

**KENYA'S URBAN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND PEDAGOGY**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on illuminating Kenya's urban high school teachers' perceptions of students' diversity and how these differences influence their curriculum implementation, pedagogy, and students' classroom interactions in the learning process. Located within theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and critical pedagogy, the study shows how multiple layered identities and differences identified by teachers interplay and intersect to influence their performance and students' academic success. The theoretical debate over critical pedagogy in diverse contexts shows how Kenya's high school teachers effectively develop classroom environments that address differences and acknowledge arrays of factors that create inequalities. Findings also show that teachers' work continue to be informed by government and institutional policies that favor uniformity and conformity creating contradictions and dilemmas for them.

The study applies a mixed qualitative methodology based on interpretive and descriptive phenomenology to inform the study. Participants were selected based on purposive sampling from urban high schools in western Kenya. Data for the study were generated through baseline questionnaires, field interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of archival documents. Findings highlighted arrays of factors identified by participants as contributing to students differences in their specific context. Differences identified by teachers that were common across institutions were academic abilities, entry behavior, primary education backgrounds, proficiency in English language, socio-economic status, and students' motivational status. Some of the factors perceived to influence teaching and learning differed across disciplines, gender of the participants, and the nature of the schools. It was concluded that the impact of these differences on teaching and learning needs to be addressed if high school access, quality, and subsequent academic performance is to be realized for all students in Kenya's high schools.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

“I cannot be a teacher if I do not perceive with ever greater clarity that my practice demands of me a definition about where I stand” (Freire, 1998, p. 93).

### **1.0 Background to the Problem**

Since the Jomtien declaration of “Education for All” in 1990, the significant priority given to primary education in many African countries including Kenya, has become evident. One of the consequences of the Jomtien conference, in some countries such as Kenya, meant giving secondary education less priority. Today, there is renewed interest in the importance of high school education in Kenya as its value in developing the social as well as economic roles of youth in society is envisioned (Ministry of Education Science & Technology (MOEST), 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). This has resulted in government reforms that view high school education as a powerful device for achieving economic and social needs such as the elimination of poverty and current problems afflicting the youth due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Therefore, high school policies and programs are currently focusing on ways to effectively provide Kenyan youth with life skills, reduce school drop-out rates, and increase their participation in social issues.

Another reason for an increased interest in high school education is to empower and prepare youths for the modern industrial and globalized economies that are technologically oriented. To effectively achieve these goals, teachers’ understanding of students’ differences and how these differences impact their practice must be explored if we are to engage teachers in a



discourse on what constitutes a relevant and inclusive teaching, and learning process in diverse high school classrooms.

The Kenya government's current focus on strengthening high school education is based on the perception of its potential role in the transformation of youths to adulthood (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). This transformation concerns social, biological, and psychological processes that students undergo during this stage of their lives. This has a great impact on each individual's academic performance, relationships with others, and their local and the wider community. In most Kenyan ethnic communities, this age group is connected with transformation rights, such as rights of passage to adulthood, the consequences of which the individual is accepted as an adult with the rights, privileges and duties connected to this status (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Therefore it becomes increasingly important that teachers provide young people with a foundation that will assist them to better understand the complex nature of their world, while developing the skills that enable them to be proactive in an increasingly interdependent, global society. The question is how such cultural factors influence students' classroom relationships and whether teachers acknowledge the influence of such factors as they plan their classroom practices.

The Kenya government's efforts to improve high school performance and maintain students' motivation in the learning process is summarized in its Sessional Paper No.1 (MOEST, 2005). In this document, the government outlines a framework for educational reforms that acts as a guide to policy development in education and training for the next twenty years, ensuring that the Kenyan youth obtain an adequate education. An adequate education is envisioned as the provision of an inclusive quality education and training for all youth irrespective of their socio-economic, gender, and ethnic backgrounds among other differences. The result of this policy

paper is the introduction of programs such as Strengthening Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education (SMASSE) and In-servicing of Teachers program (INSET) (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Through such initiatives, the Kenya government has undertaken to in-service high school teachers in these subjects to enhance their subject mastery and effectiveness in implementing the curriculum (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). This reminds me of how my teacher education background informed my understanding of who was an effective teacher.

It is usually assumed by stake holders, like educational policy makers, curriculum developers, and parents, among others, that effective teachers are often those with rich and extensive mastery of content in their disciplines (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Therefore, when students do not perform as expected by these stakeholders, it is assumed that teachers are unable to affect students' learning, which impacts the students' academic achievement. More often than not, influences from other factors like students' differences are down played and Kenyan high school teachers are expected to have a magic wand to wipe off the complexities that these differences bring to the classrooms.

One of the objectives of SMASSE was to move teachers and learners away from a transmission model of teaching and rote-learning and help them adapt a more student-centered constructivist approach in their teaching (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). It is hoped that through approaches such as discussion groups and cross-curricular project work, students can develop critical thinking skills. However, SMASSE program does not highlight the impact of students' diversity on classroom interaction and relationships in the process of knowledge construction. Neither does the program elucidate teachers' understanding of the influence of students' differences in their classroom practice on students' learning. Less emphasis on

teachers' accurate perceptions of the students' backgrounds subsume the social aspect of education, given that teaching also entails human relationships. Freire (1994) explained that educational practices need to incorporate social aspects as a necessary component.

However several researchers (E.g., Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2006; Kitano, 1997; Palmer, 1997) have indicated that attempts to improve students' achievement need to also focus on transforming classroom environments. Kitano concluded that "the heart of the academic experience, the thing which we should continually reflect on, is what happens in the classroom, the interactions between teachers and students and the curriculum" (p.10). Findings of these studies show that if teachers have little understanding of the nature of differences that students bring into their classrooms, then they would not be able to influence the development of students' motivation and self-esteem. Studies (E.g., Ainley, 2004; Jensen, 1998; LeDoux, 1993) indicate that emotional aspects of learners should be considered by teachers in order to create a healthy learning environment. This is an important aspect in maintaining positive interests and attitudes toward academic achievement. If the situation is not corrected, teachers are not likely to be effective implementers of the curriculum and teaching strategies necessary to improving performance of students from different gender, socio-economic, linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

### **1.1 Personal Background to the Problem**

My teaching experience influenced my interest in this study. I was a teacher in two of the four schools that participated in the study. This not only connected me with teachers' experiences working with the diverse nature of student demographics in Kenya's urban high schools but also made me aware of my biases as I entered the study sites to carry out the inquiry. When teaching in these two high schools, I still remember vividly, which of my students were

described as slow learners and labeled as inevitable failures by some of my colleagues and school authorities. I was also aware of how unique and precious each of my students actually was, no matter what gender, socio-economic, ethnic, or religious background they came from.

At the same time, I saw how important it was for some of the innovative and insightful teachers who entered the profession and strove for better learning conditions for students who came from disadvantaged backgrounds such as, the slum parts of the city and rural areas. Some of these teachers worked with dedication, and compassion to support their students whenever poverty and uncaring societal factors threatened their education. My hope in this research is to share Kenya's high school teachers' understanding of the differences that students bring into their classroom settings and how these differences shape the way teachers implement the curriculum and interact with their students in the learning environment. I believe that findings of this study elucidate teachers' perceptions of the existence of students' unconscionable conditions and ways in which to help change these conditions if effective learning in Kenya's high school education is to be enhanced.

I believe that research in education should provide teachers with a greater voice in public debates about education to place them in positions of transformers of their classroom environments (Freire, 1994; Giroux, 1988, 2003). This would provide information for improvement of high school classrooms for change that reflects insiders' points of view. As Giroux (1988) would say, teachers and students are capable of working collaboratively and have a greater influence in transforming their own classrooms. As education researchers, we should contest the notion of top-down change (Fullan, 2001) that currently polarizes the transformation process in Kenya's education system, privileging outside knowledge over insider knowledge. This reduces Kenya's high school teachers to what Giroux (1988), refers to as the position of

technicians. As the famous saying goes, “the wearer of the shoe is the one who knows where the shoe pinches”. Therefore, it is the Kenyan high school teachers’ understanding of the complexities of students’ diverse nature in their classrooms that would contribute accurate information for the development of initiatives for effective classroom change that supports learning in diverse high school classrooms.

## **1.2 Rationale of the Study**

Teachers who enter classrooms with over forty students, which is a typical Kenyan high school classroom population, will definitely find that these students have individual differences. These differences extend beyond intellectual and physical abilities or disabilities, to include class, different historical backgrounds, ethnicity, cultures, religious affiliations and day-to-day living experiences (Banks & Banks, 2004; Giroux, 1988, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). If teachers fail to understand the different factors that affect students learning and behavior, then it would be impossible to teach over forty students effectively through individualized learning. This is because background experiences determine the way individuals think, feel and act (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Freire, 1994; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Jensen, 1998)). These experiences are likely to direct the way students perceive the concepts they are taught and determine classroom teaching, and learning relationships. It becomes the lens through which students conceptualize the world around them and the role of education in shaping their needs (Freire, 1994). These differences as stated by Gollnick and Chinn (1990) may cause dissonance unless identified by teachers to enable them to develop supportive learning environments.

The rapid shift in the demographic makeup of Kenya’s urban high school population is compounded with the increase of orphans, needy students, and a number of students entering high schools at different levels of competency in English language which is a medium of

instruction in Kenyan education system (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). These unique characteristics that students bring into the learning settings are likely to impede their learning and classroom interaction in many different ways depending on their innate characteristics and experiential conditioning. If Kenyan high school teachers are to work effectively with the heterogeneous student population found in these institutions, then they need to understand the different background settings in which students are located in order to develop effective instructional strategies and build inclusive classrooms to support students' academic achievements.

Understanding students' background influence in teaching and learning requires that teachers engage in critical reasoning to illuminate ways in which mainstream cultures are perpetuated through institutionalized beliefs reflected through curriculum and practices that are often regarded as objective, universal, and neutral (Freire, 1994; Giroux; 2003; McLaren, 2003). These authors argue that, to assume that any education system is neutral, is an illusion and Kenyan education system that is predominantly influenced by external donors is not exceptional in this case. Thus, a claim of neutrality only perpetuates the status quo (Boudieu & Passeron, 1990; Freire, 1994; Giroux; 2003; McLaren, 2003) and will fail to help teachers address learning needs of poor students, orphans, and students from marginalized regions of Kenya like the rural, arid, semi-arid, and slum areas. According to Ludvig (2006) and Yuval-Davis (2006) the interlinking index of differential positioning in terms of factors such as gender, socio-economic, ethnicity, linguistic, religion, and other social categorizations tend to create situations of hierarchies and differential access to a variety of opportunities such as education. This definitely has an impact in the teaching and learning process and teachers need to be aware of these hierarchical positioning in their classrooms.

Kenya's post-colonial education reconstruction at all levels emphasizes the need for innovations in which diversity in education is recognized and addressed (Ominde Report, 1964; Republic of Kenya, 2005). At the same time there is consensus in the reports that teachers play a crucial role in effecting education changes through curriculum and pedagogy at all levels, hence the expectation of Kenyan high school teachers to create teaching and learning environments where diversity is embraced. However, teachers' understanding of what students' diversity entails, which determines how they deal with issues of differences in their classrooms, is often assumed. Understanding how diversity in high school classrooms is perceived from the practitioners who are involved in the process of implementing curriculum change provides a framework in which viable teacher education and professional development programs can be developed to address issues of diversity in classroom settings. Bottom up information process also provides a mirror (Fullan, 2001) in which education policy makers can evaluate the impact of curriculum innovations in Kenya's high schools such as those aimed at reducing inequities among marginalized groups of students. Fullan indicates that neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies for education reform works on its own. What is required is a blend of both strategies.

While there has been research on curriculum transformation to address issues pertaining to diversity in the Kenyan education system (Ominde Report, 1964; Omulando, & Shiundu, 1992; Koech Report, 2000; Republic of Kenya, 2005), there appears to be less literature that deals solely with Kenyan teachers' perceptions of the nature of students' differences in their classrooms and how these differences influence and inform pedagogical practices and curriculum implementation. Therefore, the study has partly utilized the literature from the North American context to frame the debate on diversity in education in Kenyan high schools. Although the literature on diversity used to inform the direction of this study is based in a western perspective,

it provides a basis on which comparative studies in diversity in education in the Kenyan context can be framed (E.g. Banks, 1999; Banks & Banks, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Thus, the a particular need for research in this area to elucidate teachers' understanding of diversity and to sensitize them on how best to teach through understanding of students' differences and overcome some of the problems teachers outlined in the study.

### **1.3 Relevant Research on Diversity in Education**

The literature reviewed reflects how diversity has been defined to have a variety of meanings depending on the philosophical orientation, expectations, context, research focus, policy frameworks of the education system, and in most cases, the prevailing cultural practices and issues impacting the society or institutions. To provide a context of the study, two perspectives of diversity in education are described: the North American perspective and the African perspective with special emphasis on the Kenyan context and experience.

#### **1.3.1 North American Literature on Diversity in Education**

Diversity has often been defined within North American literature (Banks, 1999; Banks & Banks, 2004; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2006; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1999) to mean recognition of differences of individuals' experiences and characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical and learning disability, as well as socio-economic factors among others. Such definitions are aimed at helping students value and appreciate cultural differences, while also recognizing similarities across cultures. The purpose is to redress social and cultural stereotypes that have been historically constructed along demarcations of the diverse demographic population of the society.



Diversity in education has also been defined as developing curriculum and pedagogical strategies that provide students with the necessary attitudes, perceptions, skills, and knowledge that would enable them function effectively within the dynamics of the socio-economic and political settings or micro and macro levels of their societies (Banks, 1999; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Other conceptual definitions encountered in the literature are based on the social construction of diversity. One such definition identifies with transformations of education practices that incorporate students' community context in building and scaffolding all learners towards academic achievement by connecting classroom learning to students' experiential knowledge (Banks, 1999; Banks & Banks, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Litle, 1999; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). The purpose of such transformations is to create links between students' informal and formal school settings for learning in order to provide relevance to students' everyday life experiences.

Such forms of education aim to address the cultural conflict that is likely to occur in the classrooms because of the dominance of mainstream cultural knowledge in the school curriculum. Yet, students from diverse cultural groups bring to the classrooms knowledge derived from personal experiences in the homes, ethnic, and community backgrounds which, if not recognized and acknowledged in the learning process, creates cultural conflicts limiting academic achievement.

### 1.3.2 Kenyan and African Literature on Diversity in Education

Since Kenya's independence in 1963 government reports on education have focused on reconstruction of the curriculum at all levels of the education system to incorporate the diverse ethnic values and practices that students bring into the classrooms (Gachathi Report, 1976; Ndegwa Report, 1971; Ominde Report, 1964; Mackay Report, 1981). The objective of such

curriculum change in the post-colonial era has been to reclaim cultural identities rooted within the authentication of indigenous traditions and values that had been denigrated and devalued by the colonial government and missionaries.

The reports emphasize that one of the objectives of education system should be to respect, foster, and develop the country's rich and varied cultures through education. The framework for teaching for diversity in this case was guided by the national philosophy of *African socialism* as stipulated in the Sessional Paper No 10 of 1965 (Republic of Kenya, 1965). This philosophy is engraved in Kenyan social values and ideologies that advocate for education that promotes relevance and equal access for all citizens, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, and regional backgrounds (Gachathi Report, 1976; Mackay Report, 1981; Ominde Report, 1964; Republic of Kenya, 2005). This indicates the need for relevance in education involving the inclusion of Kenyan diverse cultures, histories, geographical regions, and oral literature into high school curriculum.

Empirical literature reviewed from the Kenyan and African context defined diversity in education from the dominant discourse on linguistic diversity (Brock-Utne, 2005; Bunyi, 1999; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001; Macdonald, 1990; Probyn, 2001; Rubagumya, 1994, 2003; Write, 1993). These scholars examine students' multilingual experiences in classrooms that privilege English language in the process of teaching and learning. The aim is to explicate the problematic language policies in post-colonial African countries that have given prominence to the use of English as a medium of instruction in the countries' education system ignoring the multilingual background of students. The supportive argument is that African languages should benefit from the same status accorded colonial languages in the education system to accommodate diversity in communication. Other empirical studies and Kenya government reports have focused on gender,

culture, and socio-economic differences of students (Allemono, 2003; Ayako & Katumanga, 1997; Chege, 2004; Koech, Report, 2005; Ndunda 1995; MOEST, 2005; Mwenda, 2003; Republic of Kenya, 1998, 2005). These studies and education reports illuminate how the intersections of culture, gender, and socio-economic status of students continue to marginalize education of students from low income groups, rural, and semi arid regions. This is compounded by the continued devastating impact of HIV/AIDS pandemic and poverty in the African continent which limit educational opportunities for students from marginalized backgrounds.

In this study diversity is broadly conceptualized in ways that recognize and acknowledge group differences as well as individuals' identification with multiple groups. Students' diversity in this case is assumed to appear in many different forms given students' socio-economic, regional, religious and ethno-linguistic backgrounds and experiences. In this case, each type of diversity can greatly impact teachers' practice and students' academic achievement by defining educational opportunities, shaping individuals' identity, and knowledge construction. While perspectives of diversity in education may vary in context from one geographical region to the other there are underlying commonalities and understanding across the regional divide.

### 1.3.3 Common Understanding in the Diversity Literature reviewed

Diversity in education discourse from the perspective of North American, African scholars, and the Kenya government's education reports advocates for education that fosters ideals on basic human rights of democracy, equality, and social justice in the education system. Therefore, teaching for diversity can be summarized as involving curriculum implementation and pedagogies that take into consideration different experiential backgrounds in the learning process. It involves stakeholders such as teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers who become critically aware of ways in which demographic and socially constructed differences such

as gender, socio-economic, linguistic, and ethnicity impede or promote learning with a purpose of developing structural support to scaffold all learners toward academic achievement (Banks & Banks, 2004; Bunyi, 1999; Brock-Utne, 2005; MOEST, 2005; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Teachers in this case should strive toward curriculum implementation and pedagogy that is empowering to them and their students. They need to view their classrooms and schools as units for change in the society.

For teachers to become transformative, they need a clear understanding of what diversity means within their work environment and how these differences inform their practice and students' learning. This background formed the basis of my interest in this study. If the Kenya government's education policies focus on the need to address diversity in the school system then it is of paramount importance to elucidate teachers' perceptions of diversity. Teachers are more likely to address issues of diversity when implementing a curriculum based on their construction of what diversity entails.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore and explicate Kenya's urban high school teachers' understanding of the nature of students' differences in their classrooms and how that understanding shape their approaches to teaching and learning that are sensitive to lived experiences of all learners. In particular, my concern was how these teachers' understanding shapes their perspectives of learning environments and pedagogies that promoted active participation of all students irrespective of gender, socio-economic, ethnic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, among other factors. Thus, teachers' understanding of students' differences stand at the center of the inquiry and the theory that framed the findings of this study. The following questions framed the direction of data collection and subsequent discussions in this study.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

Three principal questions guided this study, each building on each other in order to develop an understanding of how Kenyan high school teachers perceive the nature of differences in their classrooms and ways in which these differences impacted their performance and students' learning. This was followed by subsequent questions that emerged, to elucidate ways in which teacher education programs prepared these teachers for challenges in heterogeneous work environments. In particular, this study strove to answer the following questions:

1. What are Kenya's high school teachers' perceptions of students' differences in the classrooms?
2. How do students' differences influence the way teachers plan for teaching resources, learning activities, implementation of curriculum content, teaching strategies, and students learning?
3. In what way do teachers perceive their teacher education programs as having prepared them for work in diverse classrooms?

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

The voices of the participants can inform understanding of teaching for diversity in the country and findings can be generalized to similar contexts. Although the time constraints of the study limited the number of participants for classroom observation (n=2) and interviews (n=12). It also limited the level of interaction between me as a researcher and the participants during the interview and observation protocols. There are usually general limitations with observing individuals given that when a participant are aware that they are being observed, there is a tendency to stage their practices for what they might perceive to be more interesting to the

researcher. This eliminates the typical natural classroom interactions that would normally take place if one was not being observed in their practice.

The use of a questionnaire on the other hand allowed for a wider sampling of participants in order to provide a broader view of the phenomenon as a way to counter the limitations on interview sampling making generalizability possible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that generalizability be left to the discretion of the reader because it is only after identifying units of interest from the present study that the reader would be able to know which findings to apply to their situations. The responsibility of the researcher in this case is to provide a detailed description of participants' views. According to Lincoln and Guba, providing a detailed description through participants' excerpts is necessary to enable anyone interested in transferability to judge the information from research as appropriate to another context.

## **1.7 Synopsis of Chapters**

In light of my inquiry into the study, this chapter provided a detailed background of the problem under discussion and a brief review of literature on diversity. In Chapter Two, the study provides a theoretical background on which the study is grounded. My study was informed by critical pedagogy and intersectionality theories to enhance understanding of the interacting factors that influence learning and academic achievements in high school education of youths in Kenya. The chapter concludes with a summary of literature on current issues impacting Kenya's high school education. Presented in Chapter Three is the methodology and study design, while the study findings are presented in Chapter Four. Findings of the study are discussed under three sections to answer the three main questions that framed the inquiry. In Chapter five, I discuss the emerging themes from the findings while in Chapter Six, I present the conclusions, recommendations, and propositions for further research from this study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In the past decade the Kenya government has made major efforts to expand enrolment at the high school level. The efforts have been focused toward increasing access to and improving the quality of education at this level with the hope that students will be attracted to high school, advance through all levels, and achieve meaningful learning outcomes (MOEST, 2005; Koech Report, 2000; Republic of Kenya, 1998; 2005). These reports indicate that the major challenge today is how to expand access to high school at relatively low cost while maintaining the quality of education provided for the youth. According to government reports, this is compounded by poor performance by some schools in national examinations, especially in core subjects such as mathematics, science, English, and Kiswahili (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). The ministry explains the poor performance by students in these disciplines as being partly due to teachers' lack of adequate pedagogical skills to deliver the curriculum.

Studies by Allemono (2003) examining learning achievements in some African countries support the Kenya government's concern over performance in high schools. Allemono's findings, have shown that a large percentage of children acquire only a fraction of the knowledge and skills they are expected to master in high schools. He attributes this to the fact that, what students are meant to learn has often not been clearly defined, well taught or accurately assessed. Allemono argues that simply putting students in classrooms without paying attention to the quality of instruction and learning outcomes only partially prepares learners in the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need to acquire for either further education or eventual integration into productive life.

This requires that we explore all features that support and promote teaching and learning including re-conceptualizing the overused term of “educational quality”. It is also important to discuss ways high stakes teaching and students’ characteristics that form part of the hidden curriculum shape teachers’ approaches to teaching and the overall learning process. These are characteristics such as, ethno-linguistic backgrounds, socio-economic status, students’ motivation, and gender among others. However teachers continue to experience challenges to adopting approaches to teaching that are suitable for diverse student population.

## **2.1 Challenges to Educating for Diversity in Kenyan Education System**

Student differences need to be viewed within the on-going challenges impacting Kenya’s education reconstruction. The idea of curricula based on a western economic model contradicts teaching for diversity within the Kenyan context (Lillis, 1985; Mwenda, 2003; Republic of Kenya, 1998). The western model of education continues to focus on commercialization and commodification of school knowledge, a condition that is perpetuated in Kenya’s education system through the policies of external assistance agencies (Brock-Utne, 2000; Lillis, 1985; Mazrui, 1997; Mwenda, 2003). Mazrui argues that the effect of World Bank and International Monetary Fund intervention in Africa via Structural Adjustment Programs continue to advance the education of children from the elite class to the marginalization of students from low income groups given the current high cost of high school education.

Dependency on external financial donors has led to policies that are contradictory to education policies in Kenya aimed at addressing students’ differences at all levels of the education system. This is because demands by external agents compel the Kenya government to focus on meeting the donors’ goals of globalization at the expense of the local needs and interests of the Kenyan students (Mwenda, 2003; Republic of Kenya, 1998). This has led to



stakeholders in education such as teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers, to perceive that there is neutrality in Kenya's high school education, hence the need to develop a critical lens in their practice. The focus is to promote ways that Kenyan high school teachers can acknowledge the importance of raising issues around curriculum content and pedagogies through critical reflection. Some of the current curriculum and pedagogical practices that teachers need to reflect on are perceived to perpetuate uniformity and may inhibit or promote learning in different ways for all students. To understand Kenyan teachers' perceptions of these practices it is necessary to situate the discussion on a theoretical framework.

In attempting to explore teachers' perceptions of diversity in their classrooms, it seemed fitting to situate the study within two theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and critical pedagogy and review literature on current issues impacting Kenya's high school education.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

In this study I explored ways in which intersectionality and critical pedagogy can be employed as lenses to illuminate ways in which identities and social relations are negotiated, contested, and appropriated in Kenya's diverse high school classroom settings (E.g. Giroux, 2003; Ludvig, 2006; McLaren, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The above theoretical frameworks provided better understanding of how classrooms are complex sites of political, historical, social-cultural, and economic influences, denouncing the notion of neutrality in any education practice that all stakeholders need to be made aware of. These differences exist in ways that students and teachers experience in their everyday lives inclusion, exclusion, disadvantages, aspirations, and identity formation.

Therefore, there was a particular need to examine ways in which the different factors are intermeshed through teachers' own voices. Key concepts of intersectionality and critical

pedagogy theories are capable of illuminating and explicating Kenyan high school teachers' perceptions and understanding of diversity, how this influences their classroom practices, and subsequently students' academic achievement in education at this level.

### 2.2.1 Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality as a feminist theory has been adopted as a springboard for advocacy to social justice (Crenshaw, 2001; Ludvig, 2006; McCall, 2005). The theory has recently been elevated to a methodology by feminist philosopher Leslie McCall (2005). As a methodology, intersectionality has been criticized for some of its inherent limitations and lack of rigor and suitability to certain research designs. However, in this study it has great potential as a theoretical framework in helping situate the perception of Kenyan teachers, policy makers, and teacher educators and as a theory for advocacy for social justice in overcoming historically based on inequalities in the education systems.

As a theoretical framework, intersectionality is based on the premise that people lead lives with multiple-layered identities and that differences are derived from social relations, history, and operations of structures of power (McCall, 2005; Ludvig, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Intersectionality theory aims at revealing multiple identities and differences, exposing the different types of discrimination, advantages, and disadvantages that individuals may experience as a consequence of the combination of identities and differences. The argument is that people are members of more than one community or group at any given moment and can simultaneously experience disadvantages and privileges from these identities within different settings that they may find themselves in (Crenshaw, 2001; McCall, 2005). For example, the experiences of girls coming from slum or rural areas are different from those of girls coming from affluent backgrounds in high schools in Kenya. It is also relevant to say that neither would students with

disabilities and from poor backgrounds nor those with disabilities from the affluent class have similar experiences of disability on the same scale in schools, classrooms, and generally in terms of educational opportunities accorded to them.

Although there are major categorizations of identities of gender and disability, other identities such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, and religion among other factors also come into play influencing students' educational experiences and opportunities. This may impact their schooling and classroom experiences differently, in terms of differing home and socializing environments that determine their social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) define social capital as accrued resources and opportunities by individuals, by virtue of membership to certain groups or through networks of interactions and mutual acquaintances within different social contexts. This provides individuals with prestige, value, and social and economic empowerment within a given context such as schools.

The theory provides a perspective in which Kenyan high school teachers can base their understanding, explain their perceptions, and influences of differences in classroom participation and how this affects their teaching plans for learning experiences. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework emphasizes the need to deconstruct or re-construct power relations in classrooms resulting from multiple layered identities and experiences (Crenshaw, 2001; McCall, 2005; Harding, 1997) that both teachers and students bring into the learning setting. This is a way forward for teachers to acknowledge the power differentials and address issues of equity in diverse classrooms. Maintaining a power balance is necessary if teachers are to create classrooms that are inclusive and safe learning spaces in order to ensure success in academic achievement of all learners.

The focus of intersectionality theory in this study is to illuminate teachers' understanding of the nature of the identities and differences and how they reflect on the multiple subordinate locations as opposed to dominant mixed locations that influence their teaching and students' learning. For example, students from poor socio-economic backgrounds are more vulnerable than those from the affluent class to falling prey to risky behavior because of the nature of their social environments. Their family association and social capital also determine the nature of primary schools each group of students attend giving a head start to students from affluent society as they enter the high school education. This requires that teachers find ways in which to support the education of students who come from disadvantaged positions to bring them to advantaged academic levels that can empower them to participate in class at an equal footing.

The theory critiques one-dimensional perspectives in resolving issues impacting students' academic achievement or government policies aimed at addressing issues of inequality (Crenshaw, 2001; Harding, 1997; Klinger, 1995; McCall, 2005). The authors of intersectionality argue that processes of inequality work together to create an overarching structure of domination. Therefore, the theory suggests different outcomes for the individuals and for groups positioned at the point where, for example, particular socio-economic status meets particular gender and particular ethnic status. Hence efforts of scholars that attempt to study just one of these axes of inequality at a time are likely to develop inadequate understandings of the way that social hierarchy is created, maintained, and of the way inequality and marginalization are experienced by different students in the education system. Feminist researchers like Harding, argue that using gender as a single analytical category to address issues of inequality in any setting is limiting. Therefore, embracing the interrelationships among multiple dimensions is necessary.

Intersectionality as a theoretical framework advocates for an exploration of the complexity of intersections in social life since social life is considered complex and overflowing with multiple but fluid determinations of both subjects and structures. This makes it impractical to make fixed categories, which depicts oversimplifying complex social fictions that produce inequalities in the process of producing differences (Ludvig, 2006; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). In the case of schools and classrooms as social settings, inter-categorical complexity created by student differences require that teachers, educators, and education researchers adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among students that may arise, given the changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions.

Currently the primary subject of analysis employed by education policy makers in Kenya on issues of inequality, such as gender or impact of poverty on access to education opportunities, has been either, a single social group at the neglected point of the intersection of multiple other categories or a particular social setting or ideological construction or both. The assertion of intersectionality theory is that although there have been policies and education programs used to address issues such as gender empowerment or inequality of any nature through the education system, this has often been through the fragmentation of identities. Addressing issues based on this perspective result in homogenizing conclusions about gender, disability, or socio-economic inequalities in education (Crenshaw, 2001; Harding, 1997; Ludvig, 2006). It is assumed in this study that employing intersectionality as a lens offers possibilities to succinctly illuminate how different aspects of individuals' identities and differences influence simultaneously, education outcomes of students in Kenyan high schools. The idea is to avoid arriving at any generalized conclusions about relationships with factors such as socio-economic, gender, or ethnic backgrounds in schools and classroom settings that might provide inconclusive results.

Intersectionality theorist's (Ludvig, 2006; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006) indicate that analyzing inequality entails moving beyond pointing out the similarities between individuals or groups and the mechanisms that distinguish class stratification, culture, gender, disability, and religious affiliations. Rather the focus should be on how the differing axes of inequality interconnect and intersect. A foundational assumption is that each system needs the others in order to function effectively. The system works in different ways to reproduce domination. Such an approach stands in contrast to a more simplified conceptualization of single systems, which seems to be prevalent in policy decisions when addressing issues of inequality. Single systems approaches tend to assume that the single category under study is the most important factor to social hierarchy maintenance. Therefore, policies focus on eliminating that category as perpetuating and maintaining the inequality processes within the system. The assumption is that this will lower the overall level of inequality no matter what other processes of domination may exist (Crenshaw, 2001; Harding, 1997; Ludvig, 2006). Intersectionality theory provides a critique of such models that polarize gender analysis frameworks adopted by most countries including Kenya, which focuses on gender relations in a binary form.

