. A large number of teachers experience uneasiness and professional intimidation at the prospect of having to talk about the history of political violence in Kenya, ethnic divisions, or even ongoing socio-political animosity in the country (6, 23). To avoid raising conflict in the classroom or overstepping ambiguous administrative boundaries, teachers either consciously or unconsciously shun these difficult topics (6, 23).

This evasion is devastating to the credibility and effectiveness of Kenya's Peace education policy and its programs because it unwittingly sends the message to students that the harsh facts about their country are not to be discussed in the educational contexts and spaces, thus, strengthening the culture of silence and subconscious conformity to the conflict system. In addition, educators in the direct violence prone and impacted areas in Kenya or those with internally displaced students in their schools are exposed to the frontline of student trauma. However, they practically lack training in fundamental psychosocial support techniques or trauma-informed pedagogy. Majority also lack the ability to identify distress cues, to establish a classroom atmosphere that is psychologically secure to vulnerable students, or to cope with their own second-hand trauma, which may result in burnout and diminished effectiveness (24).

Another unexploited frontier in terms of teacher capacity in peace education is the changing digital environment. Kenyans, especially the youth, are increasingly becoming information users and shapers of worldview on digital platforms which are often filled with hate speech, fake news and radical narratives. Digital citizenship and media literacy should be covered under peace education in the 21st century. Nevertheless, educators are not taught how to assist pupils to manage online bullying, critically analyze online contents, detect online propaganda and hate speech and apply digital technologies in a positive way to promote peace (25). This puts students completely vulnerable to one of the most significant contemporary agents of social division. The aggregate effect of these complete sets of deficiencies is a program of peace education, which in many schools, is viewed as peripheral, intellectually superficial, and unrelated to the real life realities that students meet in their day-to-day existence.

This is a realism that results in student disengagement, distrust in older learners, and the failure to meet the core goal of peace education which is the cultivation of enduring, internalized attitudes as well as behavior that is more inclined toward dialogue than violence; more oriented towards empathy rather than prejudice; and more oriented towards shared national identity instead of narrow-minded divisions. The peace education policy and its programs are in danger of turning into a box-ticking compliance exercise by school heads instead of being true catalysts of transformative peace and social change in Kenya (20, 21).

A Proposed Consolidated Framework for Enhancing Peace Educators' Capacity

To deconstruct the long-standing obstacles that are crippling peace education, Kenya needs to embark on an uncompromising and system-wide reform agenda that revolves around the teacher. This demands a radical re-conceptualization of professional support whereby the irregular, donor-supported initiatives are replaced with a structure that is integrated, government-resourced, and

multi-level and integrates policy obligations with consistent and well-financed programs. The framework proposes four pillars that are interrelated, demand definite policy actions and respective program investments.

The first pillar is institutionalization and incentivization of peace education in the national teacher management systems. This should be a policy precondition. In a formal partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should undertake a review of its teacher performance appraisals and regulations to clearly incorporate peace education competencies into the professional standards of the teaching profession (19). This must be incorporated in a revised Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) tool, with the efficient promotion of peace education a, with mastery of peace teaching skills playing a significant role in the annual assessment of teachers. Moreover, peace education has to be mandatorily incorporated in the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system. The policy intervention would involve the TSC accrediting a package of peace education modules. The presented programming would include the creation of high-quality, standardized modules on peace pedagogy, content knowledge, psychosocial support, and digital peacebuilding that could be provided via a well-organized mixture of workshops at the county level and a robust online learning platform. This will produce a professionally aligned reward system, which will signify that peace-building is both an appreciated and compensated professional competency (19).

The second pillar entails the systematic reform of both, pre-service and in-service pipelines of training. The Ministry of Education should issue a clear policy directive to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Teachers Service Commission and Commission of University Education (responsible for higher education quality assurance) and the appropriate directorates to require that a comprehensive credit-bearing course in peace education be included in the entire pre-service teacher certification programs of teachers of primary and secondary schools (10). This course should be practical and skill-based rather than theory-based. Meanwhile, programming should create and finance a standing national corps of Peace Education Master Trainers. These would consist of exemplary teachers chosen and highly trained and placed as county resource persons. Their work would not be limited to a focus on the occasional workshops but through extensive in-school coaching, ensuring integration of peace education into examinable and non-examinable subjects/ courses, observation of lessons and peer mentoring. This forms a decentralized, sustainable system of support that is both geographically close and contextually sensitive, directly addressing the isolation of the classroom teacher and leaving the unsustainable 'train-and-hope' model behind (14, 15).