Intersectionality theorists like Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) and Klinger (1995) indicate that addressing social issues such as gender or ethnicity as a homogenous group obscures certain experiences and issues or renders certain differences invisible. This means that problems that are unique to a particular ethnic group or social class which disproportionately affect some students from these backgrounds may not receive appropriate or adequate attention. Hence the application of intersectionality theory in this study to provide a lens through which teachers, educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers can analyze the dynamic

dimension of the interplay of different education policies, institutional cultures, educational structures, societal, and home cultures as factors that influence students' academic performance.

At the same time intersectionality theorists (Klinger, 1995; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006) caution that combining of identities or differences should not be perceived as additively increasing individuals' advantaged positions but more as a situation that produces distinct experiences. This is important in revealing the layers of meaningful distinctions and similarities in order to overcome marginalization and put conditions in place to address issues of social justice in the classrooms. The strength of this theory is that it strives to avoid essentialized, fixed, and homogenized assumptions of identities and differences (Harding, 1997; Ludvig, 2006). The theory moves away from assuming gender or culture as fixed categories that marginalize the effects of other differences of teacher performance and students learning.

While intersectionality theory provides in-depth understanding of the impact of the interplay of multiple identities and differences in determining individual or group positioning in social systems like schools, advocates of this theory also caution that it has limitations (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Crenshaw, 2001; Klinger, 2006). Limitations exist, given that the list of differences and identities is endless or seemingly indefinite, making it nearly impossible or unpractical for policy makers or teachers to take into account all the differences that are significant at any given moment in their decisions. According to Klinger, the approach starts to get blurred with questions such as: who defines the differences, where, which, and why particular differences are given recognition while others are not?

In spite of the above mentioned limitation, the concept of intersectionality provides an analytical tool for studying the interacting processes among power relations and the constituting effects of categories such as gender, ethnicity, class, disability, and religious affiliations. In this

sense, intersectionality may appropriately be understood as stated by Yuval-Davis (2006) as a conceptual contribution that gathers and redirects theoretical and empirical endeavors within a range of critical research traditions and critical pedagogy.

### 2.2.2 Critical Pedagogy

Curriculum is defined by Giroux (2003) and McLaren (2003), as an influential critical site in which the ideology of the dominant group is both projected and contested. According to these authors, curriculum becomes an arena of conflict and contestation because it embodies values, norms, objectives, and interests of the state and the dominant groups in this case the Kenyan elites. This symbolic value of curriculum is particularly powerful in former colonized countries like Kenya. After Kenya's independence, emphasis was placed on curriculum as a tool to uproot the ideology and values of colonial systems within the context of local struggles, quest to create national unity, and build international power relations (Angioni, 2003; Mwenda, 2003; Ominde Report, 1964). This is reflected in the formulation of Kenyan curriculum policies that are centrally controlled through the Kenya Institute of Education and is largely aligned with the inherited curriculum from the colonial system that was racist, elitist, and Eurocentric in nature.

Critical theorists (Banks, 1999; Banks & Banks, 2004; Freire, 1995; Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003) believe that systems and structures must be transformed to improve human conditions in society. These authors champion education as a vehicle for social change that needs to start with the diversity in school settings. From a critical perspective, for teachers to effectively develop classroom environments that address differences, they need to recognize arrays of factors that create inequalities in their classrooms by examining those structures and practices that continue to perpetuate inequalities. It is only when teachers employ a critical lens to recognize ways in which students' differences shape the learning experiences for many



especially in relation to how they are positioned in the social structures of the society (Bourdieu, & Passeron, 1990; Freire, 1994; Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003), that classroom learning can be transformed.

Although high school education in Kenya has been envisioned as having a potential of promoting social mobility and maintaining authentic diverse African ethnic identities as documented in many reform reports on curriculum change (Gachathi Report, 1976; Kamunge, Report; Mackay Report, 1981; Ominde Report, 1964), less critical research has been conducted at the high school classroom level to determine the success of these reforms. The most crucial value determining the quality of relationships and the nature of learning environments is to identify the way in which power operates in these classrooms (Bourdeau & Passeron, 1990; Freire, 1994; Seaton, 2002). Seaton reiterates that attempts at curriculum reforms that fail to provide social space for discourse on how power operates in diverse classrooms in fundamentally different ways may fall victim to the inertia of monolithic education paradigms. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate the capability of post-colonial education system and its commitment to integrating diversity in a predominantly unequal high school education structure that privileges students from the affluent class.

Critical pedagogy theorists (E.g., Giroux, 1988, 2003; McLaren, 2003) view classrooms as spaces characterized by accommodation, contestation, and resistance, given the nature of diversity. Students in these settings learn to negotiate their positions and even appropriate others. In such instances, the role of teachers is crucial in guiding students through the process of questioning and selectively identifying those aspects of the dominant culture that may inhibit or provide students with the basis of transforming their own identities. Teachers need to explore ways in which alternative teaching practices may be enabling and empowering or disabling

students from diverse backgrounds, both from the inside and outside of classroom settings (Banks, 1999; Freire, 1994; Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 2003; O'Loughlin, 1995). These studies indicate that helping teachers view curriculum as a form of cultural politics is one way of empowering them to make classroom environments safe for all learners. Such a perspective provides teachers with a lens in which to recognize ways in which problematic classroom relationships between teachers and students from different socio-cultural, economic, ethnic, gender, and linguistic backgrounds impact students' academic achievement.

The Kenyan education system that is framed within a colonial legacy needs to be re-examined and its capability in transforming social change and inclusive classroom experiences questioned by all stakeholders. This is because, despite curriculum reconstruction that has taken place at all levels since independence in 1963, education continues to foster the tradition of examinations and meritocracy, perpetuating some level of uniformity and competition at the same time (Angioni, 2003; Mwenda, 2003; Republic of Kenya, 2005). These are conditions that are likely to undermine teaching practices that take into consideration individual differences. As stated by Mwenda an examination oriented education system undermines teaching for creativity and critical thinking as it degenerates into learning for high stakes testing where students believe that knowledge comes from teachers and textbooks. Such approaches to teaching and learning lack comprehension of knowledge and promotes memorization, which encourages the authoritative role of teachers as custodians of knowledge (Freire, 1994). By making learning passive and unquestioning, high stakes teaching ignores the diverse perspectives that students bring into the classroom settings and encourages students to adopt passivity to their approach to societal and world issues. Freire (1995) argued that education of the oppressed prepares students for their world so that they can fit into their defined positions.

Another aspect of education that needs to be addressed is the current existing structures of the schools. After Kenya's independence in 1963 racially segregated schools were replaced by elitist schools (Ominde Report, 1964), a condition that continues to perpetuate class structures and inequality in accessing quality education in post-colonial Kenya. The system has retained high tuition costs in elitist schools that have better learning resources to determine this quality of education in these schools. High tuition costs limit access to education in elite schools to the upper echelon of the society, perpetuating a class system in Kenya. This limits access for students from marginalized groups to quality high school education that fosters possibilities for further education and better economic opportunities in the society. Therefore, teachers, need to be in a position to question how patterns of power from different identities and categories influence students' learning experiences and determine how they construct their image of self, others, and the world around them.

This study emphasized the need to empower teachers through a self reflective process (Freire, 1994; O'Loughlin, 1995) as they express what they perceive to entail students differences within their own contexts and the significance of these differences to their practice and students learning. This would enable teachers to realize their potential contribution as critical as agents of change in Kenya's high schools as they address the needs of diverse students. In such instances pedagogical practices that empower students and prioritize open expression and exchange of views are central to the process of classroom transformation (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003). Critical pedagogy requires that teachers strive to answer the following questions; whose knowledge is being legitimized by the school system? In what way can teachers promote participation of all students in the learning process? Who gets access to high schools? What is the role of the teacher in making education inclusive and meaningful to all

learners? It is only when teachers critically pursue answers to these questions, that they are able to understand that there is no neutral education. Freire (1994) and McLaren (2003) call upon teachers to often examine the social, historical, cultural, and political contexts in which learning takes place and how students are often positioned and represented within classroom spaces.

There are limitations to teachers' use of critical pedagogy in creating classroom reforms (Luke & Gore, 1992; O'Loughlin, 1995) given the asymmetrical power relations that exist between teachers and students. The argument is that the theory may be used as a dominating tool if not guarded by teachers given the socially constructed and legitimated authorities of teachers over their students in a social system like schools. Therefore, there is need to reformulate these power balances between teachers and students otherwise democratization of classrooms may become an illusion.

Thus, critical pedagogy and intersectionality theories provide teachers with a lens in which to analyze the complexities of intersecting issues on quality education, students' characteristics, language proficiency, socio-economic status, high stakes in teaching, gender, and disability, as such constructs shape the learning experiences for many students. These constructs form part of the hidden curriculum and teachers need to be aware that the hidden curriculum has significant influence on how they implement the planned curriculum in their classroom settings.

### **2.3 Issues Impacting High School Education in Kenya**

The current issues impacting high school education in Kenya involve quality, students' characteristics, socio-economic status, motivation toward education, high stakes teaching, gender, and disability. All these form part of the hidden curriculum that influences how teachers implement the planned curriculum and students' success in the education system. The result has

implications for how current teacher education programs and professional development prepare teachers to address these diverse issues that students bring into school and classroom settings.

### 2.3.1 Re-conceptualizing Quality Education

The perception of quality education evolved from the Koech report's (2000) concept of Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET). This meant that quality education should notably address issues of access, quality, relevance, and maintain retention for all students especially those from disadvantaged and vulnerable positions. This was to reflect the holistic and inclusive nature under which the problems facing Kenyan education at all levels needed to be tackled by all shareholders. This becomes pertinent especially for parents who need to demand for accountability from schools given the current government policy of cost sharing (Republic of Kenya, 2005) where parents take up the burden of financial maintenance of schools with the government only paying for teachers salaries. In this study, I perceive education quality as going beyond the analysis of inputs and to mean overall improved learning achievements, that is not necessarily measurable through students' mean-scores.

In spite of the existence of the various concepts of what is regarded as quality education, researchers and government reports (Jensen, 1998; McEwan & Bull, 1991; Palmer, 1997; Republic of Kenya 2005) are generally in consensus that interaction of several sets of factors tend to produce high levels of learner achievement. Such factors include medium of instruction, learner and learning environment, and learner characteristics. Students' characteristics include gender, socio-economic status, linguistic, ability, motivation, health and nutrition status among other factors. Cultural factors on the other hand are intimately woven into all domains such as linguistic, adult-youth relationships, religion, and school culture (Jensen, 1998; McEwan & Bull, 1991). Therefore, elucidating teachers' perceptions of some of the above mentioned differences

that students are likely to display in classroom environments and ways in which these differences impact teaching and learning processes, is one way of tracing core elements of teaching practices and instructional differentiations aimed at developing inclusive education.

According to McEwan and Bull (1991), curriculum content is pedagogical and implies the communication of concepts and ideas that is done through restructuring of knowledge. Therefore, effective communication between teachers and students require that teachers understand who they are, who their students are and where they come from in order to create possibilities for classroom dialogue which is one way of improving quality learning. McEwan and Bull explained that:

Subject matter is always an expression of a desire to communicate ideas to others.....Differences within the form and content of various expressions of subject matter reflect an understanding of differences in the backgrounds of potential audiences and the circumstances of the subject matter's formulation (p. 331).

Palmer (1997) on the other hand envisions teaching as a landscape and argues that to chart their way through it, teachers have to ensure the existence of three most important aspects of learners' characteristics. These characteristics are emotional, intellectual, and spiritual being of students and that ignoring any one of these aspects renders the pedagogical process incomplete. Therefore, effective pedagogy needs to adapt a systematic approach that interweaves the intellect, the emotional, and the spiritual needs of students.

What Palmer is basically saying is that pedagogy is more than techniques, it is embodies the whole process of teaching: relationships, practice, knowing one's self as a teacher, and understanding the characteristics of students in classrooms. This approach to pedagogy has been found to be effective when working with students from diverse backgrounds (Banks & Banks, 2004; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Freire, 1994)). It cautions teachers against over emphasizing teaching methods as this may subsume other factors that influence students' education

achievements such as gender, linguistic, socio-economic status, and cultural backgrounds of learners. Freire (1994) corroborates this argument when he indicates that teachers should not only focus on practices that are centered exclusively on content and methods, but also pay attention to understanding educational practices that promote relationships and their influence in the process of knowledge construction. This calls for teachers' understanding of the nature of students' characteristics and ways in which these characteristics influence teaching and learning.

### 2.3.2 Students' Characteristics in Kenya's Urban High schools

There is a rapid shift in the demographic makeup of Kenya's urban high school population, given the social mobility and current increased levels of poverty, and orphans in our school systems (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Therefore, students in Kenyan urban high schools are likely to be heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, linguistic, religious backgrounds, gender, socio-economic, and conditions of exceptionality. To work effectively with such a heterogeneous population, teachers need to understand different background settings in which students are located in order to develop inclusive learning environments, effective instructional and communication strategies that are supportive to students academic achievement (Freire, 1994; Gollnick & Chinn, 1999; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Phuntsog 2001). These studies noted that when teaching is personalized to the background experiences of students' learning is more meaningful, interesting, and relevant. Freire (1994) states that teachers must recognize and respect experiential knowledge that students bring into the classrooms because this is their reality of the world around them. Therefore, understanding students' differences is an advantage to teachers as they are able to build on students' diverse experiences to help them learn concepts through relational learning.

Teachers also need to understand that students have their own unique abilities that support or impede their learning and classroom interaction depending on their innate characteristics and experiential conditioning (Jensen, 1998; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2006). These are characteristics such as gender, ethnic, religion, language, disability, and intelligence among others. Teaching is then perceived as a process of adapting to these different constructs that determine students' academic success. The challenge is to provide all learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to become socially active in creating the necessary changes that will enable them shape their own destinies. If Kenyan urban high school teachers are to successfully scaffold students' learning through successful academic achievements, they must understand the characteristics of the learners and illuminate the complexities that student characteristics may have in the teaching and learning process.

Regional diversity (rural & urban) is another layer of student characteristics found in Kenyan urban high schools. Students from rural areas may completely differ in characteristics from their colleagues in urban centers due to lack of exposure to cosmopolitan experiences. They are likely to hold more conservative beliefs, have different perspectives and philosophies of education. Their cultural values may influence their perception of teachers as absolute authority figures who dispense knowledge, and hence understand their roles as that of passive learners who filter out the right answers from the materials presented to them (Giroux, 2003; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). On the other hand students from urban areas having undergone cross-cultural experiences of cosmopolitan, media cultures, and affluent family backgrounds, bring to the school and classroom environments, a more critical perspective on the learning process. Therefore, teachers need to be cognizant of these categories of difference in their teaching and interaction with students.



Research on teaching for diversity (Gollnick & Chinn, 1999; Phuntsog, 2001; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995) indicates how cultural incongruence causes students to struggle in the learning process, yet if their different strengths are valued, respected, and nurtured it would increase their self-confidence in the learning process. Such incongruence is also experienced by students who come from family or social backgrounds where mother tongue or *sheng* is predominantly the medium of communication and are confronted with learning environments that promote the dominance of the use of English language, creating communication barriers.

### 2.3.3 Linguistic Issues in High School Classrooms

Kenya is a multilingual country with over forty local languages and mother tongues. Added to the ethnic languages are other language groups (Arabic, Asian languages of Indian origin), English as medium of instruction in schools, and Kiswahili, which is the national language. Therefore, a typical Kenyan urban high school student is multilingual and is more likely to speak a minimum of four languages, namely mother tongue, Kiswahili, English, and *sheng*. *Sheng* is a code-switching language adopted by Kenyan urban youths, which is a mixture of English, Kiswahili, and mother tongue.

Given the linguistic diversity of the country, a number of students from various ethnic backgrounds are increasingly entering high schools at different levels of competency in English language. Like most African countries, Kenya's colonial legacy is an important factor in the problematic language policy of the country's education system (Bunyi, 1999; Brock-Utne, 2005; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001). In the school system, English holds a prestigious position denigrating the indigenous languages as most parents, educators, and policy makers continue to view English as a tool for social mobility and socio-economic development. Therefore, studies (Bunyi, 1999;

Brock-Utne, 2005; Mazrui, 1997; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001) argue that using English as the only medium of instruction at the expense of the local languages results in differential education system leading to perpetual socio-economic inequalities. Mazrui reiterates that the dominance of foreign languages in Africans education continues to promote power differentials between the children of the elites who are the minority group and the rest of the community.

The effect of English language as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning in post-colonial countries is vividly documented by several studies (Bunyi, 2007; Brock-Utne, 2005; Macdonald, 1990; Probyn; 2001; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001; Rubagumya, 2003). These scholars' points out the difficulties that English as a medium of instruction create among students from African diverse ethnic linguistic backgrounds. As stated by Macdonald, (1990):

In the end the language proficiency of the children actually moulds the task of the teacher. Teachers respond by translating texts into the students' mother tongue and providing students with simplified notes in English to learn by heart. This sets the patterns of rote-learning and dependency on the teacher as 'keeper of knowledge' which persists through secondary school with implications for students' cognitive development. (p. 44)

Studies on linguistic diversity in education (Bunyi, 2007; Brock-Utne, 2005; Macdonald, 1990; Probyn; 2001; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001; Rubagumya, 2003) with respect to many African countries, indicate how students' variations in English language proficiency have significant implications for their learning and academic success. Therefore, English as the medium of instruction is a barrier to effective teaching and learning.

The above studies view English language proficiency as putting constraints on the possibility of teachers' engaging in constructivist pedagogies, where they can collaboratively create knowledge with their students. This is because students, who lack proficiency in English language, usually engage in passive rather than active participation in the classroom knowledge construction. The important role of language in pedagogical practice is explicated by many

studies (Bourdieu & Passaron, 1990; Freire, 1994; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001; Norton, 2000).

These authors indicate that language influences how students define their world, and how their identities are shaped within specific contextual relations. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of language as a primary source for enacting social identity and promoting cultural values of social groups.

The language of Kenyan urban high school classrooms during students' interactions in the learning process is often in *sheng* and not English. Yet, there seems to be an unquestionable view held by teachers, parents, school administrators, and policy makers that English should be the only language of classroom learning and students interaction within the school environment. This is based on the assumption that speaking the language continuously is the best way for students to acquire English proficiency. Issues concerning language use in education are therefore significant in teaching as stated by Freire (1994) "ideologies reside in language" (p. 56) and therefore, using English language as the sole dominant medium of instruction in Kenyan schools needs to be problematized.

Freire indicated that "understanding the role of language as an oppressive tool for students from other cultures and who speak different languages is important" (p. 56). Norton (2000) reiterates the need to acknowledge ways in which language helps students define their imagined communities in order to impact their learning trajectory in a more positive way. This means that teachers need to recognize ways in which *sheng* language as a newly imagined identity is an important aspect of urban high school students' learning trajectory. This is because it converts the users into social constructivists enhancing learning and transforms them into legitimate participants in classroom environments, as they interact with their colleagues.

Scholars of linguistics and learning (Brock-Utne; 2001, 2005; Bunyi, 1999; Macdonald, 1990; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001; Probyn; 2001; Rubagumya, 2003) indicate that students major learning problems is linguistic. Brock-Utne (2001) argue that students are often branded as unintelligent whenever they are not fluent in English language and when English is used as the only medium of instruction. Yet, such students seldom use English language outside of the classroom. The studies cited advocate for multilingualism as valuable resource in students' learning if education in African countries and specifically Kenya is to address the diverse social, economic, and political needs of all students.

#### 2.3.4 Socio-economic Status and Effective Learning

The decline in high school enrolment is partly caused by the high tuition cost, which has limited accessibility, led to chronic absenteeism by students, further resulting in a high dropout rate. In Kenya many students who get places in secondary schools fail to report largely due to financial reasons (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). The high cost of education has a significant impact on students from low socio-economic status and vulnerable children given increasing levels of poverty among many households, especially those that are from single family and female headed. Compounding this is the devastating negative effects of HIV/AIDS pandemic (Allemono, 2003; MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 1998, 2005). The loss of wage earners in the family due to AIDS infected parents of school-going children can reduce families to poverty, resulting from loss of resources. Most students from these backgrounds exist in the high school education system. Many orphans are often left without financial capabilities, unless relatives take care of them forcing many of them to drop out of the school system (Allemano, 2003; MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Studies by Allemano show that by the year

2001, nearly six million children in Sub-Saharan Africa had lost both parents and in about two out of three cases, the loss was due to AIDS.

Studies (Ayako & Katumanga, 1997; Republic of Kenya, 1999) also show the widespread of poverty among female-headed households. Therefore, socio-economic circumstances compel many of these women to engage in illegal and risky activities such as prostitution, brewing of illicit liquor, hawking without license and living in dangerous neighborhoods (Republic of Kenya, 2005). In effect, these children are potentially at great risk of abuse and dropping out of school. Children from such backgrounds also lack positive role models to inspire them to different ways of life other than that of their immediate surroundings. Therefore, teachers' understanding of conditions in which students are raised and challenges from their background is important if they are to scaffold them to high academic achievement.

The Kenya government's efforts to expand education opportunities and support retention of students from low-income groups in the school system refocused on promoting the development of day schools in slum areas as a way to reducing the cost of education among low income groups. The assumption is that day schools are much cheaper than having students in boarding schools. Another strategy by the government is to provide bursaries to needy students through the Constituency Development Funds scheme (CDF) (MOEST, 2005). Living in poverty promotes feelings of deprivation, isolation, alienation, insecurity, and worst of all despondency (Ayako & Katumanga, 1997; MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 1999a, 2005). This emotional status determines students' levels of motivation and aspirations, which are important in the realization of educational goals.

### 2.3.5 Students' Motivation in Learning

Students' motivation is determined by their desire and compulsion to participate in and be successful in the education process (Ainley, 2004; Jensen, 1998; Fox, 2005; LeDoux, 1993). According to these studies, influences of motivation come from both internal and external factors and are significant in reducing dropout rates and increasing students' levels of academic success. Intrinsic (internal) motivation includes the learners' natural search and subsequent construction of meaning. This means that differences in students' backgrounds determine how they construct meaning based on their levels of need and places them at different levels of need that must be addressed for success in their academic achievement (Jensen, 1998; Fox 2005). Thus understanding students' backgrounds is necessary if teachers are to scaffold learners through their personal quest of motivation in the learning process.

Fox (2005) reiterates that the best way to motivate students to learn is "to persuade them that a task is connected to some existing desire, such as curiosity about a story or about a surprising phenomenon or that it offers some longer-term pay-off" (p.144). The question is how does Kenyan high school teachers know what is intriguing to students that would arouse their curiosity? They can only know this by understanding students' needs, which stems from background experiences. This cannot be achieved unless teachers understand students' backgrounds in order to gauge what would be meaningful to individuals or groups of students.

External factors of motivation come from the school, classrooms, family, and social environment of students that shape their ability to learn through messages and experiences they encounter in these settings (E.g. Ainley, 2004; Fox, 2005; Jensen, 1998). How teachers conduct their classroom activities and maintain relationships in the learning process can be a major factor in directing students' motivation. This is because learning includes engaging students in

meaningful construction of knowledge but the process must also ensure levels of participation (Ainley, 2004; Fox, 2005; Jansen, 1998). These studies indicate that students are more engaged in learning when they are active, have control over the learning process, and when curriculum is individualized to meet their interests. Ainley indicates that certain types of schooling practices such as features of the classrooms, instructional practices, and peer groups may promote or hinder motivation. Therefore, engaging students in relevant and challenging instruction helps to increase students' motivation.

Sarason, Pierce, and Sarason (1990) concur that when teachers adapt strategies that enrich classroom learning and foster resilience, caring and respectful relationships, students are more likely to be motivated to higher academic aspirations. Fostering resilience in all students helps them, especially those from marginalized positions to have hope in their education as it reduces stress and anxiety levels that are created by situations of hopelessness. Students' higher levels of motivation and aspirations in education are also influenced by exposure to safe social environments (Ainley, 2004; Jensen, 1998; LeDoux, 1993). Ainley found that exposure to helplessness often results in anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and restlessness. These are situations that most Kenyan students from low socio-economic backgrounds and orphans are likely to experience, given the risky residential areas they live in. Another way of increasing motivation is through positive connections to others such as mentors and role models.

As stated by LeDoux, emotions are critical source of information for learning and therefore, it is important for teachers to engage emotions as part of learning, not as an add-on. In other words, good teaching and learning is perceived as one that engages feelings in the whole equation. Emotions include feeling of a sense of belonging, care, and respect (Sarason et al., 1990), which teachers should take into consideration when creating healthy learning

environments. Many times the school system tests and national examinations have been used as motivating aspects of the learning process, calling for the need to problematize high stakes policies in education as perceived motivators to teaching and learning in diverse classrooms.

#### 2.3.6 High-Stakes in Teaching and Students Diversity

Government reports (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005) attribute poor performance in the national examinations by some of the Kenyan high schools partly to teachers' lack of adequate pedagogical skills, complacency, and inefficiencies in their work. It is argued that, in the past promotion has been based on teachers' levels of qualifications but not on their classroom performance, this is partly attributed to teachers' complacent attitudes resulting in sloppy work (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). The Ministry of Education now argues that one way to improve access, relevance, equity, and quality in education is to ensure better management of service delivery to learners (Republic of Kenya, 2005). This entails adopting a business model for teaching that involves establishing quality assurance monitoring system, to set benchmarks for evaluating and rewarding teachers' performance for the purposes of ensuring effective curriculum delivery.

This resulted in the enactment of a policy on performance contracts aimed at establishing a monitoring system for teachers' classroom performance (MOEST, 2005). Performance contract mean that teachers report on their classroom work on a termly and yearly basis by stating their perceived levels of achievements, constrain, factors that supported success, and strategies for addressing any limitations encountered. The policy requires that teachers draw a strategic plan for how they would achieve their set teaching objectives. Teachers' level of performance is then measured through increase of students' mean scores in their various disciplines. This becomes a basis for measuring teachers' success in curriculum implementation



and justification for their promotions. The assumption is that high stakes in teaching influence teachers' motivation to successfully implement curriculum and develop pedagogies that leads to students' high performance in the national examination.

Proponents of high stakes testing (Gladwell, 2006; Wayne, 2001; Van Hover, 2006) argue that in some way, certain types of tests have led to the expansion of curricular content, the integration of knowledge and a more student-centered, and cooperative approach to pedagogy. But they concluded that high stakes tests may lead to improved learning experiences and positive educational outcome depending on the structures of the tests themselves. Yet other studies (Anderson, 2001; Lipman, 2004; McNeil, 2000; Mwenda, 2003) indicate how high stakes testing undermine education because it narrows the curriculum and limits the ability of teachers to meet the socio-cultural needs of their students. These authors argue that, the primary effect of high stakes testing is that curricular content is narrowed to tested subjects, subject area knowledge is fragmented into test related pieces and teachers increase the use of teacher-centered pedagogies.

Anderson's research, for instance, promotes teaching and assessment practices that facilitate the learning of students who are socially, economically, and historically marginalized. His findings show that most of the teaching that goes on in high stakes teaching is oriented toward learners who tend to be strongly analytical, comfortable with learning material in relatively abstract terms or concepts that are separated from their own life experiences. As a result, students who tend to be more relationally oriented are often excluded not through overt discriminatory practices, but because the learning environment they find themselves in do not create enough opportunities to connect learning and life or put new learning into meaningful contexts. According to Anderson (2001), relational learners need more overt cues to engage

them in classroom tasks and to help them see the connection between the curriculum content and their own lived experiences.

Research findings and government reports (Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Mwenda, 2003; Republic of Kenya, 1998, 2005) indicate how Kenyan education system at most levels have heavy bias toward uniformity over diversity and one reason for this is found in the influence of over emphasis on examination. This supports Eisner's (1991) view that evaluation practices and testing are the most powerful forces influencing the priorities and cultures of schools. Eisner indicates that:

More than what educators say, more than what they write in curriculum guides, evaluation practices tell both students and teachers what counts. How these practices are employed, what they address, and what they neglect, and the form in which they occur speak forcefully to students about what adults believe is important. (p. 81)

If the Kenyan school system is to create students' communities of learners that are innovative, creative, and collaborative problem solvers, then it is essential to rethink the inherited colonial traditional curricular form that is dominated by high stakes testing. Recommendations from the Koech report (2000) resulted in reduced number of examinable subjects to ease academic stress on both teachers and students.

When learners work within a competitive and individualistic framework, this learning environment may limit sharing of different perspectives among students. In such situations many learners especially those from marginalized groups such as students from low-income settings and rural areas who may lack competencies in English language, which is the medium of instruction, are likely to have their voices silenced limiting their engagement in classroom activities. Other voices that continue to be silenced in our education system are that of girls and the disabled youth.

### 2.3.7 Gender Discourse in Kenya's Education System

Education of girls is an issue that the government of Kenya is trying to address in order to ensure their access to education. The government of Kenya's development plan of 1994-1996 (Republic of Kenya, 1998) devoted a section to address gender inequality in education. To date the Ministry of Education recognizes that girls' and women's empowerment continues to be impeded by factors such as culture, religion, HIV/AIDS, poverty, teen pregnancies, child labor, inadequate policy guidelines, lack of community awareness, and positive role models especially in slum and rural areas (MOEST, 2005; Ndunda, 1995,1998; Republic of Kenya, 1998, 2005). In spite of the above barriers, the benefits of equal education opportunities for girls are echoed not only as a right but a contributing factor to the social and economic development of the society. The government of Kenya's commitment to combating ignorance, disease, and poverty focuses on educating all youths regardless of gender and socio-economic status (Republic of Kenya, 1999). To address issues of gender disparity in education the government of Kenya has introduced policies to support access, retention, and to improve performance.

One such policy on retention of girls is the government's enactment of education policy that allows for re-entry of girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy and early marriages and affirmative action on provision of bursaries to support their tuition fees. Re-entry of girls who leave school due to pregnancy into the education system is still an illusion for students from low socio-economic groups and rural areas (Ndunda, 1998). Other than this policy level, government initiatives aim at promoting gender friendly school environments, focus on provision of water, sanitation, instructional materials that are gender inclusive, and community sensitization on gender issues (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Affirmative action has also been put in place that ensures admission of girls to high schools at slightly lower mean scores at the

Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) than that of boys. In addition, the government of Kenya has appointed more qualified women to administer schools and to act as role models for girls. More girls' boarding schools have been established in hardship and semi-arid areas as a significant effort to provide educational opportunities for girls.

While the government has made efforts to ensure gender equity in access and retention in education, studies (Chege, 2004; Ndunda, 1995, 1998; Republic of Kenya, 2005; UNICEF, 2004) reflect continued low enrolment of girls in high schools especially in rural, arid, and semi-arid parts of Kenya. Findings of these studies show that drop out rates for girls in high schools are much higher than that of boys due to the ever rising cost of high school. As stated by Ndunda "the financial demands have become unattainable for most families who rely on a single income or have no income at all" (p. 144). The low enrolment and high drop out rate can be accounted for by cultural and economic factors. The cultural factor can be explained by common beliefs among most Kenyan ethnic communities that still regard women as home makers while men are perceived as breadwinners, exerting different educational expectations and values for different genders. Therefore, girls from low socio-economic status in the Kenyan education system continue to experience marginalization resulting from stereotyping of gender roles in society. Ndunda (1998) reiterates that addressing gender issues requires challenging the deeply engrained gendered stereotypes that reinforce inequality in social settings like education.

UNICEF (2004) also showed that girls from broken homes or single parent families are often lured into marriage by men who promise to cater for their basic financial needs and wants which may not be provided for within the homes by their parents. Chege (2004) and Ndunda (1998) indicates that less effort has been made at the society levels and in teacher education training courses to help develop teachers' understanding of gender inequalities and how to

overcome them in the classroom. Yet gendered identities tend to influence the way students construct teacher images in different school contexts. Chege indicated that findings of her study showed how female teacher identity was constructed within the framework of care and empathy. On the other hand the male teachers' identity represented power, disciplinarian, and sex. This bares implications for boys and girls identities as they interact in classroom spaces given that teachers are the role models that students do emulate. Norton (2000) describes how students can redefine identities in ways that leverage social status and power within specific contexts such as classrooms. This makes it necessary to analyze ways in which gender relations are understood by teachers if they are to address gender differences and inequity in their classrooms. Further efforts are needed in this area to help teachers and policy makers understand impact of gender relationships in learning.

The current Ministry of Education initiatives to establish gender friendly learning environments has focused more on provision of responsive curriculum, instructional materials, and access (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 1998, 2005) with less reference to illuminating teachers' understanding of gender differences. Teachers' understanding of gender differences is important if they are to identify what would entail a gender friendly classroom environment and analyze textbooks and learning resources for inclusiveness. Unless teachers have a clear perspective of what gender differences entail, they will not be in a position to establish classroom structures that foster retention and empowerment, especially for girls from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds. It is on this basis that there is a need and a rationale for further studies to unfold and explicate teachers' perception of gender differences and other forms of diversity in education.

### 2.3.8 Addressing Issues of Disability in Education

Education for children with disabilities in Kenya is provided for in special schools although there is a small number integrated in the regular public school system. However schools for children with special needs in the areas of hearing, visual, mental, and physical challenges are minimally catered for given the few numbers that are located in specific regions of the country (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). The challenges occur due to lack of clear policy guidelines, which is compounded with lack of adequate data on children with special needs. Another challenge in addressing educational needs of disabled youth is lack of adequate knowledge by teachers to identify and assess the needs of such students in this education system (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 1998).

Special education has not been mainstreamed to prepare teachers adequately to handle students with special needs in their classrooms, since such training has been centralized within the Kenya Institute of Special Education. This is the only education institution that prepares teachers for special needs and teachers from such training work in special education schools. Low enrolment of children with disabilities in the regular school system can also be explained by the attitudes and beliefs that most communities hold of disability as taboo (MOEST, 2005).

Professional inadequacy compounded by inappropriate infrastructure make it difficult for teachers to integrate special education in regular programs. Students with a disability are likely to experience marginalization in the regular public school system since teachers are not trained to address the needs of different types of disabilities in their classrooms. Children with disabilities from low socio-economic class and rural areas are likely to start schooling at a mature age and this often creates age differences with the cohort groups. This sometimes develops in such students, a sense of not belonging as they experience age differences in their relationships with

younger fellow students. Students may feel rejected or not included in the classroom relationships by their peers hindering motivation for learning and schooling in general. As stated by Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995):

We know from experience as teachers that how learners feel about the setting they are in, the respect they receive from the people around them, and their ability to trust their own thinking and experience powerfully influence their concentration, their imagination, their effort and their willingness to continue. (p. 2)

Helping teachers through professional development to identify and establish structures for assisting students with any form of disability in their classroom is pertinent to improving education opportunities of such learners.

One of the Kenya government's policy frameworks on educating students with special learning needs is to integrate special education programs at all levels of education and training and to ensure that institutions are responsive to the education of learners with special needs (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Therefore, preparing teachers on basic skills and knowledge on special needs will help them attend adequately to issues impacting students with disability in their classrooms. Based on the reviewed literature, I conclude that students' differences form part of the hidden curriculum that teachers need to understand as being engrained in their practice inside and outside of their classrooms and which significantly influence teaching and learning.

## **2.4 Hidden Curriculum in Diverse Classrooms**

Exploring how teachers' perceptions of students' differences shape their beliefs and values of education as part of the hidden curriculum is central in the socialization aspect of learning and crucial in determining students' academic achievement. The curriculum becomes meaningless to students if not implemented in ways that address their varied needs and

experiential knowledge. Therefore, hidden curriculum becomes an influential aspect of educational achievement of learners and plays an important role in addressing issues of diversity.

The importance of the teachers' role in curriculum implementation is expressed by Ben-Peretz (1990) who stated that:

The characteristics and needs of the actual classroom situation are the first and final factors determining what should be done in that classroom. The teacher is the arbiter between the demands of the curriculum materials and of the instructional situation. Only rarely will arbitration lead to settlement exclusively favoring the developer's intention (p. 164).

This means that teachers in their practices do more than facilitate students' construction of knowledge as laid down in the official curriculum. Behind it lie power relationships, social implications, and cultural outcomes (Snyder, 1973). Contextual teaching and learning therefore, starts with the classroom teacher, hence the need to determine their understanding of the contexts that students bring into the school and classroom environments. Ben-Peretz (1990) argued that the essential value of a curriculum is how it permits teachers to adapt, invent, and transform as they confront the realities of classroom life.

Marsh and Willis (1999) define curriculum as "the sum of the meanings students experience as they engage in the activities of the school. Inevitably it includes both planned experiences and unplanned ones" (p. 9). The concept of hidden curriculum, thus, refers to knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and values that students and teachers internalize about learning and the process of schooling adopted from a wide range of socializing influences and processes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In this respect, understanding how the hidden curriculum influences students' learning provides explanations for differential educational achievements caused by constructs such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and religious



affiliations, which has great influence in beliefs and value systems of individuals on their philosophy of education.

Snyder (1973) advances the proposition that while many classroom tasks are cast in explicit terms, there are other sets of less obvious tasks that are important in determining relationships to the formal curriculum. The question according to Snyder (1973) is not only what students will learn but also how learning will take place. These covert, inferred tasks and means to their mastery are linked together in the hidden curriculum, which constitutes students differences. How teachers address these differences in their classrooms is related to their teacher education experiences.

## **2.5 Implications for Teacher Education**

Literature on teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Cochran-Smith, & Lytle, 1999; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995) indicate that there seems to be a growing consensus that teacher education has a moral obligation to prepare teachers to accommodate students' differences. These studies suggest the need for teacher education to transform itself as the society it serves is being transformed by the vast array of cultures and problems that compose it if pre-service teachers are to be adequately prepared for work in diverse classrooms. There is need to prepare teachers who can engage students in understanding their rights, agency, and processes of empowering students' voices through the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Students' empowerment must be reinforced through classroom interactions with peers and teachers and deciphered through to the school and eventually to their social settings.

Government reports have raised concerns on the quality and relevance of teacher preparation by Kenya's public universities (Gachathi Report, 1976; Kamunge Report, 1988; Mackay Report, 1981; Republic of Kenya, 1998, 2005) in meeting the needs of the students and

their communities. The relevance in curriculum implementation and pedagogical skills, especially in the teaching of mathematics, science, Kiswahili, and English has been perceived to be wanting. With the education reforms following the Mackay report (Republic of Kenya, 1981), a majority of university programs including teacher education, were extended from three to four years. The argument put forth is that this would provide more time for pre-service teachers to study theory and have more time for practicum before classroom practice. However, such recommendations disregard issues of students' diversity as being relevant in determining the nature of teacher education curriculum that prepares in-service and pre-service teachers in addressing challenges of pluralistic high school classrooms.

Viewing teacher education improvement from the perspective of time disregards other relevant factors that determine the success of teachers' performance in pluralistic classrooms. Research by Indoshi (2003) investigating graduate teachers' experiences during their probation period indicated that although Kenyan public universities graduate a large teaching force for high schools, there seems to be little research on their experiences in the schools and classrooms. Indoshi argued that the basis of blames on public university training has been based on wrong assumptions and that initial training program must produce a complete self actualized teacher. This status can only be gained gradually through periods of experience in classroom practices. While this perspective may bear merit, my view is that teacher educators also ought to re-evaluate the nature of the teacher education programs and make them congruent to the changing dynamics of the current high school demographics if pre-service and in-service teachers are to be adequately prepared for the challenges posed by such classrooms.

Schon (1983) talks of the importance of authority of experience as a basis of framing teacher education program. Schon argues that teachers understanding of their own teaching

practice advances as they work with students in the classrooms. Liberman (1990) on the other hand indicates that the limitation of most teacher training is the missing link between theory and practice during pre-service teacher preparation process. According to Liberman, most pre-service teachers enter the teaching profession with theoretical understanding but lack the practical knowledge about the youth and how to address their needs and challenges especially at adolescence. Newly hired teachers in Kenya are no exception and face similar experiences.

In this study I argue that helping pre-service and in-service teachers break free of ineffective models of teaching require teacher preparation that engages them in exploring all aspects that inform on good practices including understanding the influences of students' diverse nature in teachers' performance. Helping teachers inquire into their own experiences is likely to promote their understanding of personal misconceptions and biases, enabling them to confront embedded prejudices that they may hold about students from differing backgrounds.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I highlighted the rapid shift in the demographic make up of Kenya's high schools and how teachers need to acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of students at these institutions. This illuminates the importance of teachers in recognizing the dynamics that students' differences introduce into the learning environment. In order for them to vary their teaching approaches and promotes inclusive relationships and interactive learning activities to engage students' interests in the learning process. Teachers must recognize the importance of student difference when teachers understand learning and background differences that students bring into their classrooms, they can strive for a variety in instruction, curriculum materials, classroom management, and assessments that are inclusive to all learners.

Mutual education involves conceptualizing teachers as components of positive change process and the institutions as units of change (Fullan, 2001), if there is to be any structural changes within classrooms and schools that address relevant and inclusive education. For teachers to become transformers there is need for them to have a clear understanding of what diversity in education means to them within their contexts. Therefore, elucidating perceptions of diversity in education from those involved in implementing curriculum change is necessary. This is because perceptions play a large part in influencing individual beliefs and practices.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This study explored Kenya urban high school teachers' perceptions of the nature of students' differences in their classrooms and how these differences influence teaching and learning. To understand teachers and their actions in a diverse classroom environment, it was essential to investigate their conceptualization of who their students are. Providing teachers' accounts of personal experiences with students through thick descriptions of their experiences adds the participants' voice to the findings of the study. The notion of voice, embodies and provides linguistic tools to describe teachers' perspectives, their frame of references, and evokes their understanding of the phenomenon under study (Schutz, 1970, 1978; Schwandt, 2003). This background together with the main research questions raised in the study guided my choice of the methodological approach adapted in the inquiry. The three guiding research questions in this study were: (1) what are Kenya's urban high school teachers' perceptions of students' differences in the classrooms? (2) How do students' differences influence the way teachers plan for teaching resources, learning activities, implementation of curriculum content, and teaching strategies? (3) In what way do teachers perceive their teacher education programs as having prepared them for work in diverse classrooms?

A mixed qualitative research methodology based on interpretive and descriptive phenomenology (Creswell, 2003; Tashakhori & Teddlie, 2003) was employed to select the tools for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and subsequent understanding of the issues under

investigation. As stated by these authors, mixing methodologies entails adapting a research strategy that employs more than one type of research methodology in a single study or program of inquiry. The methodologies may be a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, a mix of quantitative methods or a mix of qualitative methods.

In this chapter I begin by examining mixed methodological designs in general by providing a brief review of the methodological underpinnings of interpretive and descriptive phenomenology. This will be followed by the rationale for adapting a mixed methodology design and detailed overview of data sources, data collection procedures, and methods used to analyze and present the data. Finally I discuss the criteria adapted during the data collection procedures to ensure trustworthiness of the findings.

### **3.1 Phenomenology as a Research Methodology**

Phenomenology as a research methodology has its origin in the works of Edmund Husserl (1970). Husserl explained that the key element of phenomenology is its focus on informing human experiences and action by emphasizing the need for human inquiries to start from the root causes of a problem. This involves starting the investigation from the context of the knower's level of natural knowledge to the level of absolute knowledge. Following Husserl's work, different perspectives of phenomenological inquiries have been developed (Schutz, 1970; Merleau-Ponty, 1967; Heidegger, 1962, 1982) building on or improving on limitations perceived. Various models have been collapsed into two broad perspectives descriptive and interpretive methodologies, I have employed both in the investigation.

Phenomenological approaches to research aim at inquiring into how a phenomenon is perceived by participants in a given context. These approaches involve providing a thick description through the participants' experiences and seek to elucidate human activity with the

task of discovering generalizable patterns of participants' common understandings (Schutz, 1978; Van Manen, 1996). Van Manen state that "phenomenology describes how one orients to lived experiences" (p. 4). One way of engaging research inquiry into teachers' perceptions of their experiences in diverse classroom settings is by employing descriptive-interpretive phenomenological lenses to data collection, analysis, and subsequent reporting of findings. Thus, phenomenology as a research methodology focuses on lived experiences of research participants rather than how the phenomenon represents itself to the researcher.

Hence, phenomenologists (Schutz, 1970, 1978; Schwandt, 2003) aim at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of individuals' daily experiences. As, such, emphasis is placed on both the importance of clarifying how interpretations and meanings are presented in the findings of the study as well as the significance of my voice as the researcher and that of the participants as subjective rather than impartial in the findings. This was best achieved in this study through the adoption of a mixed descriptive and interpretive phenomenological perspective because through interview excerpts teachers views were reflected differentiating it from my interpretations of these excerpts and data from other sources.

### **3.2 Conceptual and Methodological issues**

There are divergent views found in the philosophical orientation of the descriptive and interpretive phenomenological perspectives but there are shared characteristics too, as reflected in the literature reviewed (Heidegger, 1982; Howe, 1998; Husserl, 1970; Schutz, 1970).

Descriptive and interpretative phenomenologies are both concerned with investigating human experiences. Phenomenological philosophers aim at illuminating fine details, which may at a glance seem to be trivial yet revealing aspects within experiences that may be taken for granted in the participants' lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving understanding of

individuals' actions (Heidegger, 1982; Husserl, 1970; Schutz, 1970; Schwandt, 2003; Van Manen, 1996). Epistemologically, descriptive and interpretive methodologies are based on the constructivist traditions of knowledge construction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2003). Simply put this means its collaborative construction of knowledge between the researcher and participants.

Both methodologies are based on assumptions that the world is created through individuals' shared understanding, culture, history, and language. For researchers to gain understanding of realities of participants' world, they have to employ several tools to elucidate patterns as to how individuals think, make meaning of their social environment and decisions on their actions (Heidegger, 1982; Palys, 2003; Schutz, 1970, 1978). According to Schutz, the process of investigation must start from the premise that human beings are essentially conscious thinking beings, who are motivated by taking specific action towards specific social situations. The philosophy that expresses this view is known as phenomenologism (Schutz, 1970; Palys, 2003). Phenomenologism according to Palys, (2003):

Maintains that any effort to understand human behavior must take into account that humans are cognitive beings who actively perceive and make sense of the world around them, have the capacity to abstract from their experiences, ascribe meaning to their behavior and the world around them, and are affected by these meanings (p. 9).

The focus and outcomes of this research using descriptive and interpretive phenomenological perspectives in data collection, subject selection, and understanding of lived experiences has enhanced understanding of Kenya's urban high school teachers' perceptions of diversity as they make decisions on their teaching strategies.

The differences between interpretive and descriptive methodologies arise in the focus on exploration of lived experience, the philosophical orientation, issues of rigor of the research,



positioning of the researcher, and the process of data analysis (Schwandt, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1983). The critical point of departure for descriptive and interpretive phenomenology lies in the way in which each perspective explores lived experience, which determines their epistemological questions of knowing.

### 3.2.1 Critical Concepts in Descriptive Phenomenology

Husserl's (1970) descriptive phenomenology was more interested in acts of attending, perceiving, recalling, and thinking about the world and how human beings are understood primarily as knowers. Husserl perceived the methodology as a way of reaching true meaning through a deeper investigation into reality. The main focus in descriptive phenomenology is how phenomena appear through consciousness and therefore, Husserl viewed intentionality and essence as key to understanding of what became known as phenomenology of the transcendent. Intentionality refers to the ability of the mind to identify and direct action toward an object. According to Husserl (1982) there is innate "knowing of the objects in the world" (p. 2) even with less conceptual thinking of them. Husserl termed this innate knowing as "clear intuiting" (p. 52), which can be described as perceiving or an operative experiencing of the object or phenomena.

Transcendence means rising beyond sense experience and is characterized by something that is not only described but also knowable through intuition. Transcendental structures of phenomenology are rooted in perceptual experiences. Essence, on the other hand refers to common features that all persons experience within a given context (Husserl, 1970; Schwandt, 2003). Descriptive phenomenology as a methodology focuses on the description of the structures of experiences; the organizing principle that gives form and meaning to the life world from the perspective of the participants' own voices rather than researchers' interpretation.

As stated by Husserl (1970) and Polkinghorne (1983), transcendence seeks to elucidate the essence of these structures as they appear in consciousness in order to make the invisible, visible. According to Husserl any description of lived experiences based on a scientific approach require that certain commonalities (essence) in the experiences of participants be identified to allow for possible generalization of individual descriptions. The purpose of reflection is to become aware of one's biases and assumptions in order to bracket them or put them aside if the researcher is to engage the participants' experiences without pre-conceived notions or pre-conscious structures of experiences.

### 3.2.2 Critical Concepts in Interpretive Phenomenology

Interpretive phenomenology on the other hand is based on existentialist philosophy influenced by the works of Heidegger, (1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1967), among other philosophers. The main focus is in understanding the actuality of being in the world and the whole person's existence and not just consciousness (Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1967; Schutz, 1970). Merleau-Ponty reiterates that, objects do not impose themselves in consciousness, rather things as experienced are discovered through subject-object dialogue (intersubjectivity). Therefore, consciousness is not only what goes on in people's cognition, but rather intentional consciousness is experienced in and through the body. Merleau-Ponty, observes that things cannot be experienced independent of bodily experiences. This reflects a holistic approach to teaching and learning inquiries since the process involves the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive processes of the learners.

Existentialist philosophy is rooted in the belief that reality cannot be known apart from the knower, and that knowing is always in context (Heidegger, 1962; Schutz, 1978; Van Manen, 1996). Hence human consciousness is viewed as not being separate from the worldview, but is a

formation of socio-cultural and historical lived experience. Pre-understanding is a structure of being in the world and therefore, meaning is created as individuals construct the world from their background experiences. Heidegger (1962, 1982) and Merleau-Ponty (1967) argued that each individual would perceive the same phenomenon in different ways since each person brings to bear his or her lived experiences, specific understandings, and historical background in the process of interpretation.

Interpretation is viewed as the critical component of interpretive phenomenology in constructing meaning and understanding from a thick description of participants' experience. Gadamer (1994), states that in this interpretation process "language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpretation" (p. 389). Gadamer views interpretation as the interaction between the expectation of the interpreter and the meaning of the text (Polkinghorne, 1983). Interpretive phenomenology concentrates on the socio-cultural and historical meanings of experiences, their development, and cumulative effects on individuals and social levels. The interpretive process includes explicit wordings, statements, and phrases from participants that indicate the historical or philosophical orientations that are guiding interpretation as well as the pre-suppositions that motivate the interpretation of events or incidences (Polkinghorne, 1983; Schwandt, 2003).

Interpretive phenomenologists (Heidegger, 1982; Schutz, 1970; Schwandt, 2003) argue that human behavior is a social construction embedded with other people. Hence decisions about people's actions are strongly influenced by their understanding of the meaning accorded to them. The meanings that individuals' construct are considered to be influenced by their cultural, political, historical, and economic orientations determining their interpretation of their interaction with the social settings such as classrooms. In this case the effort to interpret events

or activities involves individuals drawing upon discourses that are culturally and historically available to them. Acknowledging that reality is a social construction, reflects the implication that there are possible multiple realities that exist and require constant negotiation.

Understanding involves being able to identify and explain individuals' unique behaviors within a given context, after investigating ways in which reality is constructed and investigated (Heidegger, 1962; Husserl, 1970; Merleau-Ponty, 1967; Schutz, 1962).

Applied to education, phenomenology is not concerned with discovering causes and effects of specific educational interventions, but rather ways in which people within the education settings experience and interprets education process (Schutz, 1978; Van Manen, 1996). In its relevance to the proposed study, phenomenological research in education is capable of opening up questions about what goes on in diverse classroom settings and the sense with which participants construct social interactions within these settings. The researcher is able to examine patterns of participants' behavior, social patterns, and the beliefs participants hold that connect to those patterns as they create meaning out of them. Schon (1983) views the teaching profession as an interactive process between context and outcomes of education process.

Viewing teaching from Schon's perspective shifts the role of teachers from that of technocrats (Giroux, 1994) to that of artists. Like all artistic endeavors, the objective of transforming classroom practice or the world of teaching is through understanding teachers' actions in their practice. Schon claims that, "we are in need of inquiry into the epistemology of practice" (p. viii). Schon assumes that "competent practitioners usually know more than they can say" and that "they exhibit a kind of knowing-in-practice, most of which is tacit" (p. viii). Schon describes knowing as arising from reconciling the demands of work with real life characteristics of working conditions that usually reflects "complexity, uncertainty, instability,

uniqueness, and value conflict” (p. 39). According to Schon, there is need for teachers to be conscious about how they deal with contradictions, the unexpected, and dilemmas on issues of their everyday classroom practices and in this respect, pluralistic classroom setting. In this study, teachers were to construct their knowledge of their perception of diversity.

Epistemologically, interpretive phenomenology challenges the perception of value free research attempts to attain such a stance may result in loss of certain kinds of knowledge about human experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1983). Polkinghorne viewed research as a human activity in which the researcher as knower is central while Denzin and Lincoln indicated that, it is a process whereby the investigator and the investigated are interactively linked in the creation of knowledge, with the investigator as a passionate participant. Therefore, the relationship between the researcher and research participants is seen as subject-subject interaction in which values and reality reside within each individual.

The underlying assumption of the interpretive phenomenological approach is that presumptions or expert knowledge on the part of the researcher are valuable guides to enquiry. Heidegger (1962) emphasized that it is impossible to rid the mind of the researcher from background understandings, given that it formed part of the researcher’s decision-making process when considering the topic of study as worthy of being researched in the first place. Although descriptive and interpretive strategies to phenomenological studies have divergent epistemological perspectives, I view this as being complementary to providing in-depth understanding of the study. Mixing strategies was an attempt for me as a researcher to gain deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of teachers’ daily experiences in diverse Kenyan high school classrooms as well as making both my voice as a researcher and teachers’ voices significant in the findings, as subjective actors rather than impartial.

### **3.3 Rationale for Adopting Mixed Methods**

The rationale for mixing methodologies includes various factors: One, it had the potential for rigorous phenomenological research inquiry, as it was more likely to enhance the potential for deeper understandings of the phenomenon, especially in situations of complex social contexts such as diverse classrooms (Boulton-Lewis & Wilss, 2004; Creswell, 2003; Tashakhori & Teddlie, 2003). The underlying logic of mixing methodologies in this study was to sufficiently capture the trends and details of the phenomenon under investigation. The idea was to provide an understanding of teachers' classroom experiences from different vantage points and how different data analyses validate, corroborate or enhance one another (Denzin, 1978; Creswell, 2003; Tashakhori & Teddlie, 2003). This rationale is grounded in the argument that mixed methodologies provide context for the proclaimed purpose of triangulation. The purpose is to offset or counteract biases in investigations of the same phenomenon in order to strengthen the validity of the inquiry results (Denzin, 1978; Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). The theoretical framing of triangulation is based on the premise that all methodologies have inherent biases and limitations, and therefore, to use only one methodology to assess a given phenomenon will inevitably yield biased or limited results.

When two or more methodologies that have offsetting biases are used to assess a given phenomenon, and the results of these methods converge or corroborate one another, then the validity of the inquiry is enhanced (Boulton-Lewis & Wilss, 2004; Creswell, 2003; Tashakhori & Teddlie, 2003). This provides a better opportunity for the researcher to explore alternative interpretations of the data, examining the extent to which the context shapes the results to arrive at convergence in supporting a construct or theoretical framework. It also helps in exploring further discrepancies to enhance a broader analysis of data sets (Creswell, 2003; Tashakhori &

Teddlie, 2003). Therefore, mixing descriptive and interpretive phenomenological methodologies provided this study with the potential for a more comprehensive and detailed inquiry when addressing the posed research questions related to Kenya's high school teachers' perceptions of students' differences in classroom settings.

Another reason for combining descriptive and interpretive methodologies in this study was based on the compatibility thesis and philosophy of pragmatism, (Boulton-Lewis, & Wilss, 2004; Creswell, 2003). The compatibility thesis indicates that studies can adapt a mixed methodology as long as they can be easily employed in a single study on a complimentary basis. Pragmatism on the other hand states that researchers should be able to use any approach or mixture of approaches that work best in a real world situation (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this case as a researcher I should use mixed method approaches that have complimentary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses.

### **3.4 Nature of the Research Design**

Research design is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2003) as “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and ultimately, to its conclusion” (p. 20). Yin (2003) concur that research questions provide the most important clues to determining appropriate research strategy to be used in the inquiry process. Yin also states that a researcher may be predisposed to pursue a particular strategy regardless of the study questions and a researcher can use multiple methods in any strategy in a given study. Yin indicates that the researcher should be able to identify a situation in which a specific strategy might have a more distinct advantage when making research design decisions. The main purpose of a design is to help the researcher gather evidence that addresses the research questions posed and those that emerge in the study.

The questions raised in this study guided the choice of the methodological design adopted. They provided a basis for determining where, how, and from whom to collect evidence for the investigation that adequately provided in-depth understanding on Kenyan urban high school teachers' perceptions of diversity in their practice. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state:

A research design describes a flexible set of guidelines that connects theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical data. A research design situates researchers in the empirical world and connects them to specific sites, persons, groups, institutions, and bodies of relevant interpretive materials, including documents and archives" (p. 14).

The questions addressed in the study guided inquiry in terms of determining the sites, identifying the sample, as well as the methods used in gathering data and analyzing information as described in the following discussions.

#### 3.4.1 Research Setting

The study was conducted in four public urban high schools in one of the Kenya's cities in the North West area of the Rift Valley province in Western Kenya (see Appendix F). The city has a population of approximately 400,000 people from diverse Kenyan ethnic communities. The research sites comprised of two co-educational day high schools and two single-sex boarding high schools (girls and boys). The reason for the choice of these sites was because of their urban location and the nature of their educational setting that provided different diversity challenges that need to be explored. Given that the schools are based in an urban setting, the students attending these schools are from different socio-economic, ethnic, religious, and gender backgrounds. This represented the social and cultural diversity of Kenya, providing a setting that was relevant and appropriate for this study. Description of school sites is indicated in table 1.



### 3.4.2 Participants' Descriptions and Sampling

Teachers invited to participate in this study worked in schools with students coming from various backgrounds: moderate to high level of poverty, highly affluent society, religious, ethnic, linguistic, and gender differences. Ranging in teaching experience from two to over eighteen years, a majority of the teachers (42 out of 56) had Bachelor of Education degrees. Only ten participants had a Diploma certification in education training, with four having attained a graduate level (masters) education degree. Purposive sampling (Gay & Airasian, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003) was used to select the participants. The rationale for focusing on practicing teachers for this study is that they already have a wealth of experience in working within a pluralistic classroom environment and are likely to articulate clearly their understanding of students' differences, challenges, and dilemmas that these differences pose to their pedagogical strategies and curriculum implementation. The sampling was carried out across subject areas and gender.

Selection of participating teachers occurred at two levels: At the first level, questionnaires were administered to a total of eighty two teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. Twenty questionnaires were distributed in each of the three schools (A, B, & C) with twenty two questionnaires distributed in Site D. After the questionnaires were analyzed, a further twelve teachers were selected for interviews. This was based on incites and unique responses of individual respondents that reflected richness of information for the study or issues for further follow up. Out of the twelve, four teachers were requested to reserve time for classroom observations but due to limited time, I could only manage to observe two participants.

### **3.5 Methods of Data Collection**

I employed four primary methods of data collection and the duration for which data was collected is indicated in Table 1. Data collection involved the use of questionnaires, in-depth interviews, observation, and archival data (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). This formed the basis for collecting evidence that supported findings of this study. The use of multiple techniques was necessary to support the inquiry from a broader range of evidence from different sources (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Triangulating sources and techniques was helpful in building on the limitations that would be displayed by each strategy for purposes of developing the validity and reliability (Yin, 2003) of the information provided in the study. Data collection process was sequential starting with questionnaires, which informed the interview protocols and finally interview data was used to decide on which teachers to participate in the observation. Table 1 show the schedule for data collection during the study period.

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire Data**

The questionnaire tool (see Appendix B) had two major sections: One section was based on likert type of scaling and another section with open ended responses for teachers to express individualized opinions (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The questionnaire was pre-tested in one of the high schools within the town with similar demographics as the sites participating in the study. I made a few adjustments mainly on statements for clarity based on the responses before administering the tool to participating teachers.

Out of the eighty two questionnaires administered, to eighty two a total of 56 were returned from sites as indicated: site A (15), site B (17), site C (11), and site D (13). a deliberate marginal over-sampling was done to compensate for possible attrition and questionnaire return. The questionnaire served two purposes; first, it enabled the capturing of a wider participant

sampling in order to provide a broader perspective of teachers' perception of diversity in their classroom experiences; second, it acted as a filter for selecting a smaller sample of respondents for further participation in an in-depth interviewing and classroom observations.

The advantage of using questionnaires as a technique was its capability to capture a larger sample of respondents' perceptions on the issue under study within the shortest time to support generalizability of the findings. But the technique could not probe deeply into teachers' opinions, feelings, perceptions, and interpretations (Gall, Borg, et al, 1996, Patton, 1990) about students' diversity and influence of these differences in their practice and students learning. This made it necessary to employ interviewing as a strategy to support the limitations of using questionnaires in data collection process. Criteria for selecting participants for interview was based on the depth of information provided in the questionnaire and representation of gender, years of experience, and disciplines.

### 3.5.2 Interview Data

Twelve teachers were interviewed; three from each of the sites participating in the study. Interview sessions lasted for approximately one to one and a half hours. Semi-structured interview questions (Appendix C) were formulated from the questionnaire responses to enhance further clarification or capture more details on teachers' perceptions of diversity in their classroom experiences with diverse student population. Interview sessions were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. The purpose for recording was to ensure that the whole conversation was preserved for analysis (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). During the interview, participants were probed to provide in-depth accounts of their perceptions of diversity, experiences, challenges, and dilemmas of working with students from diverse backgrounds.

Transcriptions from the interview data were given to participants for accuracy checking and with some follow-up questions, where needed.

Interviewing was necessary in this study when, as a researcher, it became difficult to observe participants perceptions, feelings, and actions that relate to their experience in diverse classrooms. As stated by Patton:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions...We cannot observe how people organize the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world...The purpose of interviewing then, is to allow us to enter into the other persons perspective” (p. 196).

Patton (1990) is right, that not all things can be observable especially human feelings or perceptions. One of the best ways to capture people’s thoughts, feelings, and understandings of issues around them is to probe incites based on their statements and explanations (Gall, Borg, et, al, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). This can be done by including interview excerpts for interpretation for that kind of information that may not be revealed through questionnaire or observation protocols. My decision when choosing participants for observation was based on the information provided during the interview and the availability of teachers to participate. I was interested in observing how teachers who indicated that they consider students diversity when planning lessons versus the few who did not implemented classroom practice.