The third pillar is the establishment of an overall, empowering support structure for teachers. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI), together with other relevant stakeholders, should be required to design, test, and publish a full-course of standardized, high-quality teacher guides, pupil-activity packs, and assessment instructions on peace education at each and every grade level (18). These resources should be practical, cultural sensitive and in alignment with the CBC. The national free distribution of these materials which could be achieved through the National Textbook Policy framework would put an end to the debilitating resource disparity and provide at least an even level of competence. Similarly, programming needs to use technology to overcome the logistical bottlenecks. The ICT division of the Ministry of Education needs to introduce a secure and interactive Kenya Digital

Hub of National Peace Education. This web-based solution would perform a threefold role as a central repository of all official peace education materials and contextual lesson plans shared by educators; as a peace education expert-led webinar faculties and professional learning community; and as a gateway to accessing the accredited CPD modules. With this digital infrastructure, scalability, lifelong learning, and collaborating with peers is possible, particularly for teachers in difficult to reach schools and regions (25).

The fourth pillar is enhancing peace education leadership and community connection at the school level. The TSC and MoE should be moved through policy to officially acknowledge and reward the position of a Peace Education Lead Teacher in each school. This one teacher, earning a modest responsibility allowance, would be school-based peace education champion, organizing Amani Club functions, serving as channel of first contact with other colleagues who wish to have instructional support, connecting the school with county master trainers and local peace structures. This institutionalizes school based peace leadership and establishes critical mass in schools (4, 19). Lastly, programming should enhance purposeful relationships between schools and communities. Teacher and school management committee training must contain lessons on how to involve parents, local elders as well as religious leaders in facilitating peace programs in schools that will enable the messages of the classroom to find support, rather than opposition, in the rest of the community. All this structure should be supported by reliable and ring-fenced funding. The Ministry of Education, National Treasury and County Governments should develop specific budget lines on peace education teacher capacity building in their annual estimates away from the approach of discretionary NGO-funded activity but an integral part of the education spending (9, 22).

Conclusion and Imperative for Action

Transformative potential of Kenya's public education system is inseparably connected with the vision of a socially harmonious, politically stable and economically prosperous country. Peace education cannot be considered as some fringe, 'soft' topic but as a critical curricular and co-curricular engine that will lead to transformative change in Kenya. But in this policy and program analysis, it has been evident that this engine is simply not starting since the most important part, which is the teacher, has been under-fueled and under-maintained. Such an ongoing situation, in which a robust national policy is systematically undermined by disjointed under-invested and unsustainable teacher capacity strengthening, is not only an educational failure, but a national strategic threat. It is a failure to make an investment into the most established, long-term infrastructure that can disrupt the perennial cycles of violence into a system where young citizen minds and hearts are molded by skillful and caring mentors.

Classroom and county testimony are clear. In the absence of confident, competent, and supported teachers, all the elegantly designed peace education policy, school based programs, curriculum and most promising peace club models will be inactive and incapable of producing the deep attitudinal and behavioral changes needed to ensure long-term cohesion. Teacher capacity building is thus not a peripheral expenditure item on an education budget, but a necessary and essential expenditure in national security, social resilience, and sustainable development.

It will take an intellectual revolution at the highest level of government to shift mindsets from teacher training as a philanthropic add-on to an idea of teacher training as the main operating plan of implementing one of the most important components of a national development agenda- transformative peace. The unified model presented here based on the foundations of institutional incentivization, a pipeline overhaul, supporting the ecosystem, and the leadership in schools, offers an actionable and realistic road map based on documented failures and successful best practices in teacher professional development scholarship. Its practical application requires the unconditional political will, the cooperative and responsible governance of national ministries and county governments, and an obligation to long-term and stable financing by governments to peace education.

Having a strategic, systemic and sustained commitment to the empowerment of teachers as a positive agents of peace education, Kenya can finally address the damaging disconnect between the rhetoric of the policies and actual classroom activities. Such is the way to make schools in Kenya the nurseries of an undivided, just, and prosperous nation, where all children learn not simply how to earn a living, but how to build peaceful co-existence with fellow citizens.

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