### 3.5.3 Observation Data

Observation was structured involving the use of a pre-designed checklist of elements such as, classroom relations, interactions or classroom incidences as a guide through the process (Appendix C). I used code sheets (Appendix D) and a field journal to record my observation notes (Merriam, 1998). At the same time, lessons were audio recorded with the permission of participants. I used the audio recording to review the observation notes to form and compile

observation data. Audio recording was important in recouping classroom conversation to reconstruct any information that could have been missed out or overlooked. Therefore, audio taped lessons together with the field notes taken during observation formed part of the raw data.

Classroom observation was based on the approach outlined by Merriam (1998), where I kept records of the physical setting of the learning environment to provide general information on students' sitting arrangements, teachers, and researchers positioning during the lesson. I had planned to observe at least four teachers in the actual teaching process, one from each of the four sites that participated in this study to provide deep and rich insights of teachers and students' behavior within the classroom context. The teachers were identified during the interview protocols. My intention was to observe a maximum of three lessons by each teacher but due to limited time and other school schedules where teachers were involved, it was not possible. Instead, I observed teaching sessions in only two sites, but this still gave me a perspective on the consistency of the information presented during interviews and in the questionnaires on how teachers implement the curriculum in their diverse classrooms.

Observation provided additional information to counter check the accuracy and biases that may occur in self-reporting data in the questionnaires and during the interview (Gall, Borg, et al, 1996). I was aware of the limitation with observation as it can interrupt normal classroom routines and also the observed participants may stage what they assume the observer needs to know (Gall, Borg, et al, 1996). This I addressed by establishing a rapport with teachers during the interviews and working with them in an earlier project establishing trust in our relationship.

#### 3.5.4 Observation Procedure

During the observation I kept written records of students' sitting arrangements in relation to the teachers' position in the classroom settings. In the case of site B which is a co-educational

school I identified the gender of the students in the sitting plan. I also indicated my sitting position during the observation which was at the back of the classroom. This gave me a clear view of what was going on in the whole room as the lesson was being conducted. This positioning was safe so that as a researcher, I did not draw attention to my presence to avoid creating any distraction to students with my presence during the learning process.

The observation criterion also included recording the general layout of the classroom furniture arrangement. This was necessary in determining how much space the teacher had for movement within and between the classroom gangways to assist students whenever necessary or enough space to move between groups as well as more concurrent group incase of group activities. I kept an observation checklist (Appendix E) with all the observation protocols and audio-taped the lessons observed to help me contextualize my notes during the data analysis. My observations also focused on the nature of classroom activities, teacher-student, and student-student relationships during the classroom interactions. I observed three lessons with a biology teacher in site B and two with an English language teacher in site D.

#### 3.5.5 Archival Data

The archival data used in the study was obtained from admission registers and class lists to illuminate students' demographic composition and tuition structures to compare the cost of high school tuition between the schools involved in the study. I also analyzed the tuition payment records to assess the state of accumulated tuition by individuals and the bursary records to establish the levels of needy students in each site. Archival data included photographs of insightful artifacts in the physical environment of the schools. Information provided through archival data could not be obtained through questionnaires or interview protocol.

**Table 1. Timeline for Data Collection**

<b>Data collection Strategies</b>	<b>Period of data collection</b>	<b>Comments on the process</b>
Questionnaire administration.	6 <sup>th</sup> May – 30 <sup>th</sup> May, 2007	Most of the questionnaires were returned within this period although a few were collected during the second week of June.
Interviews	5 <sup>th</sup> June – 3 <sup>rd</sup> August, 2007	During the interviews I realized that I had to deliberately include the administrators who also do teach as part of the interview team. This was as a result of policy issues that emerged during the interviews and I wanted to illuminate their take on some of the policy issues raised by teachers. So, I interviewed more participants (12) instead of the anticipated (8) as I entered the field.
Classroom Observation	<p><b><u>Site B observation dates</u></b></p> <p>26<sup>th</sup> June, 2007 – 10: 10 a.m.          6<sup>th</sup> July, 2007 - 2:10 p.m.          12<sup>th</sup> July, 2007 – 9: 20 a.m.</p>	<p>The lesson scheduled for 10<sup>th</sup> July - 9: 20 a.m. was cancelled because most students were absent due to unpaid tuition fees.</p>
	<p><b><u>Site D observation dates</u></b></p> <p>17<sup>th</sup> July, 2007 – 10: 10 a.m.          18<sup>th</sup> July, 2007 – 10: 10 a.m.</p>	<p>Observation scheduled for site D on 24<sup>th</sup> July did not materialize either because students wanted the lesson for revision in preparation for the coming examination that was to start during the first week of August 2007.</p>
Collection of Archival Data	15 <sup>th</sup> May – End of July, 2007.	I was unable to access data on tuition structure and the number of needy students from site C.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Thematic data analysis was used, which involved examining, categorizing, testing assertions for reliability and recombining evidence from the different methodologies to link to the initial questions of the study (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). Four levels of knowledge transformation formed the basis for the data analysis. The first level of analysis involved analysis of questionnaire data. The second level was the transformation of interview transcription and the third level was writing of field notes from the observation data. The final level of transformation examined and analyzed the archival data. All the data analysis process was carried out simultaneously using a thematic approach (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994) in an on-going process to answer the research questions. This process began after the collection of the first data set from the questionnaires and continued throughout the report writing process.

Thick descriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of interviews, questionnaires, observation notes, field notes, and archival data were reconstructed to identify evidence of teachers' understanding of the nature of students' diversity in their classrooms. This included unique experiences of participants, categorized into common patterns, themes, and sub-themes for generalization within the study context. I read through these sets of data back and forth in order to capture recurring patterns of themes, sub-themes, phrases, and unique ideas from participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), this approach to data analysis leads to practical understanding of meaning and participants' actions. Human activity in this case is seen as a collection of symbols expressing layers of meaning identified through wordings, phrases, relationships between patterns, themes, distinct



differences between sub-groupings, and common sequences (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The units of recurring patterns and themes were coded (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994) according to the basic participants' identifiers, date of observation, and interview. These were recorded in sets of 3" x 5" cards and sorted out into categories, as I compared information from these cards. The categories were labeled using sets of 3" x 5" cards within each category coded. Card file folders were used and indexed to hold the cards for easy retrieval during the data analysis process. A domain analysis worksheet was prepared in displaying data using concept mapping. This helped to visualize the structure of each domain or category based on emerging themes and sub-themes to identify relationships and any inconsistencies from the data.

#### 3.6.1 Integration of Data Sources

Integration of the methodologies occurred at the levels of data analysis and reporting of the study findings. Questionnaires, interviews, observation, and archival data sources were in some instances analyzed and reported using both text and figures in order to provide in-depth understanding of the findings (Creswell, 2003; Tashakhori & Teddlie, 2003). I employed a transformative approach where a theoretical lens adapted in the study was influential in examining data. Therefore, data from all sources were used simultaneously during the analysis and final report writing to confirm, cross-validate, and corroborate findings (Creswell, 2003).

### **3.7 Criterion for Ensuring Trustworthiness of Study Findings**

Reliability of research findings has been identified as a way of demonstrating the trustworthiness of the research information (Denzin, & Lincoln 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Van Manen, 1996). According to Denzin and Lincoln, there is a need for criteria in which the research can proclaim authority (legitimization) for data. In this study I employed the following strategies to ensure rigor in the findings: self-reflexivity, triangulation, thick description from participants' interviewees, audit trail, and member checking.

#### **3.7.1 Researcher Positioning**

During the design stage of the study, I realized the need to explore the researcher-participant relationship, as it is most likely to influence voice representation in the research findings (Giroux, 1988; Schwandt, 2003). As a doctoral student based in a university abroad, there are likely to arise issues of power differential between me and the participants. To ensure representation of both participant and researcher voices, I needed to address the issue of power during the data collection and interpretation stages of the study. It is evident that reflexivity is pivotal because my perspective as a researcher is likely to constantly be filtered through the lenses of my gender, social class, ethnicity, religion, and previous experience as a high school teacher in Kenya (Finlay, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Schwandt, 2003).

I realized that I was part of the social world that I was studying and as Palys (1997) points out, issues of 'voice' and 'privilege' are crucial because "we cannot study the world without acknowledging the 'we' that is doing the study" (p. 205). Thus, reflexive analysis enabled me to continuously evaluate my subjectivity and inter-subjective dynamics during the interaction with participants during data collection, analysis, and final writing of the report (Finlay, 2002; Van Manen, 1996). As indicated by Finlay, meaning is always perceived as

negotiated between the researcher and participants within a particular social context. Hence the final report should reflect a form of co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the participants. In this study the use of teachers' excerpts and my own interpretation of these experts provided equal representation of voice in the writing.

I was also aware that establishing personal relationships with participants was crucial in establishing and maintaining participants' trust throughout the study (Palys, 2003). To ensure this, I maintained some level of professional immediacy, developed sensitivity to participants' social space, and respected their time. During the debriefing sessions, we shared interview transcriptions to enhance clarification of information. As a researcher, I empathized with and shared teachers' concerns of the demand of their work upon them (Merriam, 1998) given that participation in the study added more responsibility to their already very busy school schedules.

### 3.7.2 Triangulation of Methodologies

A mixed methodology using descriptive and interpretive approach and multiple techniques was employed for triangulation purposes (Denzin, 1989, 2003; Creswell, 2003; Heidegger, 1982) to ensure reliability of data sources and subsequent information gathered. Incorporating both descriptive and interpretive methodologies ensured representation of both researcher's and participants' voices in the final written report. Since research takes place within specific contexts involving relationships with participants, it was important to critically assess whose constructions, understandings, and recommendations I incorporated in the final report. Triangulation of data sources and techniques of data collection has been viewed by a number of studies (Denzin, 2003; Gall, et al, 1996; Palys, 1997) as another powerful approach to ensuring validity in qualitative research. Validity can also be enhanced through the use of thick description in descriptive phenomenology to interpret constructed meaning through

representation of the participant as an insider's worldview (Husserl, 1970; Schwandt, 2003). Therefore, participants' excerpts were included in the final report of the study to present knowledge construction and reflection of the participants' unique voices. From the excerpts I used statements and words in the participants' narratives to arrive at certain conclusions and generalized trends in teachers' practices and students learning arrived at in the study.

### 3.7.3 Member Checking

Member checking involved verification of the information provided by participants during the interviews to ensure self-correcting measures during the process of the inquiry. This was done by giving participants the interview transcription notes to read through and verify the accuracy of the information provided. It also acted as a moment for debriefing sessions (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba described the member check as a continuous process during data analysis that has largely been interpreted and used by researchers as verification of overall results with participants. During these sessions, I asked a few more questions to some of the participants on issues that required further expansion and clarification. Participants agreed that the information transcribed were accurate and represented their views.

### 3.7.4 Audit Trail

Every effort was made to ensure credibility and reliability of research information by maintaining a clear recording system of data collected through different sources using a coding scheme. I also developed an organized system where raw data was filed and labeled for ease of retrieval during the analysis stage (Lincoln & Guba 1985). An audit trail assisted me in establishing consistencies and detecting any inconsistencies or flaws in the data collection and

analysis processes as I reconstructed the data from different sources and displayed it on a conceptual map. Combining an audit trail and member check to ensure that data were collected, analyzed and confirmed by participants enhanced the trustworthiness of the knowledge constructed in this study.

### **3.8 Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed the conceptual and philosophical orientation of the descriptive and interpretive phenomenological methodologies that framed the focus of this study. I have provided a rationale for adopting a mixed methodological approach, outlining the research design, methods of data collection, analysis, and criteria for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study findings. Findings from the analyses are outlined in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

#### 4.0 Introduction

This study explored Kenyan urban high school teachers' perceptions of the nature of students' differences and how these differences influence their planning for learning resources, activities, pedagogy, and students' learning. Findings show that the participating teachers were generally aware of the nature of students' differences as indicated in table 1 in this chapter and recognized ways in which these differences impact their teaching and student learning. Findings reveal how the participants' perceptions of the influence of the following factors: socio-economic status, culture, religion, and gender in teaching and learning differed across disciplines, gender of the respondents, and the nature of the schools (day or Boarding).

Despite the differences in perception of the influence of certain factors, there was a general agreement reflected through the teachers' narratives that academic abilities, levels of English language proficiency, entry behavior, prior education, and motivation status of students are most prominent to teaching and learning across disciplines and institutional contexts. Participating teachers believed that there is no one factor influencing teachers' performance and students' learning. Instead several combinations of any of the factors mentioned have significant impact on teaching and learning. I have provided the demographic profiles of students and teachers from different sites of the study from the archival and questionnaire data. The discussions of findings are organized under three sections based on emerging themes and sub-themes to answer the three guiding questions of this study. Where possible, excerpts from the interviews and questionnaires are quoted to support arguments and explanations presented.

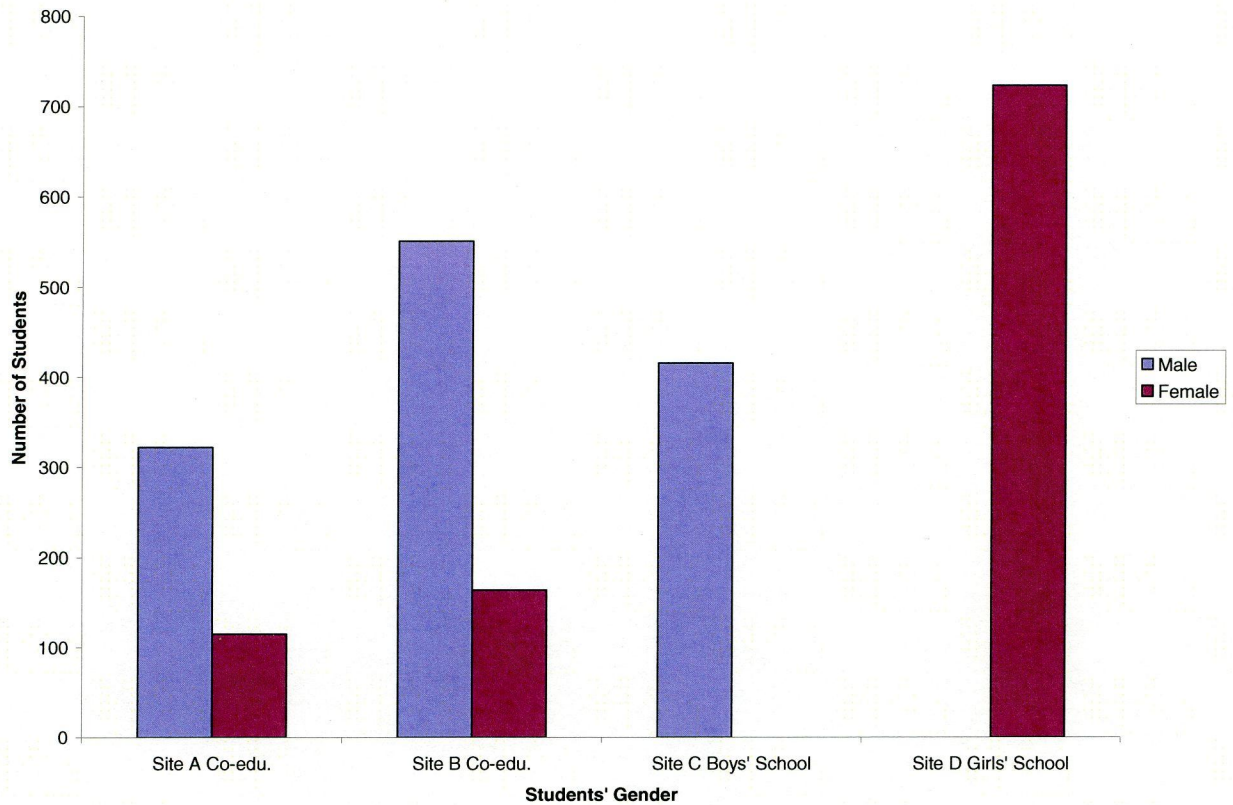
## **4.1 SECTION I: The Nature of Students' and Teachers' Diversity**

This section elucidates participating teachers' perceptions of students' differences in their classroom settings expressed through questionnaires, interviews, and supported by information from students' registration records and class lists. This provides evidence to answers for question one in this inquiry that aimed at providing insight to: What are Kenya's urban high school teachers' perceptions of students' differences in the classrooms? In this section I have outlined students' and teachers' demographic profiles to highlight the nature of diversity in each of the participating schools in the study. This is important in understanding the multiple identities and perspectives that both teachers and students bring into the classroom settings to inform the interactions and relationships during the process of knowledge construction.

### **4.1.1 Profile Demographic of Students**

Figure 1- 4 shows students' diversity in terms of gender, religion, ethnicity, and students' financial need in the different schools. Site A is a co-education District day school located two kilometers from the town center. The school is situated within the proximity of major slum residential with some of the students coming from other slum areas within the town's periphery. Site B is a co-educational Provincial day school situated in the town center with a broader diversity that includes other races and draws its students from all the social structures of the society. Site C is partly private and public institution and is supported financially by the local Catholic diocese and other sponsors apart from the tuition funds. It is public in that funding comes from parishes under the diocese and must be accounted for to the parishioners. It is private in that the government does not pay teachers working in this site but the school must meet the educational standards, teach the national curriculum, and register students for the national standardized examination. Site D is an affluent National boarding high school for girls

with a student population of seven hundred and twenty four students of whom twenty five percent are drawn from each of the eight provinces of Kenya. Figure 1 shows the number of students in each school, reflecting the gender difference in co-education Sites A and B.

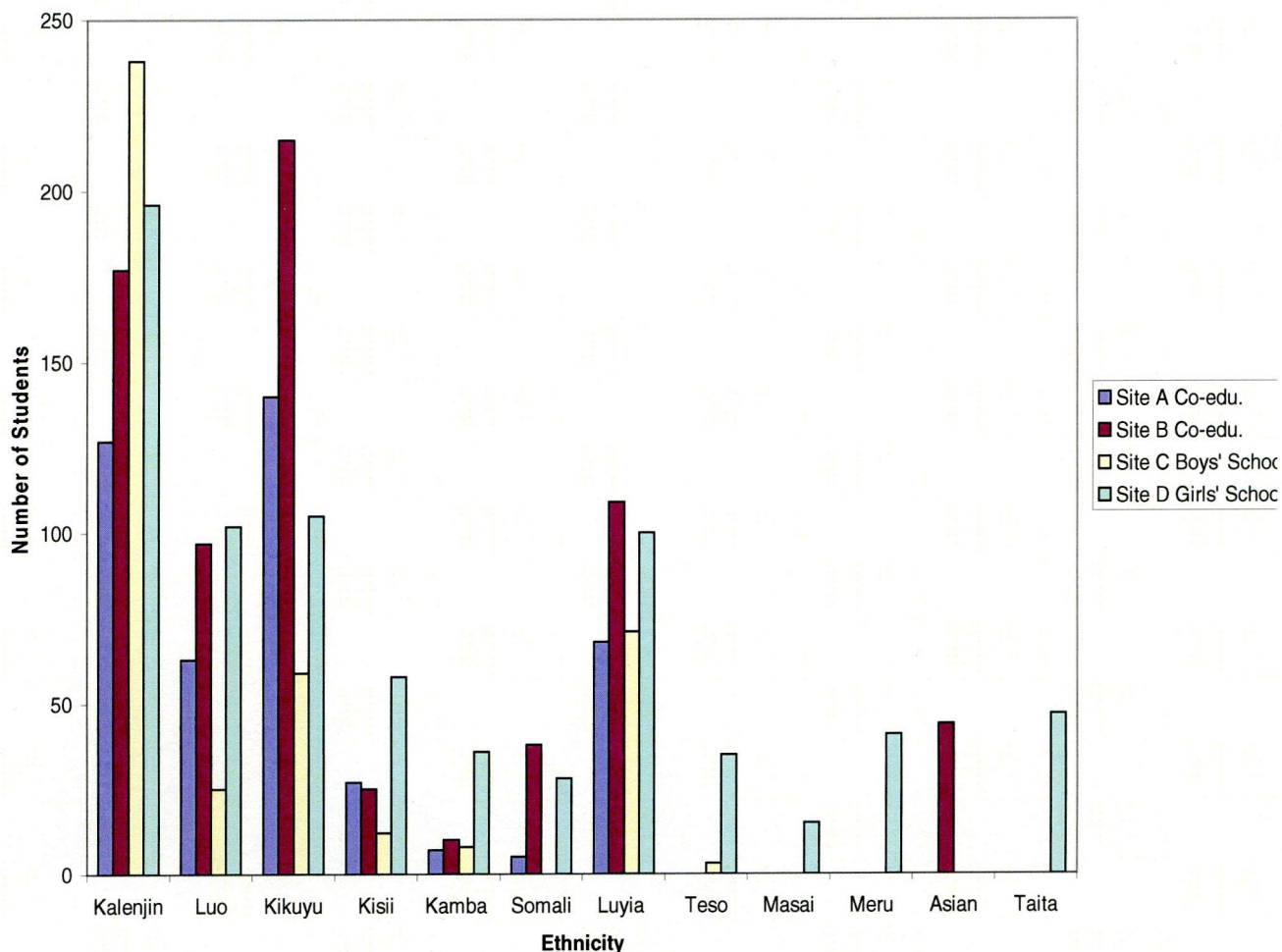


**Figure 1:** Students' Gender Enrollment in the Four Schools

Site A has a student population of four hundred and thirty seven students with three hundred and twenty two males (73.7%) and one hundred and fifteen females (26.3%). In site B the student population is seven hundred and fifteen of who five hundred and fifty one are male (77%) and one hundred and sixty four are female (23%). Findings indicate very low enrolment of girls in both sites (A & B) compared to their male counterpart.

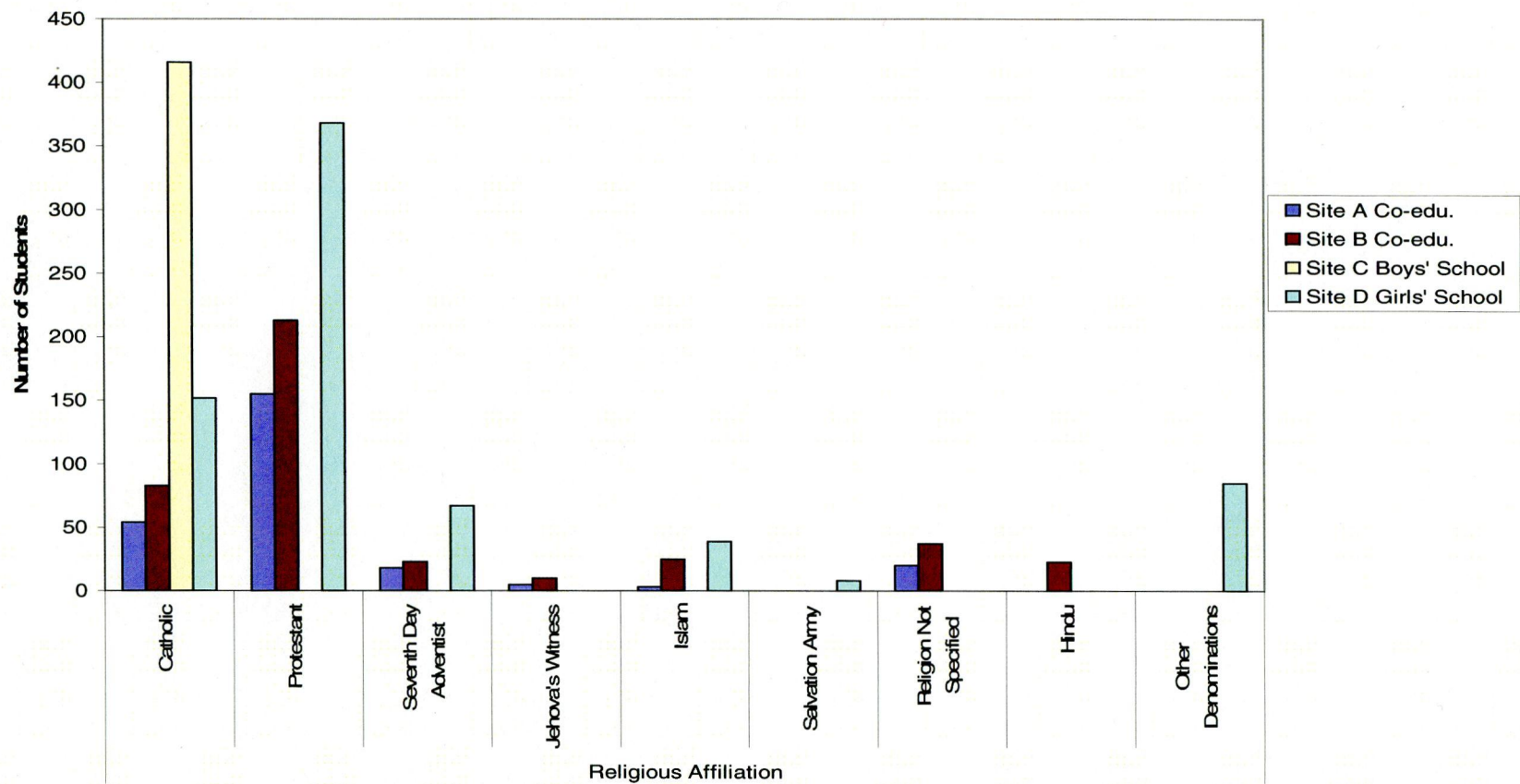


Figure 2 below indicates the ethnic diversity in the schools.



**Figure 2:** Students' Ethnic Diversity in the Four Schools.

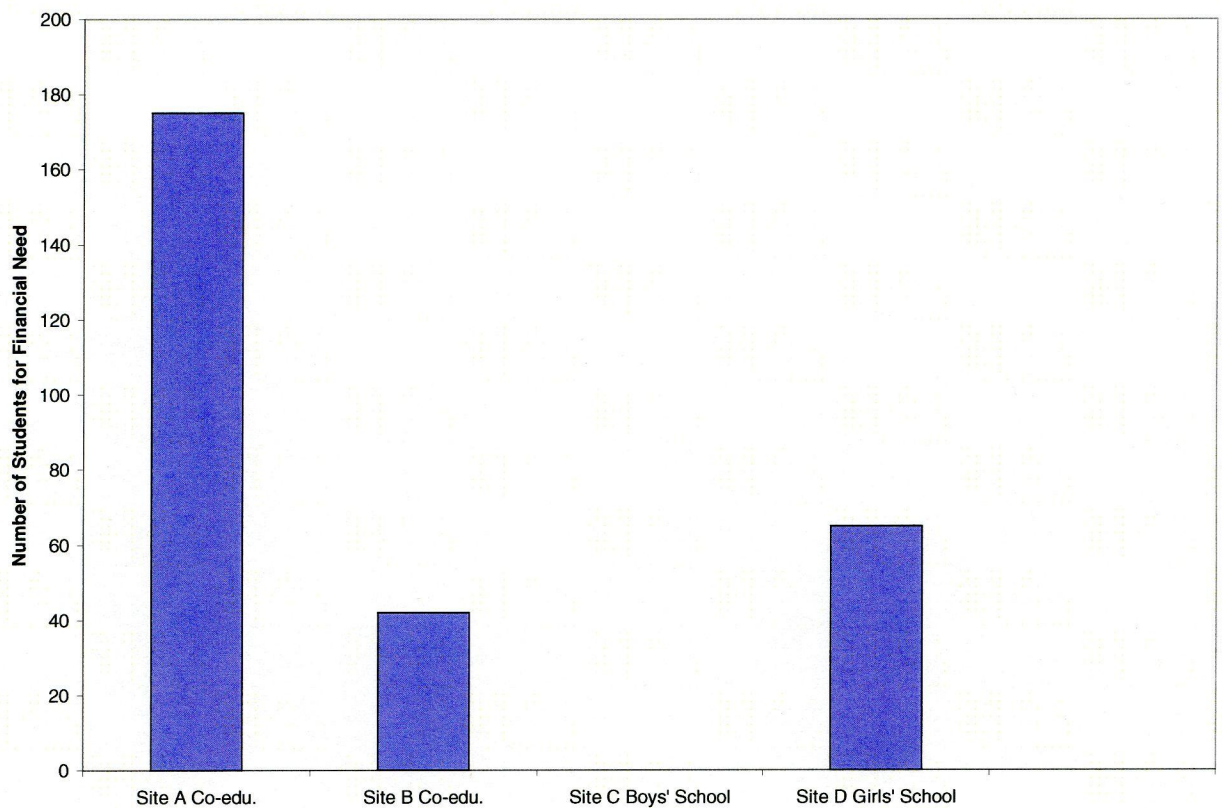
The demographics of students' ethnic diversity in the four schools only reflect the major groups. Within each ethnic grouping are other sub-groups with distinct languages and cultural practices. For example, within the Luhya ethnic group are the Idaho, Banyore, Marama, and Maragoli among other sub-groups. Within the Kalenjin are the Kipsigis, Nandi, Keiyo, Marakwet, and Tugens among others. Therefore, the graphs depict ethno-linguistic diversity of the participating schools.



**Figure 3: Students' Religious Diversity in the Four Schools**

Figure 3 shows religious diversity in the participating schools, except in Site C which is a Catholic Seminary high school and all students must be Catholics. Majority of students in Site C come from Catholic Parishes in the rural areas of the Rift Valley.

Figure 4 reflects the number of students who require financial need in the participating schools. From data analysis of socio-economic status, Site A show a disproportionately large percentage (45.8%) of students with financial need followed by Site D. Although the percentage of needy students in Site B appear to be low, this might not be accurate given that the data presented here were based on the number of students who received bursaries during the 2007 academic year and does not include the total number of applicants for bursaries to the respective constituencies to reflect the overall level of neediness in the school.



**Figure 4:** Students' with Financial Need in the Four Schools

Data on financial need of students in Site A indicate the overall record of students identified to require financial assistance. On the other hand information on needy students in Site D is based on the number of students with large amounts of cumulatively outstanding tuition



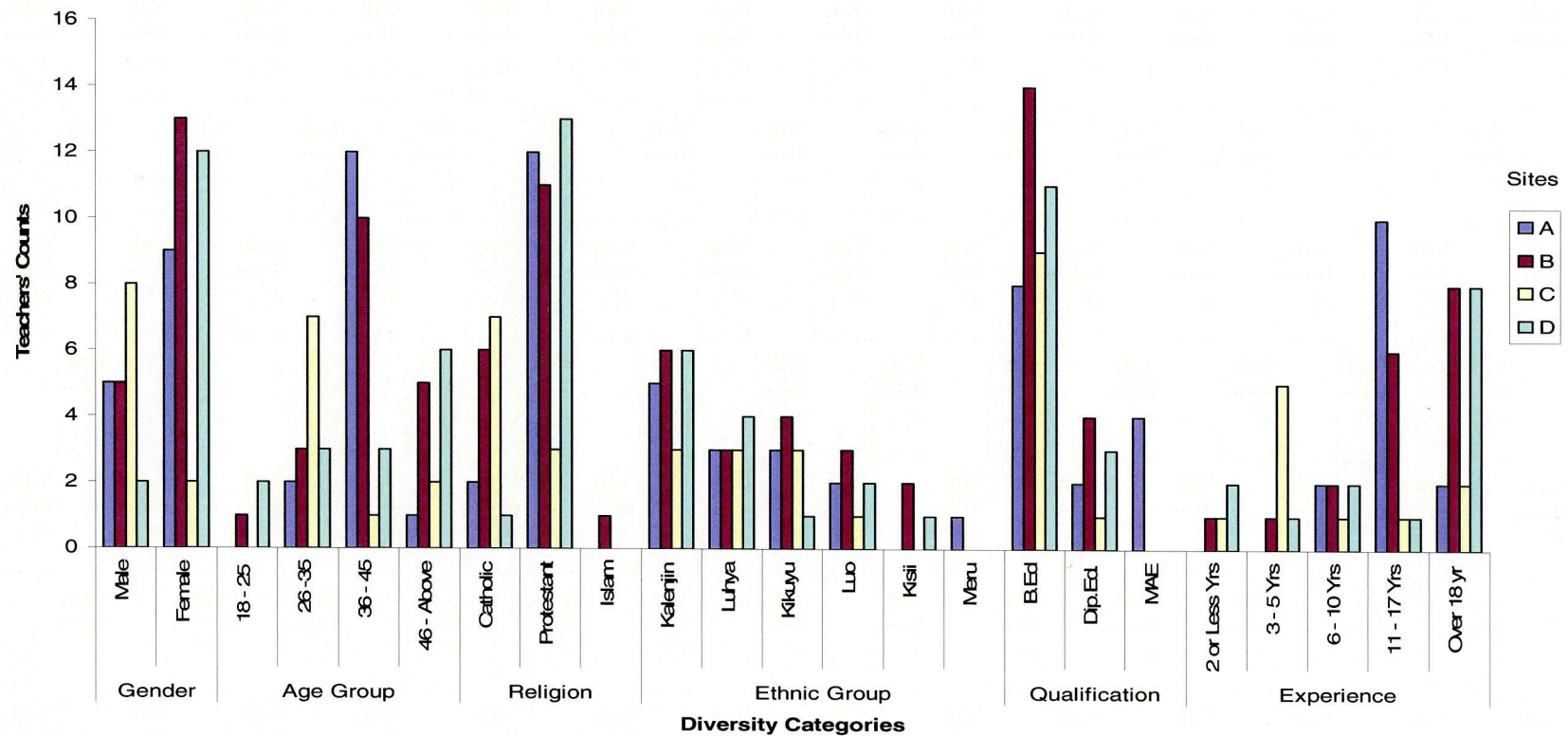
balances. Like in the case of Site A the information on the number of students currently on bursary from their administrative constituencies for the year 2007 was not available because the finance offices were still updating their records. Data on needy students in Site C was not available although in the questionnaires and during the interviews participating teachers indicated that the school had a large proportion of needy and orphaned students.

Table 1 shows a reflection of students' differences as perceived by the teachers from the questionnaires data. The information indicates the overall perceived students' differences and also those differences that are found to significantly influence teachers practice and students' learning. Significant in this context refers to those differences that have greater influence in teachers decisions when planning learning activities, curriculum content, strategies for implementing the lessons, and students level of engagement in the learning process.

**Table 2. Perceived Students' Differences by Participating Teachers**

<b>Identified Nature of Student Differences</b>	<b>Significant Differences to Teaching and Learning</b>	<b>Frequency Counts</b>
Religious Affiliation	Academic Abilities	49/56
Ethnic Backgrounds	English Language Proficiency	45/56
Students' Attitudes	Socio-economic Status	36/56
English Language Proficiency	Primary Education Background	21/56
Entry Behavior	Entry Behavior	23/56
Primary Education Background	Students Gender	20/56
Students Gender	Rural and Urban Backgrounds	20/56
Level of Expectation and Inspiration	Level of Expectations and Inspirations	19/56
Academic Abilities	Career Aspirations	17/56
Motivation Levels	Motivation Levels	14/56
Personal Values of Education	Ethnic Backgrounds	10/56
Career Aspirations	Religious affiliation	11/56
Behavior Patterns		
Giftedness		
Socio-economic		
Rural and Urban Backgrounds		
Personality		
Parents Level of Education		

#### 4.1.2 Profile Demographics of Participating Teachers



**Figure 5:** Teachers' Diversity in Participating Schools.

Figure 5 indicates the nature of diversity of participating teachers from all the four sites in the study.

It was necessary to identify the differences that teachers too bring to the classrooms because these differences form lenses that that they use to inform their perceptions of their students. Site A had a total of fourteen teachers and site B eighteen teachers participating in the study. A majority of participating (teachers) in site A and B were between the age group of 36-45 years (site A=12, site B=9) with more than ten years of work experience in the profession (site A=13, site B=13). In site D fourteen teachers volunteered to participate and most of them were forty six years and above (n=7) with eighteen years or more of work experience (n=7). In the three sites (A, B & D) there were more female teachers who volunteered to participate in the study than males. While in site C with ten participants the majority of the teachers were men (n=8) between the ages of 26 and 35 years. Most of them were new in the profession with only 3 to 5 years work experience.

#### 4.1.3 Summary

Question one of the study aimed at elucidating teachers understanding of the nature of students' differences that they encounter in their everyday classroom practices. In this section I have also outlined the nature of diversity of the participating teachers given that individuals' beliefs, perceptions, and subsequent actions are often based on their personal experiences. Participating teachers identified multiple factors that contribute to students' differences but indicated that certain factors (Table 1) play key roles in influencing teaching and learning than others. The perceptions of significance of certain difference depended on individual teachers' context, discipline, and gender. The way such factors determine teachers' implementation of the curriculum and students learning is discussed in the following section.

## **4.2 SECTION 2: Influence of Students' Differences on Teaching and Learning**

This section presents information aimed at answering research question two: How do students' differences influence the way teachers plan for teaching resources, learning activities, implementation of curriculum content, teaching strategies, and students learning? In this section I have highlighted the extent to which teachers in the study viewed the level of influence of factors outlined in section 1 when implementing the curriculum and students' level of engagement, interactions, and relationships in the learning process. Findings are based on questionnaires and teachers interview narratives, supported by observation and archival data.

### **4.2.1 Influence of Socio-economic Status on Learning**

In analyzing the impact of students' socio-economic status my interpretation was that socio-economic status of students impacts teachers practice and learning differently based on the type of the schools they attend. Students in co-educational day schools (Sites A & B) seemed to have different experiences from their counterparts in boarding schools (Sites C & D) for example in terms of absenteeism, provision of learning resources, and the risks posed by living conditions in the social environments challenging their academic work. Findings showed that students in day schools were more often sent home for unpaid tuition fees compared to their counterparts in boarding schools where the administration preferred to make follow ups with parents avoiding sending students home. This was evidenced during my observation sessions when I had to re-schedule the third observation in site B when most students were away for non tuition payment.

In articulating the relationship between poverty and its disproportionality, participating teachers from day schools perceived poverty as constituting first of all high-risk environments that do not support students' academic work.

#### 4.2.1.1 High Risk Environments and Students' Academic Achievement

The general view of most participants' was that high risk environments such as living in slum areas increase students' exposure to risk factors that encourages risky behavior in students, compromising individuals' academic achievement as characterized in the following response:

Our catchments areas are mainly slums which are low income residential areas. The problem our students face related to living in these areas is that the environment is not conducive to learning. You will find a lot of destructive activities in these areas such as brewing of illicit brews. Some parents even survive on the selling of the local brews in order to get some income to be able to feed their children, pay rent and even school fees. For example when these students return home after school some of them are not even able to study because the home is also a make shift bar where they are selling the local brew and the customers drink either inside the house or just within the compound. So with that kind of environment especially in the case of girls the same men who come to drink in these homes keep making advances at them and this you know might make them very vulnerable. Sometimes even in the case of boys you will find young women or even older sugar mummies also going for them. So the environment is not very good for some of the students' academic growth. (Principal Site A)

The risks were also experienced outside of the students' homes when commuting between the homes and the school. The journey was envisioned by participating teachers in day schools (Sites A & B) as dangerous terrains full of distracters that easily dissuade students from their educational goals as stated:

Matatu touts are the major distracters especially when they prey on girls by luring them with free rides in their vehicles but as you know from our African sayings there are never free things in this world. So they use free rides to induce the girls and entice them into relationships. The environment where some of the students live may also act as a destructor especially where there are a lot of entertainments such as discos, pool tables and bars. So students who are not careful loose themselves to such activities. But we try our best in the school to be taking attendance to ensure that all students are in school so as to keep them in school. But again there is that time between school and home when we have no control over their activities. (Math Teacher Site B)



The risks envisioned by parents often make them transfer their children from day schools to boarding schools which are presumed to provide safety for students' education success. That process when parents struggle to protect their children as they seek for quality education presents dilemmas given the limited resources that some families experience. Some of the parents after transferring their children to boarding schools realize that they cannot afford the cost of tuition in these schools and eventually have to transfer them back to day schools despite the risks involved. Also some of the students initially admitted in boarding schools often transfer back to day schools because they are cheaper and are within the economic abilities of parents from low socio-economic class. Boarding schools have other costs besides tuition that escalates the tuition cost especially national schools forcing poor parents to withdraw their children from such schools. Dean of Studies Site B had this to say about the whole scenario:

We have had cases when students leave day schools to go to boarding schools because parents feel that the child will concentrate more in their studies when they are in boarding schools. The assumption is that boarding schools do not have too many distracters such as influence from matatu touts. Sometimes you find that those students who had been admitted in boarding schools come back to day schools especially in form two we admit quite a number. They transfer because they find day schools to be cheaper for them to manage.

Response from a participant from site D (girls' national boarding school) confirmed the above phenomenon when it was noted by the deputy principal that:

Quite a number of girls from very needy backgrounds will opt to go to the nearest day schools in their areas. But of course these schools are not as established, so we have had that kind of problem and we have not known exactly how best to deal with it because we even go to the District Education Office about these cases. But you find that parents don't follow that procedure, they just pull out their children when they realize they have accumulated very high fee balances and register them in day schools.

The charges arising from the cost of boarding facilities (water, lighting, personal emoluments) provided to students increase the costs for boarding schools to very high levels. Otherwise all

other charges other than boarding expenses seem to be the same or even lower when compared to what day schools charge students.

Shown in Table 2 is the tuition fees structure for the schools in site A, B, and D paid by students at different stages in their course of study.

**Table 3. Tuition Structure by Schools**

<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Tuition Paid By Grade</b>	<b>Amount in Ksh.</b>	<b>Government Tuition Scheme</b>
Site A – Co-educational School	Form 1	22,000	District Day School Ksh. 11, 000
	Form 2	19, 200	
	Form 3	22,650	
	Form 4	25,850	
Site B – Co-educational School	Form 1	20,150	Provincial Day Schools – Ksh. 11, 000.
	Form 2	19,650	
	Form 3	19,650	
	Form 4	23,300	
Site C – Single-sex boys High school	I was unable to get the tuition structure from this site		Boarding Provincial High Schools – Ksh. 22, 6000
Site D- Single sex girls National School	Form 1	53, 660	National Schools – Ksh. 26, 900
	Form 2	47,725	
	Form 3	51,375	
	Form 4	50,275	

While the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) has a policy on mandated school fees for the various categories of schools, principals through Parents Teachers Association (PTA) restructure their own tuition fees above that stipulated guidelines. This is

because when the government transferred most of education funding to parents and guardians, then all other costs of education have been added to tuition fees.

Apart from the high tuition fees, boarding schools have been perceived as safe havens that promote students learning irrespective of their gender and socio-economic status. Boarding schools have structures in place that support favorable learning environment such as organized prep time (study times), regular meals, and reduces the risks that students, especially girls would encounter walking to and from school. Sharing of resources among students, which have been perceived by participants as one way of addressing issues of inequalities on learning resources is much easier to accomplish in boarding schools than in day schools.

Although taking children to boarding schools have been identified as one way that limits some of the risk factors that students especially from low income status do encounter increasing their academic opportunities, these institutions too have unique challenges created by student differences. These differences impact the emotional aspect of students' learning as indicated in the statement by the business education teacher in Site C "family backgrounds determine how often a student may be visited at school. For instance, those students who are orphans do not get visited as often as those students with living parents and this acts as a set back to their studies as students feel lonely when they see their colleagues being visited".

Participants stated that sometimes the distance between homes and schools do pose financial challenges for parents and guardians from low income groups given the high cost of transportation and expenses for just one day's visit per month. Some students might understand the financial implications for their parents while others might not, and this can be depressing and lonely, especially for those students who find themselves in boarding schools for the first time.

This is likely to impact students' concentration in class and eventually the whole learning process.

The isolation from home and siblings over a long period can be frustrating and even so in situations when children leave behind sickly parents or family members as narrated in the following story:

Patrick is a very bright and easy going boy in my class but in form three I noticed a change in his pattern of behavior. He started reporting back to school late from school holidays without proper explanation when asked by his dormitory teacher. School policy requires that all students must arrive in school by 6:00 p.m. and report to their dormitories on the first day of opening. His grades started going down and he was always angry at his colleagues. So one day I called him to my office and had a chat. It is then that he explained to me how his mother has been very sick and he always fears that someday he will be called from school that his mother is dead. I asked the guidance and counseling teacher to find out ways in which teachers could provide support to the boy because his emotional state was really impacting his grades. (Physics Teacher Site C).

Site D has an institutional policy on school visits that the school administration hopes to commit parents and guardians to become part of the learning support process. As an institution they have come to realize how students are emotionally attached to parents and how valuable the visits are to them. During my interview with the deputy principal she indicated that:

As a school what we have done when we realized this, is that we have made it possible for parents and guardians to come to school at least once every year for every class that their children are in for teacher parents conferencing. So for the four years that a student is here, the parent or guardian have a responsibility of coming to school at least four times.

Site C has also adopted a policy assumed to create uniformity and is believed to be an effective measure in establishing a level playing field for addressing students' socio-economic differences. It is assumed that this policy will guard against eminent disparities likely to be displayed when students come with "goodies" and other facilities from home. The policy puts restrictions on what students can have when they are in school and in what amounts:

What we have done like here we don't allow students socio-economic differences to show. For instance when it comes to the amount of pocket money parents can give their children, we restrict the amount. Students are only allowed to have Ksh.300 for pocket money even if the student comes from a rich family, we don't want to know that. Then in terms of food from home, we don't allow food and drinks to be brought by students to school because you know if we allow food, the rich students will bring so many things and the others will feel hopeless and then start admiring. So we don't allow even things like juices, the policy is strictly no food from home. (Dean of Studies Site C)

In both boarding schools (Sites C & D) students are not allowed to bring to school their home clothes. A participant from site D explained the reason for adopting this kind of policy:

Some students from very poor families are often ill at ease with the others because they kind of lack a bit of self-esteem when they are comparing themselves with the others from rich families. But what we have done is trying to make them as uniform as possible. So like for example they wear the same uniform and they are in uniform most of the time. But when they used to put on their own clothes after school you could see that differences very clearly because of the way they dress up with trendy dresses for those who are endowed with money. And the ones who come from poor backgrounds would just be in their uniforms throughout or dress up in very simple ways and they would kind of be looked down upon by the others. (Guidance & Counseling Teacher Site D)

In this case creating uniformity through school policies is assumed as a way to reducing the socio-economic divide among students. Teachers argued that based on their experiences when students struggle to be accepted within peer groupings or class groupings it impacts their levels of concentration in learning as they become more pre-occupied with the sense of belonging rather than educational expectations. Exposure to enriched learning environment is another aspect emerging from students' socio-economic status.

#### 4.2.1.2 Exposure to Enriched Learning Environment

There was consensus from responses (36/56) indicating how socio-economic status of students determine their levels of interaction with enriched learning facilities and environments. Enriched environments enhance students' knowledge base which is necessary in motivating and understanding of new concepts. Some participants noted that, how students' comprehend

concepts taught and how they articulate their understanding of these concepts is very much influenced by their background experiences as stated by the computer teacher in Site D:

Students' upbringing often influences their social life and impacts the level they are already exposed to the subject content. There are those students who come from urban settings who already know what a computer is and their typing skills are already developed. And there are those who come from rural areas who have never even seen a computer and therefore when you are talking about a computer mouse, they are thinking about another animal. So it becomes difficult to grasp concepts at the beginning but with time they get into the context of working with computers.

Corroborating similar sentiments is a response from a physics teacher in Site A "for example I teach physics and when discussing concepts like the circuit system of a car, children from affluent families show a lot of knowledge on the subject of discussion". The level of exposure to enriched learning environment is also envisioned as key to influencing intellectual capacity as reflected in students' composition writing in both English and Kiswahili. According to the English language teacher in Site B:

Socio-economic differences determine the level in which students are exposed to the media such as newspapers, televisions, and internet facilities. Lack of exposure limits students knowledge of surroundings outside that of their own and international issues. This is reflected in students' composition writing exercises in class and discussions during debates especially when required to talk about issues outside their own environment for example international issues.

Exposure to enriched learning environment is directly related to students' socio-economic status and family backgrounds as it enables learners to access resources such as media, internet services, and extra learning materials. This has significant influence on students' level of knowledge foundation on different aspects in terms of depth and scope in the knowledge construction process.

Apart from enrichment, home environment also provide a nurturing atmosphere that is supportive to students' learning in terms of emotional stability explained some of the teachers. They argued that when students lack support from home it spills into their classroom learning as

stated by this teacher from site A, “students who come from family backgrounds with strained relationships would always have problems of social adjustments. They often have issues where discipline is concerned”. Misbehavior can disrupt individual’s own learning or the flow of classroom activities and interfere with the general learning process. Some teachers argued that understanding students’ home background is important because lack of awareness of problems encountered in the homes may result in misinterpretation of student’s behavior as indiscipline:

Teachers sometimes take punitive action against a student because they don’t know the student’s problem and instead conclude that they are rude. Yet for me with the eyes of a counselor, I can see that this is not a rude child, the child has a problem and I can be a bit patient. (Guidance & Counseling Teacher Site A)

Teachers’ understanding of students’ problems enable them to employ strategies that are more supportive to learning and not actions that may impede individual’s motivation to learn.

#### 4.2.1.3 Access to Learning Resources and Quality Learning Time

Participants’ narrated how poverty limits learners’ access to resources such as supplementary learning materials as noted by the English teacher, “although the school provides students with basic textbooks, there are supplementary texts and materials that support learning in English classes but which students from poor families are unable to obtain, limiting their ability to expand their reading”. Although basic required textbooks are provided to students to share as indicated in the four schools, teachers indicated that relying only on a few texts do not enrich students’ learning. Therefore, they often encourage students to read other resource materials outside the main texts provided by the school. There are other equipment and facilities that students are expected to purchase for use in learning and as one teacher stated, “you find that you need students to have things, such as geometrical set or dictionary yet some of them don’t have. So, it becomes a problem to teach as fast as you would have liked but because some

students cannot afford, it makes teaching very challenging”. Other than resources, students’ socio-economic status impacts their class attendance.

Absenteeism is perceived as a key factor impacting students learning and subsequent academic success especially in day schools. This is because absenteeism reduces the number of contact hours required in promoting in-depth understanding in students’ learning and continuity. Students who are frequently absent often phase the risk of dropping out of the education system all together because in some cases students find themselves unable to catch up with the missed content as pointed out by this response:

Some students stay home for a week even a month when they are not able to raise the money for tuition; which of course will affect the student because they have missed out a lot in terms of learning hours. Sometimes when you calculate the number of days and lessons missed for some students it can even convert to a whole terms [semester] work in a year. Therefore, by the time a student reaches form four and is preparing for the national examination, this student has missed out in so many concepts. For some students they just give up on school because they find that they cannot cope with the learning process. (Principal Site A)

The impact of access to learning resources and quality learning time seem to be experienced differently depending on the nature of the schools as this is determined by institutional financial ability to support the needy students. Financial positions of schools are determined by institutional operative structures and the economic status of parents. The only financial support that the government provides to public schools currently is providing salaries for teachers but all other expenditures are raised through tuition. This depends significantly on the financial ability of parents to pay tuition fees for their children. For example Site D which is a national school is likely to have more resources than sites A (District school) and B (Provincial School) because of the economic status of parents. National schools are elite schools with the majority of students coming from Kenya’s affluent class of the society. Therefore, parents in these schools tend to effectively subsidize school budgets through the Parents Teachers



Association (PTA). These funds ultimately help in maintaining the academic standards of these institutions.

Sites A and B are situated within the proximity of slum dwellings and business centers and do not enjoy the financial support from the majority of parents who are Jua Kali artisans (small business owners), small scale farmers, and low income workers from the informal sector of the economy who are basically struggling financially. Majority of parents in these schools lack the financial capabilities to meet tuition payments for their children and depend on availability of bursaries. Therefore these schools experience difficulties in providing adequate learning resources as indicated by a math teacher from Site A:

Resources is a problem, like now there are four math classes in form four alone which I am teaching a topic on construction. We just have a ruler and we have a board for ten full time teachers plus those teachers on teaching practice (practicum). Most teachers do not have adequate resources to work with efficiently.

Most students from Sites A and B (day schools) are more prone to absenteeism due to lack of tuition, lack of learning resources, and are more likely to develop delinquent behavior given the economic disparity of most students and the social environments they live in.

Students from low income backgrounds learning in sites C and D which are boarding schools, experience less impact in terms of loss of learning time as they have low absenteeism and have sufficient learning resources. Basic learning resources are adequately provided for by the schools to be shared by learners. These schools have implemented policies that ensure students maximum attendance by limiting students' absenteeism from class. For example, Site C has regulations on when and how long students can be absent from school due to non payment of tuition as indicated by the Dean of Studies:

In most cases we do not send students home for non-payment of tuition fee. We always try to keep them around as their cases are being looked into. If we must send students home for non-payment of tuition, we normally send them on a Friday or Saturday and

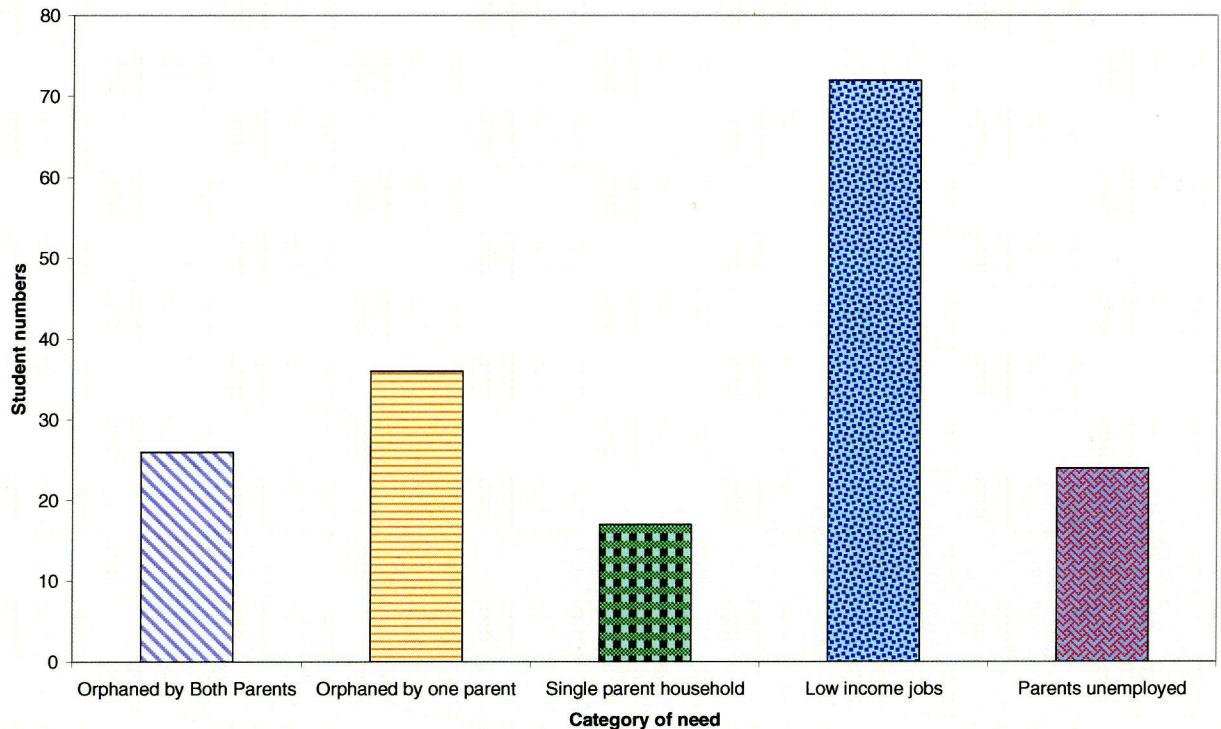
they are expected back in school the latest on Monday morning. If there is a problem at home the director demands that the parents should accompany the student back to school and personally explain their case to the office. They sort out and make an agreement on ways to pay the balance by installments to ensure that the students remain in class most of the learning period. But for parents, who are single and have limited resources or orphaned students, we have that kind of information through class teachers who keep those records and we collect tuition fees for needy students differently. The parent or guardian signs a contract on the mode of payment for the remaining balances, specifying amounts and expected dates for payments. So that in case of delay in making payment, class teachers communicate with the parents to find out reasons for the delay. The maximum time students are allowed away from class is just two days not months and if a student happens to have stayed home for that long, then we make a follow up. Most of the time we have telephone and address contacts of parents, which makes it easier to call or write to make a follow up on the student's whereabouts.

Site D school has almost a similar policy with Site C of dealing with unpaid tuition balances given that being boarding schools they are required to be responsible and accountable for students while under their care. During the interview with the deputy principal of Site D concerning school policy on absenteeism, the following was her narration:

Students are still sent home for school fees and we have had to even look for the students again to ensure that they come back to school. Okay you find that when they are sent home for school fees, we tell them to come back with a parent or guardian in case they do not manage to get money for fees in order for the administration to work out a payment plan contract with the parent/guardian. But then the students go for school fees and parents do not come neither do those students. Then we are forced to go out of our way and look for them. That is when the parent or guardian comes just to realize that they can't even afford to raise the required amount. Then at times such parents decide that the student should just stay home and leave school. But what we have done as a school is that we try as much as possible not to have students withdraw from school because some of them are very bright. In the end you find that such students end up with a mean score of A or A- in the national exams. Again we have found that it is very expensive in terms of transport cost to send home students who come from far places like North Eastern or Coast Provinces. This is because when they do not have the money the school has to give them transport which is very costly and therefore, we may as well transfer that amount as part of their tuition payment.

In the study, different archival data sets were used in different sites to identify which students were categorized as being in financial need when dealing with issues of non payments of tuition and providing financial support by schools to students whenever possible. Whereas all

the teachers underscored socio-economic status as a contributing factor to the way they organize their instructions, and acquire resources for teaching, there was need for accurate information on financial needs of students. Figure 6 below shows the categorization of needy students in Site A indicating factors that were perceived as indicators of financial need.



**Figure 6:** Indicators of Students' Financial Need in Site A

I realized that record keeping and availability of such information was crucial at each site. For example it was only in Site A with well documented information on the background of students who required financial assistance as shown in figure 6. In Site A students with financial need were identified as those who come from single female headed families, orphans with no financial support, unemployed parents with no form of property, and students' whose parents have low income with large family size. The process of profiling such students involves the

participation of class teachers and teachers in the counseling unit. It entails personal interviews with students who owe the school large amounts of tuition balances cumulated over a period of time. Counseling teachers make personal visits to students' homes to conduct interviews with parents in order to establish the level of economic need. These records are well documented and can be accessed through the guidance and counseling office. In Site B the information on students with financial need is based on the records of the number of students who received bursary during the year 2007. However, the school had no information on the number of applicants for bursaries from their school from different constituencies. It was difficult to get information from Site C on the number of needy students or bursary recipients because this information is considered confidential and can only be divulged by the director.

Absenteeism in day schools (Sites A & B) is not only attributed to lack of tuition fees but also due to other experiences encountered by students emanating from living conditions in their homes. Students whose personal needs are not catered for by family members or guardians sometimes skip school to raise funds in order to provide for their needs:

The socio-economic status of some families may not enable parents to provide certain personal requirements to their children because they have their siblings and may be other dependants. So when these students feel inadequate as they compare themselves with their peers who are adequately provided for, they go an extra mile looking for ways and means to make up. Even sometimes they miss school to go for kibarua (part-time jobs) to get money and buy things that their friends have. (English Teacher Site A)

Some students experience insecurity in the homes from guardians or step parents forcing them to run away, a situation that renders them absent from school as stated in the following case:

We have even had cases where girls have been sexually molested by their step fathers or their mother's boy friends. With the kind of life in urban centers mothers are usually very busy selling things at the market in order to earn a living for the family. It is during her absence that the husband or boy friend takes advantage of the child. We have this girl who ran away from home whenever the mother went to the village to visit the grand parents or somewhere else. So one day she disappeared for two weeks from school and when she came back we asked her where she had been but initially she could not tell us.

So when we wanted to punish her for absenteeism she started crying and narrated what happens to her at home. We later discovered that the girl decided to live with her boy friend who is a matatu tout. So you see problems in the home drove this girl to move in with a matatu tout. She came back home only when she guessed that her mother had returned home. (Guidance & Counseling Teacher Site B)

Stability and security in the home is identified by teachers in their experiences working with students from diverse settings as an important factor in supporting students learning. Another characteristic that adds to students' diversity identified by some of the participants was that of orphaned students and students affected by HIV/AIDS pandemic who because of their social-economic status become more vulnerable and risk dropping out of school.

#### 4.2.1.4 Impact of HIV/AIDS to Classroom Learning

Ten participating teachers who are also involved in guidance and counseling activities in their schools narrated ways in which HIV/AIDS pandemic has added another layer to the nature of students' characteristics in terms of orphans and non orphan status. Responses show that growing number of orphans and vulnerable children in the schools have been intensified by children losing parents partly to AIDS. This represents a major challenge to teaching and learning opportunities of those students affected by HIV/AIDS in terms of financial and emotional support. These teachers narrated how the AIDS pandemic reduces the quality time for students learning, as children are either withdrawn from school in response to rising household expenditures which results in lack of tuition and children having to balance academic and family responsibility of caring for family members who are down with the disease.

Responses also indicated how some of the students orphaned by both parents may at times have problems of where to stay after school especially when they have no relatives to take care of them. The problem of where to stay during school vacations pose great challenges to those students in boarding schools creating anxiety to some of the students:

Like we have a girl in form two who lost both parents but she has older sisters at the university who are paying for her school fees. So paying her tuition is not a problem, but she often has no where to go during school vacations. Sometimes she would stay with the sister who is a student at Moi University medical school and you just know how tiny those rooms are. Besides that these are shared accommodation and at times it would be really difficult. So you can sometimes see the anxiety the girl is going through when the vacation period is approaching and that is why I decided to be staying with her during the holiday because I have a lot of room in my house and I stay within the school compound. One just feels obligated as a teacher to provide whatever support you can to ensure that our orphans in the school can complete their studies. (Chemistry Teacher Site D).

There is also the emotional aspect that influences students' level of concentration and eventually their academic performance. One of the teachers narrated the following case as an example of experiences of students affected by HIV/AIDS in her classroom:

The psychological trauma that some of these children go through is enormous. Like I have this boy in my class, I think his mother died and we didn't know his father was down with this problem (HIV/AIDS). His grades started going down and he was always absent minded. He would not talk about his problems with anybody. So, when we decided to investigate the case is when we were told by some of the students who live near his home of the difficulties that the boy was going through. So we found out that this child comes to school after feeding his dad, cleaning him, and doing everything. If the boy fails his final exam, because he is now in form four (Senior), I mean you will not be right to pass judgment on his academic ability because you don't know what that student has gone through in his social life. (Geography Teacher Site B).

When students have to add home responsibilities to their already loaded school curriculum then they are likely to be overwhelmed. Their concentration level in the learning environment is definitely compromised impacting the overall academic performance.

Often it is not only the situations of caring for sick family members that is challenging. The impact of being orphaned by both parents also causes a lot of psychological and emotional issues that these students have to deal with, as stated by this teacher:

Some of the students for example are orphaned and some of the emotional stress that the outside life puts on some of these students you can't imagine. Some of the students suffer a lot of psychological and emotional problems. Sometime you find that when you started with a student in form one (freshman) he/she you find that they were in a family of a single parent and by the time they are completing form four (senior) they are complete orphans. And some cases are so bad that they don't have even someone to live

with. But in this school (Site A), we sometimes contribute a bit of money then we keep the child in a rented house just to ensure that they complete their form four education. (Physics Teacher Site A).

Living with feelings of hopelessness is likely to create a lot of anxiety and restlessness because of not knowing what one's future holds. This might not enable a student to keep up with learning making possibilities of dropping out of school quite possible. Another respondent also corroborated the difficult conditions orphans experience as they try to survive a difficult social life while pursuing their educational aspirations:

You find that a student was staying with a relative, after sometime moves on to stay with a neighbor, after a while the same student is later accommodated by another student. Eventually they drop out of school or they stay away from school for a whole term (semester), then we go fetch them and bring them back to school. (Agriculture Teacher Site A)

The teachers' narratives show how experiences of students orphaned by both parents are dismal as they often have to fend for themselves and cope with the competitive system of education. This just confirms how difficult it is for orphaned students to succeed academically, especially students in day schools, when their situations do not guarantee living spaces. Moving from one residential place to another seeking accommodation does not provide a sense of security and emotional stability necessary for supporting learning and eventually academic achievement.

Some students develop psychological problems impacting their learning as reflected in the case of one student from Site D who was orphaned by both parents:

Alice is a girl in my biology class and her mother died last year and the father had died two years ago when she was in form one (freshman). This girl started developing some psychosomatic symptoms that we could not understand as teachers. Sometimes when she is in class she would just go stiff and would not be able to move her limbs. It is as though her muscles have stiffened and the other girls would be asked to carry her to the sanatorium. The school nurse would find nothing absolutely wrong with her and when she recovers she would say that she had no pains. We even took her to Moi Referral hospital and there was no positive diagnosis of the problem. So having been in the counseling office for sometime I thought this could be something psychological. I arranged several counseling sessions with her until one day she told me her fears. When

her mother died and they are four in their family, no one wanted to take up the responsibility of caring for the four children because they had no financial means to do so. So they were shared out and her little sister is only two years old. So her fear is that she might not see her little sister again because they live in different cities. We cannot do anything to address her problem because this is now a family matter, but the least we can do as teachers is to offer her some spiritual guidance and emotional support in the classroom. (Biology Teacher)

During the interviews teachers' narrated incidences when they noticed the drop on their students' academic performance, how they accused them of slacking off their studies just to realized the challenges that some of these students were experiencing such as caring for either a sick parent, lacking someone to care for them after loosing parents or the separation with their siblings. These conditions impacted students' academic work and required teachers and institutional support. Students intellectual differences was another factor identified that influences teaching approaches and students' academic achievement.

#### **4.2.2 Differences in Academic Abilities**

Participants described how students came to their classrooms at different levels of academic abilities, influencing their teaching approaches and the pace of content delivery in class. As stated by one teacher; "..... in one classroom you will find very weak students and very bright students and to bring them to the same level, you have to actually understand their academic needs and cater for them. This requires that teachers present their practice in such a manner that you don't bore the quick learners and you don't lose out on the slow learners". Teaching for intellectual differences means crafting ones practice as a teacher to accommodate everybody in the learning process. The following phrases were used by teachers to describe academic differences among learners: "slow-learners and fast learners" or "weak students and bright students".



When I probed into teachers' conceptualization of "slow learners", I realized that the construction of the concept does not refer to learning disability. Meaning that these students did not possess significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of basic learning skills and reasoning abilities to warrant specialized education classes. My interpretation of "slow learners" based on teachers' description was that these students' experiences limited their ability to comprehend and synthesize concepts at a certain rate and pace compared with their peers, the "fast learners". Fast learners were described as those students who are always on task, often engaged in the learning process and are always ahead with content to be taught in the next lesson. Below is a definition of slow learners and fast learners by the math teacher in Site C during the interview:

Slow learners are those students who do not grasp concepts very quickly and there are some who will not even ask any questions in class. So it is usually up to the teacher to single them out and you can also identify them from the way they perform in CATs (Continuous Assessment Tests). Like they can be getting D grades. So those are the ones we categorize as slow learners. Fast learners are those who understand concepts very fast, you will give work and they will do it immediately. The slow learners will not even bother, they can actually just even sit in the class without participating in the lesson.

I was interested in this particular teacher's definition because he was one of three teachers who indicated that they do not address issues of students' differences in their classrooms and that they usually try to create uniformity among students. Therefore, my follow up question to this teacher was to determine what factors he identified as causes of students' slow learning and his response was as follows:

Many factors may affect them, may be entry behavior, other problems from home such as children from single parent households, orphans and so on. There are those who may sit in class physically but their minds are away. Some have opened up and told us that. They have said you know mwalimu [(teacher)], I normally sit in class but I don't understand what the teachers say because I am thinking of how much fees I still have to pay and I don't know whether my parents will be able to come up with the money. So normally we counsel them, we try to talk to them and bring them back to normal.

Other teachers in the study concurred with the above explanation and stated that the genesis of students' academic differences often result from several factors including students' attitudes and their previous primary education experiences. A teacher in Site D explained that, "slowness in learning can arise from attitudes and previous education background. The way they were taught math at primary school level may not have provided them with a strong foundation, and attitude toward the subject could also be a factor". Students who enter into Kenyan high schools come from different categories of primary education namely; private schools, public affluent schools, rural primary schools, boarding schools, and schools located in low income areas of the cities. These categories of schools indicate socio-economic status and levels of preparation in terms of resource allocations, teacher-student ratio, and the level of English language proficiency. This background determines learners' level of knowledge foundation at entry into high schools which influences students' academic foundational base.

Teachers find difference in students' abilities quite challenging when trying to accommodate both levels in their practice, as said by the English teacher in Site A:

You have to cater for the slow learners and the fast learners because if you go into the classrooms, you find that there are some students who are already conversant with the concepts that you want to teach during that lesson. So what do you give, you have to give some extra work.

Students' academic difference is also determined as teachers say by individual's entry behavior in high school. Entry behavior refers to the mean scores obtained in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examination (KCPE). The Ministry of Education sets guideline for mean score entry into the different categories of schools. During the national selections of students into high school, national high schools select students with the highest scores in the whole country. This is followed by Provincial schools selecting from within the province and finally District schools from the district level.

Therefore, the mean score levels for entry into the four types of schools that participated in the study are quite varied reflecting academic differences at entry into the specific schools, which require that teachers recognize these differences in their teaching indicated the history teacher in Site B:

Entry behavior of students contributes a lot to how much one can do as a teacher because you get students who come in with a mean of 40% that is about two hundred marks and you find that bringing them to 60% you must have done a lot as a teacher.

Understanding the achievement levels of students at entry in the learning environment is helpful to teachers when they plan how to scaffold all students' performance toward higher academic achievement and set mean score objectives for the class or the discipline in line with the Ministry of Education requirement. Students who enter high schools also come in at different levels of language proficiency given the multilingual nature of the Kenyan society.

#### **4.2.3 English Language Proficiency**

As pointed out in Chapter 2, English is the medium of instruction in Kenya's high schools and yet students come from various ethno-linguistic backgrounds given that Kenya is a multilingual society. Therefore, students come to classrooms at different levels of English language proficiency, a factor which the participating teachers identified as significant in influencing students learning and teachers' presentation of the curriculum content. As one teacher stated; "some of the students come to school with a very serious problem of expressing themselves in English because they are used to speaking their mother tongue, Kiswahili or *sheng* yet teachers commonly use English as a medium of instruction". A biology teacher in Site C also expressed her frustration with some of her students with limited English language proficiency:

I don't know whether some students do not understand English because the way they sometimes explain answers to questions does not come out clearly. They may not be speaking English very frequently in their social settings and so they sometimes have to translate the concepts from their mother tongue into Kiswahili and finally into English. Sometimes this process of synthesizing information doesn't come out clearly.

Limited proficiency in English language creates communication barrier determining not only students' comprehension of curriculum content but also interactions with peers and the teachers.

When students are not able to articulate their ideas, it often leads to frustration and lower self-esteem limiting their participation in the learning process as noted by the physics teacher:

Students with limited command of English language will always fear expressing themselves because they fear what other students will think of them. They are more conscious about their self image before their peers and will always shy away from participating in class or group discussions. (Physics Teacher Site D).

Teachers in the study identified certain influences in students learning and use of English language as a second, third, or even as fourth language learners and ways in which they try to address issues of language in their teaching and as schools. These were factors for example the nature of primary schools attended. In their experiences teachers have noted that students who attend private and affluent public schools are more fluent in English language compared to their colleagues in low income urban and rural primary schools. On the other hand students from low income primary schools are more likely to use Kiswahili and *sheng* in their interaction with their peers and those from rural areas would use the predominant local ethnic languages of the communities. This scenario is explained by the following response from a chemistry teacher in Site B:

When students come from primary schools where there was no diversity in their ethnic backgrounds then they tend to be really weak in English language. This is because occasionally they would just break into speaking their mother tongue and of course they are students from the same community so it lacks that variety. And again this translates into their limited communication in English language and this determines their level of proficiency.

This assertion was corroborated by a math teacher in Site C who indicated that “children from private and public high cost schools are more confident and speak English fluently. Most of children from rural primary schools have difficulties speaking English. They are usually shy and are never ready to integrate with others”.

Ethnic linguistic background of students and the use of *sheng* have also a greater influence in students use and mastery of English in the learning context. Students are often conditioned to the use of the dominant language of communication in the homes or social settings which can be mother tongue, Kiswahili or *sheng*. Therefore, students find it challenging when confronted with the use of English as the only medium of communication in the school settings. Teachers in the study also argued that learning English is difficult for some students because certain ethnic languages do not have some of the consonants found in the English language. This often influence the way students speak and write in English as narrated:

Students from the Kikuyu community experience difficulties with the pronunciation of such sounds as “R” and “L” and they would say “led” instead of Red, “fliend” instead of friend. That goes for other communities too like the Luo’s would say “seep” instead of sheep and “fis” instead of fish. (English Teacher Site A).

The pronunciations are often translated into students’ writing and this impacts clarity of their work and the performance in the disciplines indicated a computer teacher in Site D:

You see language differences is found in the writing too, like when you are grading a paper of a girl who is already exposed and has the command of the usage of English language and compare it to somebody who even putting sentences together and explaining themselves is a problem, then it is challenging to the teacher.

According to teachers interviewed, difference in English language proficiency is a major problem across disciplines and school settings impacting students’ self-esteem, participation, and socialization in and outside the classroom. English language proficiency determines the general academic performance of students in all the disciplines in the national examination.

#### 4.2.4 Strategies to Improve Students' English Language Proficiency

Teachers acknowledged students' differences in English language proficiency and have developed strategies in helping students to improve their English language skills and address their self-efficacy issues that is hampered by their language limitation. Teachers' strategies to improve English proficiency of students involved encouraging them to speak in English. They ensured that students are engaged with school activities that exposes them to the use of English language in their socialization both inside and out of classroom settings. For example, students participated in activities like writing competitions, drama, and debating clubs that were found to yield good results in improving students' proficiency levels in English language:

We have some of those students when they first come to school, it seems like they can't even speak in English but we found that interaction with other students who are fluent in the language is supportive in improving students use of English. Helping students through their self-esteem issues and encouraging them to express themselves through participation in drama and debating clubs. And you would be surprised that at the end of form one (freshman) year in the school, some of them act on the stage speaking in very fluent English. So they just need a bit of encouragement from the teachers. (English Teacher Site D).

In site C apart from engaging students in clubs as a way to encouraging students' use of English, the school has enforced a language policy that discourages students from speaking mother tongue within the school environments. Students found speaking in their mother tongue are punished and those presumed to resist are sent home on suspension. This was expressed by the Dean of Studies in Site C during our interview:

Students tend to speak a lot of their ethnic languages and that influences their engagement with English as a language. So, we try to encourage students to communicate more in English, but the boys have been resistant. We have even tried the disc, which is a form of badge with the word 'disc' inscribed on it but the boys colluded to sabotage the whole thing. For students to master the language they must speak it and that is why you see the sign on a board out there written "speak in English Always". We have now reached a stage where if we get students speaking in their mother tongue or *sheng* we punish them on the spot and if they become very resistant to what we want we have decided we must send them home.



On the school compound near the classrooms stands a big board with the inscriptions “*Speak in English Always*”. Figure 7 shows the board in the school compound of site C, which acts as a reminder to students to speak in English while on the school grounds.

Other ways in which teachers address the issue of English language proficiency in their teaching is by moderating the use of English language to the levels of the students understanding. They ensure that the language used in the curriculum content is simplified, technical terms used, and vocabulary in the content are reduced to the language level of students.



**Figure 7:** Site C Notice on English Speaking Policy

Some teachers found it useful to create time outside the lesson for further discussion of the concepts of the previous lessons with those students with language barrier as stated: “sometimes I have to go out of my way to further explain concepts to these students outside of the lesson so that they don’t lag behind because they might feel like they can’t cope with the learning process”. Other teachers explained that dictating notes to students and the use of the blackboard

to write out word spellings has been a useful strategy. This helps students with difficulties with English consonant sounds to have the correct spelling given their different ethno-linguistic peculiarity and barriers.

The responsibility of nurturing students to attain higher levels of English language proficiency to enable them to function effectively in their academic activities and facilitate learning is viewed as a collective responsibility of all teachers within their disciplines. Individual student's level of English language proficiency also contributes to motivation in the learning process as claimed by some of the teachers. They explained that it helps students build on their self esteem and motivates them to engage in the learning process as active participants. Motivation in the classroom is perceived by participants as an essential component of teaching and students' learning.

#### **4.2.5 Levels of Motivation**

Ten of the participating teachers identified students' levels of motivation as another characteristic that impacts their "commitment to performing academic work" as stated by one of the teachers. They indicated how students' motivation level was necessary in enhancing their general engagement in the learning process. These teachers claimed that some students lacked the drive to engage with academic work as claimed "most of these students are not motivated and so you have to push them to do their work". Teachers used the following labels to describe the different levels of students' motivation: students as "motivated" or "unmotivated", "interested" or "uninterested", those who pay attention or lack attention, those who concentrate or lack concentration, those with positive attitudes or negative attitudes, those who listen and those who don't. The argument put forward by these teachers was that students' levels of motivation fit



them well within any of the descriptors above as they gauge their behavior in the learning process.

Teachers in the study explained how students' sources of motivation stem from both the intrinsic and extrinsic sources. Intrinsic factors emanate from "levels of personal motivation" stated one participant, determining students levels of aspirations, concentration, and academic achievement as they become self-motivated toward academic achievements. As indicated in this response, "self-driven students do very well in their academic performance. Self-driven students are very alert and encourage the teacher to do much more than teaching". Teachers indicated how extrinsic motivation on the other hand is a resultant of a variety of factors for example career aspirations, social-cultural background, students' basic needs, classroom practice, teachers' feedback, examination scores, and attitudes toward education. All these influence learners' relationship with peers and teachers during the classroom interactions.

#### 4.2.5.1 Career Aspirations

Thirteen teachers in the study indicated how career choices that students want to pursue were found to be significant in enabling them develop interest in specific disciplines that they believe will help them actualize their objective. The result is that students develop interest and positive attitudes towards the discipline, energizing their efforts despite the challenges they may encounter in the process of learning. According to this teacher's explanation, "when students have confidence in pursuing challenging careers, they develop a liking for subjects like mathematics that can help them meet the requirements despite the society's perception of girls as being weak in math". For students and girls in particular, self-motivation is critical in overcoming societal stereotypes if they are to achieve their academic objectives.

#### 4.2.5.2 Socio-Cultural Background

Other extrinsic factors such as the social-cultural context in which students live in is also significant in determining levels of motivation to academic achievements. The environmental impact is based on among other things, the nature of role models encountered, the value of education transmitted, and the expectations of the gender norms of society. This is more likely to influence students' perceptions of the value of schooling, aspirations in their future, and eventually level of commitment to education as indicated by the following statement; "most of our students come from low income settings. What I have noted is that these surroundings do not instill higher life aspirations on students due to lack of appropriate role models that they can emulate". Levels of aspiration shape individual student's dreams and visions which act as motivators and are shaped by the context from which students come from:

Students who come from rural background, their visions, and the kind of things they want to pursue are not very high in life. They do not have the very high dreams, the result is they don't find a very high level of motivation. This is because ones dreams and vision will have a great influence in terms of motivation. (Home Science Teacher Site B).

Students from rural areas, especially those from conservative communities where gender roles are specific may not require girls to obtain higher levels of education. This is because women's roles in such society's is often perceived as that of bringing up families as stated, "and you realize that girls from the rural areas in some of the communities where culture and tradition have a strong influence, girls go to school to pass time waiting for marriage". Students who lack exposure to other forms of life other than what they experience in their rural context tend to have limited perceptions of other world experiences beyond their immediate surroundings. This inhibits awareness of other opportunities and options that might be available for them when determining their educational goals.

Students' hardship was observed as a unique situation that inspires some of them toward higher levels of academic achievement as stated by the English teacher in Site A:

There is an interesting situation whereby difficult experiences that certain students encounter in life give them the motivation to succeed in their education goals. They are motivated by the negative circumstances that prevail in their lives as they struggle to succeed with the hope of changing their conditions in the future.

Humble backgrounds are perceived as a positive source of energy that drives learners toward commitment to academic goals given that most Kenyans still perceive education as a medium of social and economic mobility. Although other participants' accounts indicated that negative circumstances in students' lives will only provide positive outcomes depending on the student's personality indicated the physics teacher in Site C:

To some students their humble backgrounds acts as a pressure point and it gives them greater motivation to achieve their objectives but we also have those who encounter emotional stress due to difficult conditions and this really works negatively in their learning.

Teachers indicated how situations or stressful physical environment leads to learned helplessness in some students manifesting in feelings of low-self-esteem and low self-image:

Some students from low socio-economic status have low self-esteem and negative self-concept about themselves. So it becomes difficult for these students to concentrate in class. They don't accept their socio-economic status especially girls and some end up dropping out of school. (Geography Teacher Site A).

In order to motivate students despite their difficult situations, teachers have to provide positive feedback encouraging them to work hard and make a difference in their own lives.

#### 4.2.5.3 Teachers' Feedback as a Motivating Factor

One way that teachers' helped students focus on their academic work included developing in them some level of persistence and resilience to overcome obstacles in order to motivate students from marginalized groups. This is expressed in the form of feedback to

students during interactions inside and outside of the classrooms. As stated by the guidance and counseling teacher in Site A:

We even talk to students so that they rationalize their difficult situations to help them remain motivated. This at least helps them appreciate their problem so that they can use it as a source of positive energy towards achieving their educational goals. I try to encourage students by making them understand that although there are difficulties and problems in their lives, this should not put them down. They should view the obstacles positively to motivate them to work hard in school so that they can improve their situations in the future. I tell them that you can be down but not out.

I was interested on further understanding of this teachers' statement "you can be down and not out" and asked the teacher to expound on what meaning his students would construct of it. The statement according to the teacher's explanation means that despite the adversities in students' experiences, they can still make it in life through determination, hard work, and keeping a clear focus of their set goals.

However, when teachers' feedback does not make meaning to students' situations, then making connections on the relevance of education to their future becomes difficult indicated the physics teacher in Site D:

Whenever we tell students to work hard and achieve high academic standing, we often indicate that they do so in order to achieve a good life in the future. But some of these students come from families where they already have that good life. So to such students the question is what are they working for? So teachers need to identify the levels of students' needs and use a variety of inspiration sentiments that would appeal to different groups of students if they are to make connection on the importance of academic achievement to their future.

Statements used in class to encourage students toward achieving higher levels of inspiration must be meaningful and realistic within the context of the individual students' perspective. It requires recognizing individual differences and teachers' understanding that not every student will be motivated by the same thing.

Teachers in this study also narrated how students' family backgrounds impact their attitudes to learn "students from well to do families seem not to take studies seriously" exclaimed one participant. They also argued that in some instances students socio-cultural and family background encourages a culture of complacency among some of the students', influencing their levels of motivation in pursuing their academic outcomes.

Complacency can either come from cultural situations like communities which do not encourage persistent education for girls. Complacency can also come from students of affluent backgrounds who feel that they have 'enough' as far as their economic status is concerned. Such students may feel that they do not need to work for anything else. (Physics Teacher Site D).

The level of complacency may be aggravated by the type of role models around the students' social circles. Role models are found to play a key role in shaping students' dreams and ambitions in their career choices as well as life aspirations. This has influence on students' motivation toward academic achievement indicated the principal of site B:

When students do not see role models that can inspire them within their own homes and living environments, it negatively influences their levels of motivation and inspirations in their academic success. Like we were seeing the other day, you find that our school is just next to the road and you find that the manambas (touts) that are working in the matatus (public transport) most of them are our former students. Why? Because their own relatives work there and that is the job opportunity they perceive as being lucrative.

The people that students socialize with such as peers, family members, and teachers have significant influence in their success not only in academic sphere but also in the social and economic choices they pursue in life.

Students' home environment was perceived by teachers to have significant influence in shaping the students' attitudes toward learning as parents communicate their expectations through reinforcement and role modeling. Students get these messages through feedbacks and understand what is expected of them. According to the teachers in the study students are often inspired to work hard because they fear letting down their families or being reprimanded by

parents. As pointed out; “some students from very rich families do not even see the need to work hard in school but they are there and have to work hard because their parents demanded them to do so”. Therefore, parental expectations become a significant factor in students’ motivation toward academic achievement.

Parents’ level of education was also perceived by some participants as a key socializing aspect that influence students’ motivation to learn as noted by the biology teacher in Site A:

Students who come from families with parents with high education have a different perspective of education from their other colleagues who come from families with parents who never went to school or dropped out at primary school level and are just engaged in small trade or business ventures. Such parents don’t perceive education as a means to success. Students from families where parents are highly educated value education and are highly motivated towards their children’s education which in turn is instilled in their children.

Education levels of parents play an important role in inspiring students to higher academic achievement. This is because educated parents create structures in the home that support students’ academic achievement by providing access to learning resources, internet, and other media facilities. This enhances students’ exposure to an enriched learning environment promoting their classroom learning. When students are raised in homes that nurture a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy it becomes very important in motivating students to academic success. This is not likely to be the experience of children from low socio-economic status who often lack learning resources and parental assistance with academics in the home. Often such students even lack the basic needs for survival.

#### 4.2.5.4 Students’ Basic Needs

Students’ differences were viewed by some of the teachers as placing them at different levels of needs they believed must be addressed especially in day schools. Such basic needs like lack of proper meals affect students’ concentration levels as cited:

Initially there were no meals provided to students in the school but then we realized that some of the children would go without lunch while others during lunch hour would engage in mischievous behavior like taking local brew. That is why during the Parents Teachers Association meetings we agreed to introduce the lunch program. Before the lunch program was introduced not having proper meals also affected learning because those students who cannot afford something to eat may be present in class physically but mentally they are exhausted. Teachers have observed that since the introduction of the meal plan students are now energized, their concentration in class is enhanced and the general academic performance of the school has improved. (Principal Site A)

In sites A and B (day schools) money for students' lunches is included as part of the tuition fees payable across the three terms of the school year. Site A charges Ksh.4, 250 while site B Ksh.3, 750 per term (semester). Teachers' approach to teaching was also viewed as one way of motivating students' engagement with learning process.

#### 4.2.5.5 Classroom Practices in Motivating Learners

Teachers viewed classrooms as spaces where they can instill higher levels of motivation and inspiration among students but the success depends on teachers understanding the students' different background. This helps in designing appropriate teaching strategies and providing examples that are suitable for different groups or individuals. Addressing the problem of inadequate motivation among students sometimes requires that teachers' model motivation through their own practice:

Often our students lack even the interest in the discipline, which may come about at times because they are not very well prepared. You know, at times the teacher may not be able to deliver the content in a way that is engaging to students. This may impact students negatively because they may see the subject as a very difficult area. Therefore, role modeling come in, in that you as a teacher must be prepared and enjoy teaching the subject as you scaffold students through the learning process. (History Teacher Site B)

The argument is that teachers need to reflect their own excitement, enthusiasm, and passion in their own classroom practice if they are to make learning interesting to students.

Teachers indicated how some students from low socio-economic status lack self-efficacy:

When you are talking to students from poor backgrounds about becoming a university lecturer for example, they look at you and even wonder whether such dreams are attainable because, where they come from such possibilities seem to be unachievable. (Chemistry Teacher Site C).

When students' perceived goals are not congruent with the teachers' expectations then the expectations might diminish students' self-efficacy. Apart from modeling the love for work, teachers explained there was need to engage students in setting learning goals that are challenging but realistic and achievable within their context. In this case students are more likely to be encouraged to take up ownership of their own learning process. Students' achievements in test scores were also viewed as one way of motivating students to learning as it is believed that it helps them develop good study habits that encourages continuous learning.

#### 4.2.5.6 Examination Achievement as Motivator

Continuous assessments (CATs) are organized within disciplinary departments to ensure uniformity in the administration of the tests and coverage of syllabi within stipulated time periods. Results of these CATs are monitored and displayed on score charts on the notice boards near the principals' offices where all students, parents, and visitors can have access and evaluate the progress of students, while students can also compare their performance to those of their peers. Students who maintain steady progress in their scores receive awards at the end of the term (semester). Those with poor performance have their vacation time reduced as they attend remedial classes at a fee charged to meet the cost of learning resources and teachers' tuition fees.

Good performance in certain disciplines is viewed as another aspect that draws students' interests to take up those subjects at the end of form two (sophomore) when students make their subject selections:

Most students fear geography, I don't know why. But I realized that it has been a problem because many students have not been getting quality grades. But with the



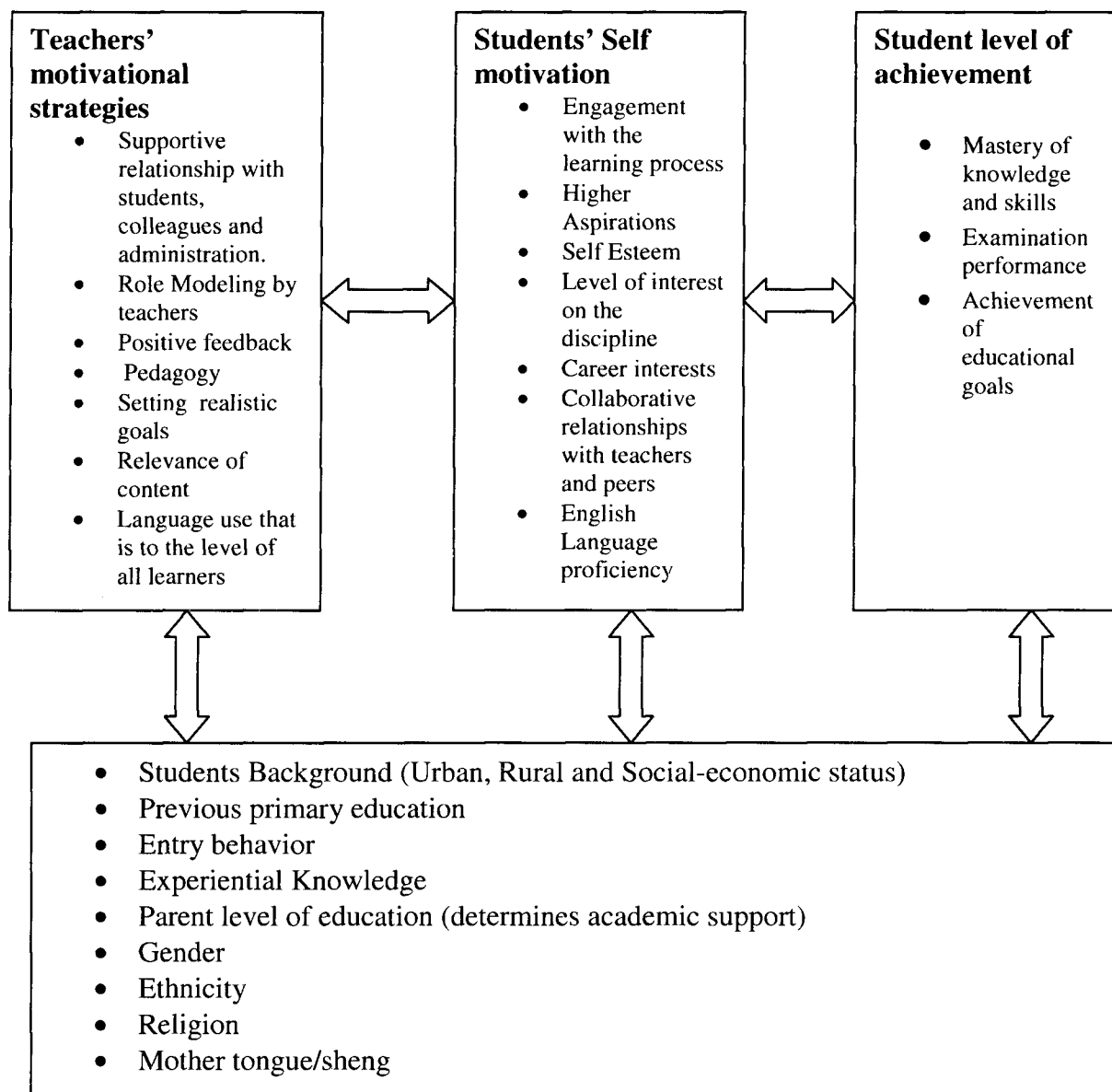
improvement in the results I know there is going to be a change in students' perspective of the discipline. (Geography Teacher Site B).

Previous performance in the disciplines motivates students' interest in engaging with these disciplines. This is because they perceive them as better options in boosting their final grades in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education results, providing them with better opportunities to join post-secondary institutions, especially the public universities. All these build on students' attitude to sustain their interests in learning and eventually success in high school education.

#### 4.2.5.7 Attitudes Toward Learning

Attitudes toward learning have been perceived by teachers in the study to significantly influence students' motivation toward academic achievement as indicated "differences in students' attitudes toward learning increase or reduce class participation and eventually performance in examination". It was also viewed that students' attitude toward teachers can influence their interest in the discipline as stated "students will like the subject if they like the teacher even for those who perform poorly in the subject". In some instances students may lack the motivation to learn when the work is not presented in an interesting manner as the geography teacher indicated, "some students can easily switch off from learning if they perceive the teacher to be boring in the way he/she is presenting the work". This occurs especially in the case of students who come to class with low motivation. This is because some of these students, according to the chemistry teacher "have not realized their potentials and have closed minds, they do not do assignments and sometimes are chronically absent. This makes it difficult for a teacher to assist them and therefore, they do not perform well". Helping students to realize their potential is one way of building positive attitudes toward academic achievement.

Figure 8 summarizes the intersections of factors that motivate students learning identified by teachers in the study as discussed in this section.



**Figure 8:** Summary of Sources of Students' Motivation

Motivation levels of students in learning is an interactive process which involves internalized personal values by students and reinforced by classroom interactions and previous experiences in other social settings.

#### 4.2.6 Gender Differences in Classroom Learning

Only twenty out of fifty six teachers in the study viewed gender differences as being significant or very significant in their curriculum implementation and students' learning. Sixteen others found gender to be somewhat significant or fairly significant and twenty indicated that gender as a factor did not influence their practice and had no influence in the way students learn.

**Table: 4. Counts by gender of Teachers' Beliefs on Gender Influence in Students Learning**

<b>School Type</b>	<b>Not at all significant</b>	<b>Somewhat significant</b>	<b>Fairly significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Very significant</b>
Co-	Male = 6	Male =3	Male =2	Male =1	Male =1
Educational	Female=6	Female=2	Female=3	Female=2	Female=10
	Male = 4	Male =3	Male =1	Male = 1	Male =2
Single-Sex	Female=2	Female=5	Female=1	Female=2	Female=2
Total	18	5	7	6	15

Table 4 above reflects participants' responses from the questionnaire data on their perception of gender influence on students' participation in the learning process by school type and by gender. Majority of participating teachers believed that gender had no influence in students' learning process. Those who believed that students' gender impact their learning were mainly female teachers in co-education schools (Sites A & B).

**Table: 5. Gender Influence on Teachers' Lesson Planning and Strategies**

<b>School Type</b>	<b>Not at all significant</b>	<b>Somewhat significant</b>	<b>Fairly significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Very significant</b>
Co-Educational	Male = 3 Female=2	Male = 4 Female=5	Male = 2 Female=3	Male = 1 Female=3	Male =2 Female=5
Single-Sex	Male =3 Female= 4	Male = 3 Female=4	Male = 2 Female=1	Male =2 Female=4	Male = 1 Female=2
Total	12	16	8	10	10

Table 5 above indicates participating teachers' responses by gender and school type on the influence of students' gender in planning their lessons. A large proportion of the teachers indicated that students' gender had no influence in their planning and implementation of curriculum. Only twenty out of fifty six teachers found gender to be a significant factor in their practice. As indicated by the math teacher in Site A "girls tend to perform poorly in a mixed school than boys". This was corroborated by an English language teacher in Site B who said that "unless you instill confidence in both boys and girls, you will find one group always shying off in a mixed-school like this one. In most cases I always find that girls shy off, I don't know why". According to the chemistry teacher in Site A "boys are better academic achievers than girls" in national examinations.

The poor performance of girls is perceived to be attributed to various factors for example the small numbers of girls in co-education day schools is viewed as a major contributor as stated, "the small numbers of girls in the school is problematic because it makes girls experience that

feeling of being minority and hence not feel included in class discussions and the learning process”. Teachers indicated that in mixed school settings, girls tend to develop low self-esteem and this impacts their general participation and subsequently, their academic performance:

I have noticed that gender differences affect the learning of girls more than boys in a mixed gender school. I have noticed this because I have been teaching in mixed schools and I have noticed that girls’ achievement is often lower than that of boys when they are in a mixed high school but when you go to a single sex school girls perform well. Teachers have found that girls sometimes shy off and they do not participate effectively in class. So, lack of participation occurs because when girls give wrong answers the boys laugh at them and the boys try to show that they are more intelligent than girls, which we know scientifically that it is not true. But because of those cultural stereotypes or gender biases which students have carried on from their traditional backgrounds, they often bring them into the classrooms and then the girls just shy off. So their participation becomes less in the learning process and their achievement also goes down. (Principal Site B).

Teachers indicated that when girls learn in their own classroom environment they tend to perform much better than when they are in mixed classrooms. It could also mean that teachers paid more attention to girls needs when they are on their own settings than when with boys.

Some co-educational schools within the district are currently phasing out mixed gender classrooms by separating girls to learn in their own setting as a way of improving their academic performance:

Some schools within this district separate boys from girls in the same class into different classes to learn. So even in our previous school we actually did an experiment, we decided to separate girls from boys. We did it and when we analyzed the grades when students were placed in separate gender classes and compared with previous academic records when the students were mixed, we now found that the girls’ grades were improving. So when attending lessons students remained separated in classes but when they were out for breaks and on their way home they would socialize. (Principal Site A)

It is argued by some teachers that, “when the girls are on their own, they tend to work without any distractions from their male counter parts” and this has been supported by the experiments shared in this study by teachers in co-educational schools where performance of girls improved when they were grouped in separate classes.

Generally in Kenya's national examinations, girls-only schools tend to do very well and site D is among the top national schools in the country that has maintained high performance. Respondents indicated that basing their arguments on the above claims, most school boards in the district recommended that they phase out co-educational high schools especially boarding schools indicated the deputy principal of Site D:

There are a number of co-educational high schools that have been segregated into single sex schools. During the segregation the district ensures that they maintain a balance in the number of boys and girls schools so that all genders education are taken care of.

Despite citing the advantages of studying in an all girls learning environment in terms of academic performance, teachers in both single gendered and co-education study sites believed that "there are a lot of advantages in boys and girls learning together" explained the deputy principal in Site D. Learning together as boys and girls is socially beneficial to both boys and girls. As stated by one teacher in Site B "they learn to understand each other, to trust each other, and work together". It is argued that those girls who learn in their own secluded environment tend to "miss out on other aspects of growing up with boys" claimed the history teacher in Site A. According to these teachers, girls in co-educational high schools tend to be better exposed on issues impacting their social lives, as reflected in the following response:

You find that girls who have been in mixed schools may stand a better chance later on especially in the universities when faced with social pressures like love relationships as compared to girls who have been in a single sex school. Girls from single sex schools at higher level may become too conscious about their surroundings with boys while girls from mixed schools have had the experience with such surroundings. (Principal Site A).

It is assumed that girls in single sex schools tend to be over protected by the school and the home environments. The over protection disadvantages them to the extent that when left to make independent judgment or decisions on personal issues after completing school they tend not to know how to deal with difficult challenges and decisions in the society.

Girls' performance in co-educational schools was observed by teachers to decrease as they get to the upper classes (senior years). Yet in lower classes (freshmen and sophomore) they seem to perform very well, sometimes even better than their male counterparts:

In lower classes girls do come in very strongly in their academic work, like in form one now they are doing very well in class. I don't know what happens later, whether it is their development stages or whatever changes in their bodies and their minds that makes them start deteriorating. But they always start well and somewhere in the middle they disappear and only towards the end again they might come up when teachers pay more attention to them. (Math Teacher Site B)

This phenomenon is assumed to be attributed to the developmental stages that students undergo during this period in their lives. Supporting this claim the Chemistry teacher in Site A explained:

I have noticed a trend in this school for the last five years, this is my sixth year that when girls are still young and have not reached that teenage life in forms one (freshmen) and two (sophomore), they perform equally well with boys. But the moment they reach forms three (junior) and four (senior) they are in their puberty; they begin to take a downward trend in their performance.

Relationship between girls and boys tend to affect girls' achievement as indicated by the physics teacher in Site A "when girls start engaging in love relationships with their male colleagues their academic performance start to go down". It is believed that such relationships often interrupt girls concentration in the learning process more than boys as indicated in this response by the home economics teacher in Site B "it is often the girls who get affected more than the boys because their grades go down while the boys academically continue to excel or if their grades go down it is not as drastic as that of the girls".

Those involved in relationships if identified by teachers, are often placed in a separate learning environment, as noted by the English teacher in Site B "when teachers become aware of such relationships, the couple is usually placed in different classes". It is assumed that by taking such actions, girls can be provided with a safe learning environment in which they can freely participate in the learning process. In Site A, teachers reported how such an action led to

improved academic performance by the respective female students. The impact of relationships in school often was attributed to emotional turmoil and psychological distractions that hinder girls from focusing on school work.

Teachers reflected that apart from absenteeism due to socio-economic factors, most female students in the three schools (Sites A, B, & D) have been able to complete their education successfully. Teachers in sites A and B indicated how in the past, “most girls’ dropped out of schools due to pregnancies, while others dropped out due to early marriages”. But this trend has been reversed, given the positive responses achieved through guidance and counseling sessions provided in the schools. One of the school counselors in Site A gave the following explanation:

Later after intensifying our counseling of female students, we hardly have cases of pregnancies. They have really reduced and girls in our school are completing school. What has happened is like we are able to counsel the girls and we are able to outreach, and counsel the parents, guardians, and that is why we are able to retain these girls in schools.

Gender differences were found not to be a significant influence of students leaning by majority of teachers interviewed, especially participants in single sex schools (Table 4 and 5).

It was also indicated that with the current Ministry of Education policy that allows girls who get pregnant to continue with their schooling, a few girls do re-register and continue with their schooling after delivery. Although girls can continue in the same school there is a cultural stigma in most ethnic communities on pregnancies outside marriage that impacts students’ self-image. Therefore, to save such girls from dented self-esteem school administrators find it supportive when the girls move on to other schools as the principal in Site A explained:

We normally prefer when we have cases like that we encourage them to transfer to neighboring schools. We give them good recommendation letters to help them with the admissions to enable them continue with their education. Likewise we have also admitted some girls in our school who we know very well have a child because parents come and tell us about it. Some girls are bold enough and admit openly that they have a child.



Teachers in the study argue that social stigmatization creates a barrier for girls' re-entry to school and there is a need to address these issues beyond the school to the family and community levels.

The societal expectations in some communities that girls who get pregnant do not go back to school still exist. This filters into the school culture despite current policy. Therefore, some schools tend to fall back to an old policy of not accepting back their students after delivery:

You grew up in Kenya and there is that feeling in the past that the moment any girl gets pregnant the school does not admit her back to school and in some cases the parents also kind of reject them. So if the society can also change its perception of stigmatizing of child bearing out of marriage then it would be supportive to the education process of girls who might find themselves in such situations. (Principal Site B).

Teachers indicated that another way to support such girls is to empower them to speak out without feeling ashamed of their conditions. As one counselor stated, "we have one girl in form four who openly told her colleagues during guidance and counseling sessions that she has a child but has come back to school". It is believed that when girls start to speak out it becomes one way of breaking the barrier of pre-marital child bearing in our societies and schools can enable girls to complete their education with less emotional stress.

Despite the progress made in girls' attendance and retention in the four high schools involved in the study, teachers still believe that there is need to address cultural issues that continue to hinder girls' progress in education. As the geography teacher in Site B stated, "some girls are unable to complete their studies because parents in some cultures still give special attention to boys, and leaving girls with minimal or no attention with regard to their academic needs". In some communities girls are still affected by forced marriages:

The ministry of education is encouraging more girls to join secondary schools but what happens is that they are affected of course by cultural problems like in cases of communities that marry off girls the moment they reach puberty. Yet that is the age when they are supposed to join the secondary education. (Principal Site B).

This indicates the need to support girls in these schools who come from such communities to help them not become victims of cultural practices that would limit their educational achievements. Teachers in the study highlighted other efforts to improve the education of girls in such communities by the ministry of education through provision of bursaries. But as I have discussed in this chapter, teachers have found that the current system of disbursing bursary funds through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) has not been supportive. Most students who are in dire need of the educational funds do not receive the expected assistance from their respective constituencies.

#### **4.2.7 Students' Cultural Differences**

Figure 1 reflect cultural diversity of students in the four schools indicating the multicultural composition of students. The figure show the main ethnic cultural groups represented in the schools. However, within these groups are other sub-groups and dialects that reflect subtle student ethnic diversities. Responses from the questionnaire data indicated that a majority of the participants (n=30) believed that culture had no substantial effect on students learning, while others (n=16) viewed the students' culture as having minimal influence on teachers practices and students learning. Only ten teachers indicated that culture had significant impact on teachers' practice and learning. The effect of culture is often experienced mostly in the teaching of certain topics, especially in biology as explained by the biology teacher in Site C:

Culture affects students learning to some extent especially when you are talking about certain topics in biology. From the community where I come from, there are some terms you are not supposed to mention or when you mention them people feel embarrassed and shy to engage in the conversation, especially such topics like the reproductive systems of animals and so on. So I find it somehow challenging when teaching such topics given that I am a female teacher in an all male classroom environment.

In some cultures discussions of sexual reproduction is perceived inappropriate to discuss openly with people outside ones community or the opposite gender.

Another aspect of teaching where culture is viewed to be significant by mostly female teachers in co-educational schools (Sites A & B) is teacher-student relationships in the learning environment. As stated by one of the female teachers in Site A, “cultural beliefs and practices make some male students to behave rudely to female teachers”. “The cultural upbringing of the boys in this community who are the majority in class is such that they don’t respect the female teachers. They adhere to some cultural beliefs that they are men and a woman cannot say anything to them” Complained another female teacher in Site B. Although one of the male teachers argued that teachers’ understanding of students’ culture is necessary in providing information about cultural characteristics that shape students’ behavior. This is because, without understanding of cultural backgrounds, teacher-student relationships are bound to be based on generalized assumptions of group behavior. For example, when teachers come from a different culture from that of their students they are bound to have misconceptions as the teacher filters out students’ behavior based on their own cultural experiences leading to stereotyping:

Teacher’s culture can act as a hindrance to relating with students from a different culture too. For example when I first started teaching students from community F, students would make ‘click’ sounds to indicate a positive response when they understand the concepts being taught. Yet coming from community L, a ‘click’ has a negative connotation of being rude. So, as a teacher I had to learn more about specific students’ cultures to be able to relate to them in class and create a friendly learning environment for all. (Male Math Teacher Site A)

Stereotyping of students cultural characteristics may act as hindrances to building students’ and teachers’ relationships or student-to-student relationships. This inhibits a constructive learning environment due to assumed misconceptions of expected behavior of certain ethnic communities. The physics teacher in Site C commented as follows:

It is not uncommon to hear statements like that one is from an X community that is why he/she behaves that way or anyway it is obvious that people from Y community do behave like that. These are stereotypes that are likely to spill over into classroom relationships during the teaching and learning process and which might influence teachers' perceptions of students from particular ethnic communities.

Therefore, teachers need to recognize their own stereotypes and biases to avoid assumptions and misinterpretation of the behavior of students from other ethnic communities different from their own. Stereotypes subsume understanding of individual differences and are likely to understate the values and enrichment that cultural differences bring into the classroom. As indicated by a teacher in Site D "cultural diversity enriches students' lives as they are able to learn cultures of different communities and so they have some appreciation of different cultural groups". Apart from enrichment, cultural understanding helps resolve "cultural conflicts in the learning environment" reiterated another participant. They argued that when students interact with their colleagues from other ethnic groups, they tend to develop better understanding of the other groups' practices eliminating the stereotypes that they may have of these groups.

Teachers in the study also indicated how the current increase in the number of single parent headed households significantly influence students' perception of themselves, leading to low-self image among their peers. Female headed households in some ethnic communities are still viewed with contempt as indicated in the following response:

Some students are from single mothers and they tend to inherit that kind of life style and in the cultures of most ethnic communities if you don't have a father heading the household you are kind of disadvantaged. People tend to mock you and call you all sorts of names, that kind of thing and this affects girls more than boys, making them develop low self-esteem. (Guidance & Counseling Teacher Site A).

Girls are more likely to be affected by this because their image in society is often based on their mothers' status and how they are portrayed. At the same time, they are the immediate role models to inspire their daughters towards positive life ambitions. Boys too, are affected by the

presence of female figures as heads of households especially when their mothers engage in other relationships. As explained by the principal in Site A:

We have even had cases of single mothers who may be living with their boy friends having conflict with their sons. We had cases of boys reacting very violently to their mothers when their mothers bring their boy friends at home. You sometimes find that there is unexplained hatred and when we investigate through our guidance and counseling teachers, we discover that the boy hates the mother because she is having an affair. This you find makes the boy uncomfortable and embarrassed.

Self-image is an important aspect in promoting students self-confidence especially when it comes to building relationships with others in the learning environment. Therefore, the nature of family structure was found to play an important role in supporting students learning in terms of developing positive values, self-esteem, and fostering disciplined behavior. Teachers indicate that from their experiences they found that “students who grew up in unstable families have discipline problems”. Any kind of misbehavior can disrupt classroom activities and interfere with the learning process.

#### **4.2.8 Students’ Religious Differences**

Students’ religious diversity in the schools is reflected in figure 1. It was only in Site C where there was no religious diversity given that all students attending the school are Catholics, which is a requirement for joining the school. Like in the case of culture, students’ religious differences was not seen as being significant in influencing teachers’ practice and students’ learning by majority of the participants as stated in the following response:

Religion is not so much of a factor. Most of them (students) are Christians, a few are Muslims and others are silent. There is nothing much that religion brings, like kind of we agree because in our assemblies we normally read the Bible, we sing Christian songs all of us. It has never been a problem. (History Teacher Site B)

Twenty three respondents indicated that religion was not a significant factor; five indicated that it is somewhat significant, ten indicated that it is a fairly significant, and eighteen significant,

pointing to the mixed perceptions of the impact of religion in teaching and learning. One of the teachers who find religion to influence her practice and students learning was the music teacher in Site D. She lamented how “some students are very rigid regarding their religion. So when I am teaching music using hymns, it is difficult as other groups of students don’t appreciate the message from the hymns”. Biology teachers also viewed religion as being influential when teaching certain topics, such as evolution. A biology teacher from Site B had this to say:

When you are teaching a topic such as evolution where there is a discussion on the origin of life and all that, you have to really come out very clearly and state that I am not teaching for you to believe differently, I am teaching you a scientific theory and which you can either accept or reject but for purposes of examination you have to learn it. So you have to come out clearly on your stand point.

Those participants who viewed religion as having a significant role indicated that when “religious values are deeply rooted in students’ culture it interferes with learning”, especially when interwoven into cultural values and beliefs. Generally it was argued by these teachers that “students coming from different denominations will always have different points of view in relation to specific religious issues such as the Sabbath day by Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) the Ten Commandments (Catholics), beliefs on salvation (Protestants), and the last days (Jehovah Witness)”. These perspectives can cause conflicts that can potentially impact students’ relationships in the classrooms and teachers need to be aware of this.

Other considerations of religion come into play when arranging time schedules for CATS and remedial teaching outside the regular class hours especially when it coincides with worship times for certain religious faiths. A teacher from Site D stated how “religious beliefs sometimes conflicts with the teaching programs. This is because some students are very rigid on their religious beliefs especially when it comes to days of their religious worships”. Given that teachers have a loaded and overstretched curriculum to cover within a limited time, they

sometimes work with students over the week-ends to make up or extend their teaching. This might not be acceptable to students whose religious faiths have strict observation of the Sabbath days (days of worship) as narrated by the Music Teacher in Site D:

Quite a number of our Seventh Day Adventists not all of them are conservative. There are those who are so fundamental that they believe they must stop learning on Friday evening and then go on with the Sabbath until Saturday evening. This kind of cause them to lag a little bit behind the others because they are spending a whole day on religious activities and they do not want to be involved in any classroom learning. This impacts them negatively because when assignments, tests, or remedial classes are carried out on these days then they are not able to participate.

Some participants as indicated by the math teacher in Site A “religion affects those students in day schools more than those in boarding schools”. This is logical given that most schools in Kenya are founded within specific religious faiths and in boarding schools religious activities and values are based on the values of the founding denomination. Therefore, students enrolled in these schools are expected to adhere to the religious expectations of the dominant religious group although there is space for students from other faiths to exercise their own beliefs. For example, Site D is a protestant school and although there is flexibility for other faiths, the administration expects all students to attend the protestant service on Sundays as part of the school regulations regardless of their alternative faiths.

Teachers in the study cited various reasons why they found understanding students’ differences to be important and necessary in their practice. Most teachers reiterated how their understanding of students’ differences encouraged them to explore various possibilities in their practices to make the right judgment and take appropriate action to make learning relevant to students’ conditions inside and outside classrooms.

#### **4.2.9 Importance of Teachers' Understanding of Students' Differences**

It was important to probe why the participating teachers viewed their understanding of students' differences as necessary to their practice and students learning. Out of fifty six teachers who participated in the study only three indicated that they did not consider students' differences when planning their teaching despite acknowledging that differences do exist and has a significant influence on students' learning. The rest of the teachers cited various reasons why they found students' differences to be important and necessary in their practice. Most teachers reiterated how their understanding of students' differences enabled them to explore various possibilities in making the right judgment and appropriate actions that are relevant to learning conditions inside and outside classrooms. Reflecting on students' diversity assisted participants to re-examine their own practices as reflected in the narratives and statements in the following discussion.

##### **4.2.9.1 Diversity as a Reflective Examination of Personal Practice**

Teachers' narratives showed how recognizing students' differences enhanced their understanding and appreciation for their students at a more personal level. According to the math teacher in Site B:

Differences are significant to my teaching because they help me to cater for each and every individual because I know that people are not the same. I am able to adjust my teaching especially to the poor and needy students. I don't push them to buy materials for learning but encourage them to share with their colleagues.

A physics teacher in Site C corroborating the importance of understanding students differences in teaching indicated that "teachers must understand learners' differences if they are to address their needs". From teaching experiences, participants indicated ways in which they have become more aware of the need to make curriculum more relevant to learners, taking into



consideration different backgrounds. A chemistry teacher in Site A said that starting from what students already know on the topic based on their background experiences has been most helpful to her students understanding of new concepts:

In my teaching, I allow students to tell me what they already know on the topic. Like now I am teaching a topic on alcohol, I ask them to tell me what they know about it from their own communities, how they prepare the content, what are the effects, and from what they tell me, we build onto the scientific aspects. So, in most of my lessons I try to bring out what students have ideas about.

Implementing curriculum in a relevant manner is envisioned as key to engaging learners in meaningful education experiences.

In order to make learning relevant, these teachers indicated how they always tried to make the examples in class resonate with students' experiences. As stated by a teacher in Site C, "the examples I give when teaching should be relevant to the different backgrounds of my students". Through understanding of differences, teachers are able to gauge academic levels, and recognize the strengths and weaknesses students bring into the learning environment, as stated in the biology teacher's response in Site D "I am able to understand their level of capabilities, appreciate their varied abilities, and tend to treat each student individually". Another participant in Site B narrated how scaffolding learning for diverse students requires careful lesson planning, taking into consideration ways in which to maintain the interests of all students in the learning process:

The challenge I face is that I can have extremely bright students who out of their poor backgrounds have been forced to really work hard. Then you can have some students who don't have interest in education as such. So when you are planning a lesson, if you go so slowly you will be boring for the fast learners. If you move very fast you will leave the majority of them out of the learning process. So this is where I try to harmonize my teaching and assignments. Like in math after I have taught a topic and used relevant examples, I usually give some problems to be worked out beginning with simple problems moving on to more complex ones. When the fast learners complete quickly, because they will always finish ahead of the others, they will have more complex and a

bit challenging work to do. This keeps them occupied and motivated while the others are still catching up with the work.

From this narrative, catering to differences in abilities helps teachers sustain students' interests and motivation.

Some teachers stated how acknowledging diversity in the classroom has forced them to adjust their practices and determine appropriate measures where necessary to enhance learning and participation in their classrooms. One of the home science A teachers in Site noted, "Knowledge of students' differences enables me to use various methods and enhances my ability in having to work with limited resources and time, and still be able to work with a large number of students from diverse circumstances". Reinforcing this perception was the following response from another participant in Site C "it calls for extra arrangements in providing lessons to those students who were absent from school due to school fees issues". Perceived differences make individual teachers become more sensitive to learners' social backgrounds, especially when making comments in class during teaching as noted by the history teacher in Site D, "a teacher has to be careful when passing comments that may be specific to a certain community and which may affect students in a negative way". Being sensitive to students' background experiences is important because it helps to build respect for different cultural groups, which promotes a positive environment for learning.

For other teachers, understanding of students' differences significantly influenced their perspectives as they have become more critical of institutional structures. As explained the business education teacher:

Acknowledging existence of students' differences helps me to be aware of school routine and rules that are not well formulated to take care of students' differences and therefore, helps me to discourage the norm so as to facilitate good learning environment. (Home Economics Teacher Site B)

Diversity in the classroom enriches learning through sharing of experiences as perceived in the following narrative by the biology teacher in Site D:

As a teacher you must find a way of integrating all students in the learning environment with all their social differences. Sometime I even make them share information in class about where they come from and the experiences they have had. Through sharing of experiences, other students are able to understand what is going on with their colleagues because apparently as Kenyans you find that many of the students have not traveled outside their own regions. So it is very difficult for them to understand experiences of other students who come from other parts of the country.

Enrichment of lessons is also enhanced through students' divergent perspectives indicated this chemistry teacher in Site A, "when you allow students to express themselves and you get diversity of opinions, it enriches the learning process". It is perceived that students' diversity deters teachers from engaging in a teaching-as-usual manner, noted the physics teacher in Site C "it also perfects ones practice because as a teacher when you find that you have to go an extra mile in your teaching because of the differences you find in the class, it makes you a better teacher". According to some of the participating teachers, understanding students' differences enable them to foster effective student-teacher or student-student relationships in the learning environments and more so when engaging students in conflict resolution protocols as indicated by a chemistry teacher in Site D:

Being a national school our students come from different backgrounds and unless I have some information about their experiences I will not be able to understand certain patterns of behavior in my classrooms. For example some of our students who come from North Eastern sometimes have war like tendencies. You find that everything makes them very upset and therefore, they just want to make a fight with other people who they perceive to be against them. They always want to stand up for their rights because may be all their lives as they were growing up they have been surrounded with a lot of violence. You have to be able to understand where they are coming from in order to guide them through alternative approaches of resolving conflicts. There is usually need to counsel such students in order to help them fit in with other students in classroom relations and outside of their classrooms. Otherwise the other students tend to fear them and start isolating them and it becomes very difficult for their learning and socialization.

Helping students develop constructive relationships with peers is important in diverse classrooms in supporting learning.

Two math teachers in Site A indicated how understanding of students' differences enables them to critically assess examples and learning activities given in some of the textbooks used in the mathematics curriculum. The first teacher cited an example of gender bias in a commercial arithmetic topic in a mathematics class text being used in form three:

Some examples from the textbooks we use in class indicate bias and may cause some learners to feel locked out. For example the mathematics textbook has a topic on "commercial arithmetic", which uses Mr. Baraza, Mr. Rotich, Mr. Ochieng, and Mr. Mwanzia took a bank loan, bought a car, and bought a house leaving out women. This makes the girls feel like it is a man's issue to be involved in big transactions and ownership of property.

From the above example, I could see that the authors of the math textbook were more focused on addressing ethnic diversity but did not address gender differences. In the second example the teacher narrates some activities students engage with in a math topic in probability that in her view, did not take into consideration gender differences:

Some examples of activities we use in a math topic like probability does not resonate with some students experiences. For example, when we have to play cards, darts, and even chase when we are teaching the topic, you find that the girls are disadvantaged. From their cultural backgrounds they are not involved in playing such games.

These teachers' awareness of students' differences sensitized them toward identifying the resource materials and activities used in the learning process. The Ministry of Education has made some effort to sensitize teachers on gender diversity through the on-going SMASSE professional development program and the two teachers have participated in the in-service training. This made it necessary to explore ways in which teachers were prepared for work in diverse classrooms through their various teacher education programs as discussed in section 3 of this chapter.

If teachers claimed that they were aware of students' differences and were sensitized to teaching practices that recognize and appreciate diversity in their classrooms, it was important to understand ways in which they positioned themselves and their students in the process of teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers' perceptions of their roles in the teaching process in diverse settings were explored in the study. How teachers perceive their roles determine their approaches to teaching strategies and relationships with their students in the teaching and learning process.

#### 4.2.9.2 Teachers' Multiple Roles in Diverse Classrooms

Teachers described their roles in terms of their functions, conceptions of the learning process, relationship with their students, and instructional approaches adopted. There seemed to be a consensus in participants' narratives indicating their understanding that teaching in diverse classrooms require multiple roles if they are to address the multiple needs that students bring into classroom settings. Defining her role in terms of her conception of the learning process, a physics teacher in Site C said:

When I started teaching at first I was like I am the sole source of knowledge but with experience and time I have realized that students too are a source of knowledge given their diverse backgrounds. So when I am teaching a topic I ask students to tell me where in their experiences they find the topic applicable in their life. So when I begin with that which are familiar, students are able to give more examples from their own experiences. Therefore, it indicates that I am not the only source of knowledge I am just facilitating the learning situation in class. Of course there are those areas that I really have to make clear in class when teaching certain concepts.

Apart from being facilitators, teachers viewed themselves as role models in order to build relationships with their students in ways that inspire them towards setting higher goals in their education. The argument put forth is that teachers can be the bridge which is the missing link for those students who lack positive role models in their homes and social settings, impacting

students' academic success. The math teacher in Site A shared with me her text message from her student to illustrate ways in which as a role model she positively influenced the lives of her students:

I also think that as a role model I have had positive impact in my students' lives. Let me read to you one of my text messages from one of my previous student. The student is now a third year at the university and I taught him math. And here is what he wrote to me a week ago "you not only placed an A in my certificate but valuable life lessons. For this I will be forever grateful. You were a guide, guardian angel, more than a teacher, a parent, a mom. I strive to live up to your footsteps, a teacher who was more interested with our future lives". I responded "thank you for making me proud but who are you?" Then he wrote his name and indicated that he was now a third year student majoring in math and science. I felt so touched because sometimes you tend to think that these students don't appreciate what their teachers do.

Empowering students and ensuring they are not limited in advancing their opportunities by the absence of role models in homes or social settings, was viewed by teachers as part of their task. Additional role delegated to teachers was that of counseling and as one math teacher in Site C pointed out, "students' home background and experiences sometimes interfere with their concentration in class. So, we normally counsel them because we regard ourselves as counselors; all teachers here are regarded as counselors". Counseling is particularly necessary in providing social, emotional and psychological support, especially for students who are vulnerable as explained by this response by a counseling teacher in Site B, "as a teacher I do a lot of guidance and counseling because of the high level of emotional stress that the outside life puts on some of these students, especially orphans". When students feel really low, they need the support of an adult that they can trust and confide in, in order to get that emotional support. A Chemistry teacher in Site A stated how "students would sometimes want to talk to me on heart-to-heart matters. It would just be anything, may be they would just want to role over their emotions and they would be okay through the day". Providing avenues where students can let out their anxieties and fears was found to be really supportive in their learning.

Classroom climate is important in that if students' experiences a sense of belonging, care, being valued, and respected their participation in learning is increased. Teachers believed that this should be reflected in their roles as they define their relationships with their students in their practice "I am a friend, my students see me as a friend and as somebody they can trust and rely on", said one teacher. Creating relationships through roles that teachers display during classroom interaction has the potential to motivate students to effective learning, as stated:

Relationships between teachers and students is key because you might get to know students well if you maintain a closer relationship with them, I mean you relate nearly to their level of course with boundaries. It is important to recognize what is their reality based on their background experiences. Especially students will like the subject if they like the teacher even for those who are performing poorly. So it is like relationships contribute to students developing positive attitudes towards learning. Students tend to interact freely with teachers when they allow it. (Physics Teacher Site A).

In pursuing their quest for classrooms that enrich students' learning, there was an added role of teachers as that of motivators "I am always there as a motivator, providing students with an interactive learning environment where they can interact with the concepts that I am teaching and with each other as they develop positive relationships", expressed an English language teacher in Site D. These narratives show how teachers' roles inside classrooms are changing as they learn to act as facilitators, guardians, friends, role models, and motivators to set up structures of relationships that support students' diverse needs in the learning process.

One other role displayed by teachers which was not expressed by teachers but emerged in the course of this study is that of caring. During my visits to schools, I observed teachers' collective actions which reflected a general inclination to improve the well-being of their students by sustaining some of the needy students through personal donations towards tuition or students' accommodation. This was a gesture in support of those students with high academic standing but who faced the risk of dropping out of school due to financial challenges. Teachers

believed that they can make a difference in their students' lives. An example is the case of Joan, a form three student narrated by a guidance and counseling teacher in Site B:

We call Joan our adopted daughter in form three. The parents could not pay her fees and she was being forced to leave school yet she was one of our brightest girls and we have a lot of hope in her academic achievement. So when she came to the guidance office and told us that the father wanted her to leave school, we decided to help her. Although we had known that she was having difficulties paying her fees we thought that being in form three her parents would continue to struggle with it.

Teachers narrated other stories of how through the guidance and counseling units, they contributed money to buy personal needs such as sanitary towels for girls who could not afford such facilities. In Site B, the school administration allocated a vote head of 20,000 Kenya shillings for the counseling department per year for sanitary towels but “this money is not adequate to sustain the needs of girls in the school”, stated one counselor. This made it necessary for teachers to cheap in more funds from personal contributions. Teachers' also believed in several roles in the learning process, which has had a profound influence on how they approached their practice.

#### 4.2.9.3 Perceived Effective Approaches for Diversity

From the participating teachers' responses it can be inferred that there is a general understanding among the majority of them that participation and interpersonal relationships are important in creating vibrant classrooms that are inclusive and empowering. Teachers viewed learning as “two-way traffic”, claimed one teacher. This shows their perspective and understanding that teaching involves an interchange of information sharing and co-constructing of knowledge between teachers and students. Listed in Table 4 are some of the approaches teachers indicated that they often used and were found to be effective in teaching students from diverse backgrounds.



**Table 6. Perceived Effective Approaches in Diverse Classrooms**

<b>Approaches</b>	<b>Teachers' comments on Objectives of the Strategies.</b>
Group Activities	Develop students' collaborative skills, enhance students' participation. Promote positive classroom relationships.
Class Discussions	Develop critical thinking in learners. Develop students' communication skills & critical thinking.
Laboratory Experiments	Engage students on hands on learning and was found to resonate with those students perceived as slow learners.
Question and answer strategies	Get feedback and draw students into classroom discussions
Field Trips	Enhance students' meta-cognitive skills by connecting classroom learning to real life activities.
Research Activities	Promote students research skills and it is an effective way of covering learning units as students engage sourcing for information.
Lecture Method	Helps to introduce new concepts and clarifying concepts to enhance understanding on a topic.
Role Play	Motivates by maintaining students' attention and interest in the learning process.
Multimedia	Appeal to students' different senses and help students retain information.

The approaches indicated in table 6 above are perceived to be more student-centered and found to be effective in teaching diverse students, as stated by the geography teacher in Site D, “student-centered approach is the best. The reason for this preference is that it provides individualized attention to discover areas of strengths and weaknesses of students and enables teachers to appreciate their performance and abilities individually”. Teachers explained ways in which the stipulated approaches enriched their teaching, enhanced students' interactions, and engaged students in the accountability of co-constructing knowledge noted by the computer teacher in Site C:

You find that even when you are teaching there are some things that are not in the book. Like when it comes to computing field, we have so many things that keep on coming up because technology keeps on changing. So there might be some things that as a teacher you have not come across but you find when you encourage students to engage in

research they might come across interesting information to share and this really contributes to the body of knowledge in the classroom. I have come to realize that we are getting more information that way than what we have in the Ministry of Education mandated textbooks that we use in class.

Teachers in the study indicated how students who engage in sourcing for extra information rather than wait for teachers notes are more active in the learning process as observed by one chemistry teacher in Site B, “students who seek extra work through research are different from those who depend on teachers to give them information because the former have more information, they are more active in class as they ask and even answer questions”. Working with students who are well grounded in knowledge is not only easy but their performance improves and that makes it easier for teachers to complete topics within the planned schedule explained one math teacher in Site C:

Those students who engage in research are bright, have good performance and are very easy to teach because they have the concepts already, compared to those who wait for the teacher. You find that topics can easily be completed with the former students.

Fieldwork is found to bring real life experience in the classroom helping students to make that connection in the learning process as described by one biology teacher in Site D:

During biology lessons we have time allocated for fieldwork where students go out and identify different species and see the adaptation process of different kinds of animals and plants. I have found that this kind of learning gives students such joy because they are able to practically engage in learning within their environment as they are in contact with the specimens under study.

Group discussion is another approach that participants viewed as effective in enhancing students’ participation and contributions in the classroom. They argued that group work provides opportunity for peer interaction and sharing of experiences and insights. I observed teachers employment of this approach in their practice during my classroom observation in sites B and D.

Groups were constructed based on the teachers’ objectives and understanding of classroom differences in influencing group dynamics. Some teachers preferred having students

with mixed abilities working together as in the case of a geography teacher in Site D, “during group work I provide a topic for discussion where students brainstorm and present their findings. Students are put in groups with mixed abilities”. For others, students are grouped according to their perceived abilities and mixed ethnicity, as indicated by the math teacher in Site B:

During group work I mix students as much as possible so that students can have some time to share their experiences and also assist each other. Usually what I do is when I make groups I consider their academic levels and therefore I construct groups in terms of their abilities i.e. lower quarter, second quarter, and upper quarter, so that they are all working together and helping each other. And then I also consider the ethnic differences so that students don't group up as members of the same community. The ethnic mix is necessary so that students can appreciate students from other communities.

I think grouping students according to abilities has advantages and disadvantages and need to be used sparingly with teachers changing membership of groups from time to time. I have discussed more about group formation in Chapter Five.

Otherwise grouping according to abilities can also help develop self-esteem and reduce intimidation among novices as indicated by the computer teacher in Site D:

I do consider grouping students according to their differences because it really impacts how students are going to interact and participate in the activity. So if you put a student from Nairobi (city) who already has been exposed to computer skills with someone, lets say from Marakwet (rural area) who has never even seen a computer in the same group, the student with knowledge in computing will always have a tendency of taking over the activity. So for those students who are not exposed to the subject I tend to put them together so that I can help them.

For this female biology teacher in Site B, grouping students according to gender especially with class activities that engage students in some level of body contact is appropriate:

If I am teaching something that requires students forming groups or pairing up for demonstration then I consider differences such as gender. An example I can give is that recently we were learning how the ribs move as we breadth in and out and the demonstration exercise was that students should feel their partners ribs when they are breathing. And they had also to do some activities of running on the same spot. So now I had to group girls together and boys together to avoid any embarrassments. But in other activities I just mix students up because it can be an advantage having boys and girls working together on a project as it enriches learning in certain topics.

One physics teacher in Site D who strongly believed that recognizing student differences is not supportive to creating a cohesive classroom environment indicated that he did not pay any attention to differences when constructing groups for activities and class projects:

In my classrooms I don't allow differences to be a major consideration when the lesson is going on or when I am selecting groups for discussion. I don't want to make differences prominent amongst them that you must be with somebody who is of a different culture or circumstances. I would rather create a situation whereby differences are not prominent that way it helps to make the class social system to be easy, to be comfortable for everybody. But in the preparation of the lesson, it is clear in my mind that I need to be able to understand these differences.

I think teaching for diversity aims at identifying student interests and that should include comfort levels when working with others. So, simply putting students in groups without identifying their comfort levels, especially individual personality traits of members working in that group might be a deterrent to others. Apart from the strategies used, it was important to inquire into ways in which these teachers shared power with their students in the process of teaching and learning.

#### 4.2.9.4 Ensuring Democracy in Classrooms

Teaching in a diverse classroom requires that teachers embrace critical pedagogical principles that ensures democratic learning environment. It is through inclusive and respectful learning environments that students can share knowledge and authority in decision making about their classroom experiences with their teachers and peers in a collaborative manner. In this study, some of the questions asked in the questionnaires and the interviews aimed at establishing ways in which teachers crafted classroom activities and promoted relationships that reflected power sharing among students, and between students and their teachers. In their responses, teachers indicated how they preferred teaching approaches that engage students in collaborative participation as they both co-construct classroom knowledge. Teaching approaches such as

discussion groups, presentations, and students' contributions through research were found to be useful techniques for engaging students and teachers in sharing information in a collaborative manner depicting these teachers' democratization efforts in their practices.

Through these approaches (Table 4), teachers enhance sharing of information in ways that valued students' worthwhile contributions "I ensure that during the class discussions individual's air their views in a respectful ways", reiterated one math teacher in Site B. The teachers in the study indicated how they ensured that during class discussions, students were able to express their views without feeling intimidated by their colleagues as indicated by the math teacher in Site A:

The way some students speak English has a lot of influence from their mother tongue. For example a student may *shrab* (*sheng*), say words kind of influenced by the mother tongue pronunciation and the others laugh and they make a big joke out of it. Sometimes as a teacher you are forced to come in to support the student either by speaking to the others to accord respect and encouraging the student to speak up without feeling intimidated.

Creating the right kind of environment encourages students to trust that they will be treated with respect despite their differences.

Encouraging all students to speak up in class is necessary if teachers are to avoid the lesson from being dominated by one group of students. It helps in providing classroom as a space for all students' voices as indicated by the biology teacher in Site B:

I try to identify those students who are introverts and I try to bring them up to participate in class. Students who are introverts would like to listen when looking down, they will never answer questions. Sometimes I crack jokes and try to make them engaged in the lesson. And when those students who are extroverts want to dominate the lesson, like they would always want to ask questions, I can now say lets have somebody else and pick on those quiet ones. So that is how I engage all students to contributing in the lesson.

Encouraging all students' voices in class is one way of reinforcing a democratic classroom environment by teachers where individuals become active participants in the learning process.

Participants also indicated how they shared power with their students in the management of the learning process through consultations on issues concerning learning and classroom relationships. According to the math teacher in Site C:

Before making any decisions, I usually present the issue in class and ask students to think about it. They may give their suggestions at the end of the lesson or in the next lesson. We then talk about it and reach some consensus.

Some teachers involved students in making suggestions on ways to improve classroom learning. As one agriculture teacher in Site A said, “I encourage students to share ideas on ways to improve on the lessons we have covered through their feedback”. Other teachers involved students in discussions on ways to improve Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs) scores in a way that enables them to critique teachers’ administrative strategies:

I usually give room for students to discuss on ways to improve our grades, and give suggestions but I do not allow them to make decisions fully on their own. Where I disagree with their ideas I give reasons why I am doing so. This freedom of discussion provides a way forward especially after an exam or CAT. It has helped me to find out hidden indiscipline cases because on their own, the students would tell me those students who are troublemakers, lazy, and even suggest what I should do to be hard on them if they feel that I have been too lenient. (Business Studies Teacher Site D).

This encourages students to provide positive feedback to their teachers for improvement of classroom performance.

Students are at times involved with the teachers planning of learning activities to ensure that individual interests are taken into consideration especially in specific projects that might touch on issues of culture, health or religion. As one participant in Site B explained, “I involve students in planning the kind of activities they should carryout in class or in the laboratory, because some may not be free to carryout some activities due to religious affiliations and beliefs, culture or may have some issues on ailments”. Democratic participation is also fostered by teachers through relationships in the classroom where students are encouraged to express their

opinion on personal issues that do not have direct linkage with learning. As stated by a math teacher in Site A “I give students opportunity to express personal feelings” which is helpful way for students to let out stress or share frustrations they may encountered in the learning process.

Forums such as class meetings are encouraged to address classroom issues “I often provide a forum where students can raise any issues about classroom activities or relationships”, a teacher noted the physics teacher in Site C. Some of these forums are chaired by class secretaries reflecting the ways in which teachers’ delegate authority and leadership roles to their learners indicated the computer teacher in Site D:

I allow class meetings chaired by the class secretary to discuss any concerns including subjects taught and any general concerns on their welfare in and out of class. And they make suggestions on the best ways to address issues of concern raised during the meeting.

Encouraging students to speak out on how to improve their welfare while in school and in their classrooms is one way of building on students’ ability for freedom of speech and expression. Students are also given the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights by electing their class secretaries and club officials:

I ask students to choose their class leaders through a voting system where students have to vote who they want to be their class representative. But I do rotate this responsibility to give all students equal chances in leadership roles. (Principal Site A)

Sharing of responsibility promotes students’ accountability in the classroom activities including contribution to classroom learning and ensuring of positive relationships that creates democratic learning environment.

So far the information gathered that has formed the storyline in this study to this point comes from teachers’ personal accounts, questionnaire and archival data. Another source of information used in this study was classroom observation to present the researchers account.

The idea was to determine how teachers translated what they stated to be perceived effective approaches and inclusive relationships into their classroom practices.

#### **4.2.10 Classroom Observation**

My interest during the observation sessions was to determine how participating teachers employed some of the strategies they indicated on Table 4. My other interest was to determine ways in which teachers' practice balanced safety and challenge in diverse classrooms. In case of safety, how teachers together with their students set acceptable norms for participation to influence the interpersonal relationships among students especially during discussion groups. This is important for students if they are to trust, value, and respect each other's perspectives. Another aspect of my observation focused on teacher and student engagement in the whole learning process to see how teachers ensured everybody's participation in the learning process. This is because shy students are usually passive in group activity and may fade into the background. Therefore identifying how the teacher kept track of these students and engaged them in the discussion, while respecting their privacy or being sensitive to their lack of confidence was important.

During the observation, I also noted whether students asked any questions or whether all the questions were directed by the teacher to the students. Presented next are the class room observations on the selected sites. My observations also focused on the nature of classroom activities and I noted whether the teacher used predominantly teacher-centered or a more student-centered approach to teaching and learning. I had three classroom observations with a biology teacher in Site B and two with an English language teacher in Site D.



#### 4.2.10.1 Site B – Agnes's Form 3 Biology Class

I had a total of three classroom observations with this particular teacher, two were in the classroom and one was a practical lesson in the laboratory. During the first observation (lesson notes Appendix G) I noticed that the lesson was dominated by the teacher dictating notes to students and writing of difficult terms on the blackboard. There were pauses in between the note-taking, to either refer to the diagram on the board to illustrate concepts, or to ask questions as a way of engaging students in the conversation. The illustrations on the board were useful in enhancing the learning of those students who are visual learners. Although most of the students responses were in the form of chorus, which may seem to provide good feedback to the teacher, indicating students concentration but may easily subsume individual participation. The teacher is likely not to identify those individuals who do not really understand the concepts or those who may not be attentive. Because the teacher repeatedly used this technique to solicit students' response and engagement in the lesson, my concern was that such students would just fade into the background.

I noticed that boys dominated the class participation and they spoke out with a lot of confidence which was quite the contrary of their female counterparts who spoke in very low tones, almost inaudible to most of their colleagues, given the reactions observed from the others. My conclusion of the entire lesson presentation was that it was more teacher-centered because the questions were mainly asked by the teacher and the nature of the questions required factual responses. The teacher was not able to draw students into an engaging discussion in the lesson. Another observation on the physical layout of the classroom was that the space was too cramped up for the forty three students. There was hardly any space between the rows of desks for the

teacher to move around during the lesson, a condition that restricted her movement in front of the class near the blackboard.

Lesson two was a practical lesson in the laboratory and the laboratory was a much larger space leaving more room for the teachers' movement between groups. At the end of the instruction and activity guidelines, students were asked to divide themselves into two groups and elect their group leaders which should be one boy leading one group and a girl leading the other. Groups were then formed based on the way students were seated and this automatically put the eight girls into group one (n=14) and one girl in group two (n=18) creating girls imbalance which was problematic. During group activities my interest focused on selection of groups, and participation levels of group members. During the activity I observed how students interacted in their groups identifying groups' norms on collaboration and team work in accomplishing tasks.

In my observation the groups were too large for such an activity and at the beginning I noticed that group leaders had challenges trying to maintain group control and coordination. Almost everyone in group two were so engaged in the activity except the one girl who totally became an observer as the boys dominated the whole process. Group one having almost equal number of girls and boys (eight girls & six boys) also had almost every member of the group actively engaged in the process except Gedion. There seemed to have been group resistance toward him. I was informed later that Gedion was a new boy in the class who joined the school from a neighboring boarding school at the beginning of the semester. I also noticed that students used Kiswahili and English languages during group discussion and even when discussing the ideas with the teacher. The teacher seemed to accept students' communicating in the two languages although she responded in English.

The final observation was in the classroom and was also dominated by dictation of notes to students. This time around more questions were directed to individuals and were distributed uniformly across gender, as opposed to the unison responses from students which characterized the first lesson. The lesson included students' sharing their experiences as they narrate personal stories how they encountered real situations with animals delivering calves. The teacher too shared with the students her experiences with her own cow giving birth to a calf. During the lesson students participated in a lively discussion especially during the sharing of personal experiences with the topic. My conclusion was that students got into active participation when the teacher minimized note taking and provided space for hands on activity or learning that connected students to what was familiar.

#### 4.2.10.2 Site D - Martha's Form 3 English Language Class

In the first observation students' discussion during the lesson was based on a passage from a book entitled *Black men in public space* by Brent Staples Harpers (1997). The discussion was centered on issues of racial and gender discrimination in public spaces in the cities/towns. Students narrated their own experiences of discrimination or narrated stories from the experiences of people they know for example friends, relatives, or incidences witnessed in public spaces. During the discussion most students showed interest in the discussion and expressed themselves in a very articulate manner. The teacher too shared personal stories with her students on occasions when she experienced discrimination in some public institutions. My critique of the lesson was that the discussion was not inclusive of students from rural areas who are likely to experience discrimination differently in their settings. Restricting the topic of discussion to specific setting limited students from such settings from sharing their experiences since they did not fit into the framed parameters.

The second lesson observed included group presentations where students were comparing public relations conduct of Kenyan police force to that of the American police force. The teacher guided the discussion at the beginning and gradually pulled back from being the controller of the discussion, as students started to co-ordinate the questions and responses in a more coherent manner. Students were able to respond to each other more effectively in a respective way. Members of the groups were very articulate as they tried to draw parallels on the perceived behavior and actions of policemen and women in the Kenyan and United States context. Students showed a lot of confidence when defending their positions, giving clear examples of incidences on police activities in public realms from which they based their arguments and conclusions arrived upon in their presentations.

Students presented a number of examples of police brutality and cases when the police have been very supportive in maintaining order, safety and security in the two contexts. However, the discussion was more skewed to students experiences with the Kenyan police with very little to say about the American police force. One group mentioned racial discrimination among the American police force giving an example of the Rodney King's case where white policemen were alleged to have charged a black man on a traffic offence and was caught on tape being assaulted by the officers in question. Apparently one of the girls in the group had watched a movie that was showing this case.

Another group presented a parallel incident in which they indicated how the American police respond to emergency calls very promptly because they have more resources to work with than the Kenyan police, who they claimed most of the times, lacked even vehicles. Again the knowledge of the conduct of the American police is mainly drawn from the movies and media as opposed to the conduct of Kenyan police that they claimed, came from experiences from

personal accounts, relatives, friends, and the Kenyan media. Discussion of what is not familiar like in the case of the American police seemed challenging to most students because they lacked first hand information in which to build strong arguments. It was much easier for them to discuss the Kenyan police force, although again students from rural arrears rarely do encounter the police activities given their setting. What was significant is the role of media as a source of accessing global information that was necessary in enhancing students' source of knowledge. Unfortunately as mentioned earlier by teachers in Chapter Four, majority of students from low income group and rural areas lack access to media, restricting knowledge on the world outside their immediate surrounding.

From classroom observation and teachers' narratives, it was obvious that they do experience challenges in their practice with diverse student population. Highlighting these challenges was important to this study especially with implications for institutional support, teacher preparation, and education policies.

#### **4.2.11 Institutional, Student, and Policy Challenges**

The challenges that teachers face while trying to address issues of diversity in their classrooms are high-stakes examinations and policies, overloaded curriculum, limited teaching time, students absenteeism, lack of resources to work with for both students and teachers, as well as obsolete and archaic cultural beliefs and practices with gender stereo-types in the surrounding communities. Teachers are not able to effectively address students' diverse needs given the compounding factors.

#### 4.2.11.1 High-Stakes Policies and Standardized Testing

Although teachers in the study showed a lot of enthusiasm in engaging pedagogical strategies that were compatible with supporting the learning of students from diverse backgrounds, they also indicated challenges that were constraining their efforts. Fifty four participants indicated how the outcome of the national examination significantly determines their teaching strategies. The geography teacher in Site A expressed the dilemma she experiences in her work:

There are other competing aspects like you want to complete the syllabus, raise the mean score of students, of course what I consider as best in such circumstances I have to put aside because I have to meet the schemes of work target and then try to touch on areas that are sensitive to the national examination that kind of thing. Approaches that involve the students for example practical activities and discussion groups would be the best and that is what I would go for, but I am often constrained by time limits. Because I would like to complete a topic within a certain pace, I would rather concentrate more on the areas or concepts that are important for the examination preparation.

Teachers indicated that with the current policy of performance contract where teachers' performance is measured based on increased students mean scores, their teaching is more likely to focus on imparting content required for examination, rather than teaching that addresses students' diverse needs:

When you have different students' needs and you also want to cover the syllabus, you may not have the time to meet individual students' needs and this will definitely influence your teaching approaches. So if a teacher is going to be paid and promoted according to the students' results in your discipline area, then it forces the teacher to go an extra mile to improve students' academic work. But then I also tend to think that the weak students might be ignored because what do I do, may be I concentrate on my sharp shooters [most intelligent students] so that they increase my mean score and then these weak ones will be left behind. So it is a two way perspective. (Physics Teacher Site B).

Questionnaire data supported this claim that the expectation of the schools, Ministry of Education, and national examination significantly influenced how teachers implement the curriculum (Table 6). This indicates that high stakes policy may improve teachers' performance

in diverse classrooms or it may limit the use of teaching approaches that addresses individual students' needs to transmission of knowledge.

High stakes in teaching creates pressure on teachers limiting them to addressing only the intellectual aspect of students' abilities ignoring other special needs such as giftedness or the social development of students as stated by this math teacher in Site C:

We are just testing the mind, I think it is unfair the kind of examination we give at the end of the four years to judge students capabilities. Just developing the intellectual aspect of a child and testing them and making judgments on which ones are intelligent and which ones are academically weak which may not necessarily give an accurate analysis of individuals. With the emphasis of examinations we don't effectively develop other aspects of the students' growth like the social and other special talents that may be unique to individual students.

Given this situation, teachers are more likely to pay attention to improving examination results which is beneficial to them in terms of gaining their promotions than teaching other skills that improve social, ethical and physical well being of students that are not measured by standardized tests. Focus on examination success also works against those pedagogical approaches seen as reducing time available to cover the syllabus and revision time stated the Chemistry teacher in Site D:

When teachers performance is only measured by the students' mean score, it also makes us not implement some of what we find to be more effective approaches that cater for students differences. The teacher is more oriented toward achieving the set targeted mean scores in the national examination and so they will resort to transfer of knowledge quickly so that you complete the syllabus quickly, you do revision, you carryout a lot of practical work and give tests to see how students are developing their test taking skills.

Examination oriented curriculum does not take into consideration the nature of differences students bring into the learning environment explained another chemistry teacher in Site A:

There are students who are slow learners, if they are given more attention they would bring out better results. There are students who are always absent because of lack of school fees, if they were in class full time like the rest of their financially able colleagues,

they would perform better in their final examinations. So I think the examination oriented system limits what students from marginalized positions can bring out of themselves. So if there were no pressures of exams a teacher would be able to handle each group of students according to their needs.

Because teachers resort to preparing students for national examination, there is hardly time to identify the needs of students with gifted talents as stated by the principal in Site B:

We have not put in place a system of evaluating special skills in students and now we are falling in the trap where we used to say that students who go for games are stupid. We say that they are not bright and yet you look at those people who entered into athletics, soccer or some form of sporting. They are some of the richest people in the country. So we need to identify these special skills that students have as schools and as teachers. We also need to look at gifted children otherwise some of the people you see in the streets who have ended up becoming manambas (touts), jua kali artisans, and others engaged in low level paying jobs are very intelligent. What might have happened to some of them is that the classroom teaching did not address their talents and so they got bored because teachers considered them among the average students yet they had gone beyond that and required a learning environment that was more academically challenging. So in the end we brand them as social misfits.

Although forty out of fifty six participants from the questionnaire data indicated how students' giftedness significantly influences their curriculum planning and subsequent implementation, issues of giftedness or students disability did not feature in the teachers' discussions during the interview sessions.

#### 4.2.11.2 Overloaded Curriculum and Time Allocation

Teachers indicated that having too much content to cover before students' take their final national examinations also creates difficulty in teaching for understanding and application of concepts. This limits teachers' practice from incorporating for example, research as a teaching strategy, which most teachers perceive as being effective in encouraging students to participate in co-construction of knowledge in the classroom. Although teachers indicated how they preferred using approaches that engage students in research, lack of access to resources is found



to be a challenge to this kind of strategy in Sites A and B where most students lack access to extra resource materials and rely on the sharing of the recommended textbooks provided by the schools. Statement from one of the business studies teachers in Site A confirms this claim:

The curriculum is so packed and you are supposed to complete the syllabus within a specific period of time. Because of the congested curriculum, the students will not have the time to engage in interactive teaching involving classroom discussions. Secondly lack of resources, even if students are to go to the library and carryout research, the resources are not there at that time for them to use.

Within the four schools that participated in the study only site D (Girls national High school) had a well equipped library. The other three schools had poorly equipped libraries with very few reference books that are mainly used as reserve references limiting students from borrowing and working with these resources outside of the library. On the other hand access to internet services is very expensive and beyond the reach of students from low socio-economic status. Teaching through research is viewed to discourage students from being dependent on teachers as the source of knowledge. However, course content may not be covered on time given the strain on time and in such conditions the main emphasis on teaching becomes more on “syllabus coverage” reiterated one teacher rather than teaching concepts for in-depth understanding.

The overloaded syllabus also makes it difficult for teachers in day schools (Site A & B) to create extra time for remedial classes to assist students who stay home for long periods of time due to unpaid tuition fees. Therefore, according to one teacher from Site A; “the best the teacher can do is to assign other students to assist those who were absent when they come back to class. I also provide extra assignments on those topics taught while they were away”. For boarding schools (Site C & D) teachers indicated that they gave extra work during the evening preparation time (study time) and weekends.

#### 4.2.11.3 Increase in Students' Financial Need and Large Class Size

Increase in the number of needy students has also contributed to the high rate of absenteeism especially in day schools (Site A & B). Increase on the numbers of needy students result in financial constraints on schools caused by large amounts of uncollected tuition which limit schools' capabilities to provide adequate learning resources such as textbooks and laboratory equipments claimed the principal in Site A:

So we actually have a lot of problems, one in terms of fees payment. A moderate percentage of parents from our school are not able to complete fee payment by the end of the year. Then you find that those arrears keep on accumulating and by the time these students complete their form four they have quite a large sum of unpaid fees balances. This is our biggest problem because it disrupts the budgets in terms of being able to pay for purchases for learning materials in good time from the schools suppliers.

Increase in the number of needy students has been attributed partly to changes on government policy and modalities in disbursing of bursaries to needy students which is now being done through the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) instead of the schools, as had been previously the practice:

I think another limitation is the large group of needy students that you find constituencies have to deal with. So you find that students are given as little as Ksh1000, which is a very small amount, it is like a drop in the ocean compared to the tuition amounts required by the schools. (Deputy Principal Site D)

Teachers felt that the current policy on student bursary has not been effective because it does not according to the principal in Site B “involve schools in the selection process of students who are needy”. The current system of bursary allocation is perceived by teachers and school administrators as not being transparent and has resulted in inequitable distribution of financial support to those students who genuinely require financial support most.

Many students, who are really needy for example orphans, do not receive the financial assistance they deserve as indicated by the deputy principal of Site D:

Initially this bursary used to come directly to the schools then we would identify the very needy students and distribute the money towards their fee balances. But then as you are aware that was changed and put under parliament and it is now under constituencies. So for us we saw this as political gesture because the members of parliament wanted to use it as leverage for political status. And indeed some of the students who get bursaries today don't deserve it because to us they do not fall under the category of neediness. You find that some of these students who are given bursaries are from families that are able financially. They may not be so well off but they can be able to pay their fees yet orphaned students who might not even have able guardians misses out on the bursaries.

One of the guidance and counseling teachers in Site A argued that when bursaries are distributed through the schools, they are able to cater equitably for students with tuition needs because:

The schools are more in touch with students and their families and they have personal information on students' backgrounds. And therefore schools are in a better position to identify those students who are really needy but the constituencies might not have that capacity to reach out for most needy students in their areas given the size of coverage of these constituencies. From the time of change on the bursary policy although students get bursaries, it is not as effective because still many needy students are left out.

This has put extra responsibilities on teachers and school administrators to find ways in which to raise funds for needy students who are performing well in order to ensure that they complete their education as stated by the principal of site B, "so we have been thinking about our options on what we can do to assist our students as a school after the change of policy by the ministry of education. So, sometimes teachers contribute towards supporting our needy students who are academically promising".

In Site C there is a provision in their strategic plan in place to provide bursaries for their needy students through the catholic diocese bursary funds:

In terms of tuition payment we do have problems such that most of the students are in fact on bursary. We normally have to sign bursary forms for students. The parents indicate what amount of bursary they could get from their constituencies so that the school can assist at least with the balance. So there is a mechanism set up by the school to assist needy students. (Dean of Studies)

Other schools like Sites A, B and D continue to struggle with cases of unpaid tuition which teachers indicated that must be addressed by schools if students from poor backgrounds are to be

retained in schools. Schools are expected to include students' needs in their strategic planning documents. Site D launched their strategic plan in July 2007 in a ceremony presided over by the former president of Kenya Daniel Arap Moi. One of the objectives of the plan is to mobilize resources from the community to cater for tuition fees for needy students as stated by the deputy principal in Site D:

Now that we have developed our strategic plan, one of our strategies is resource mobilization. So, we are thinking of involving as many people as possible to kind of raise funds for the very needy students who seem to be academically promising.

Site A identified several income generating projects as ways of generating funds to assist needy students which are underway and are being discussed by the PTA and the Board of Governors as explained by the principal:

We have not yet put in place a good system of helping our needy students but of late we have been discussing several proposals with the Board and the PTA committee. For example we have put a proposal to set up income generating projects in the schools one of them being a dairy project so that instead of purchasing milk from other farmers for students' ten o'clock tea this can come from the project. Income from such a project can then be used to pay tuition for the needy students. We are also discussing with the board on ways to establish an endowment fund where as a school we can ask well wishers in the town, organizations, teachers, and individuals who are willing to contribute toward this fund.

Institutions facing the challenges of students dropping out of the school because of their socio-economic status and failure of the government bursary system have developed strategies to address the financial need of students that is critical in supporting education success of students.

Large class size is another aspect of the challenges that teachers identified as limiting effective performance in diverse classrooms, especially when they have to work with limited resources. "Students should be few in class e.g. 25 instead of 40 to 50 students. This will enable teachers to identify the individual differences and address them in their practice" as noted.

Having large classes is perceived by participants as hindering their possibilities of working effectively with students from diverse classrooms.

Apart from schools raising funds to assist needy students, there are other ways in which schools have been able to effectively support classroom learning to ensure students academic success as discussed below.

#### 4.2.11.4 Emotional, Psychological, and Social Constraints

There are many challenges facing students that impart emotional, psychological, and social constraints on students learning that have polarized the themes in this chapter as noted from teachers' narratives. Among the challenges that have been discussed are: constraints of HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty, as well as family problems impacting parents and their children's relationships. Findings of the study also highlight serious challenges in the educational development of the Kenyan youths from low income groups for example, lack of positive role models, especially in the homes of single and female-headed households, where boys lack father figures there is a tendency of strained relationships between parents and their children as explained by teachers during the interviews. There is also the escalating violence on girls by stepfathers, making homes unsafe. All these factors as indicated by teachers' narratives impact students' learning because of the emotional and psychological constraints exerted on them.

The Kenyan school system does not engage the services of school psychologists to assist students in dealing with emotional traumas from the impact of stressful experiences such as rape or lose of loved ones and schools have seen the need to strengthen the activities of their guidance and counseling units to support teachers' practices. According to the computer teacher in Site C "guidance and counseling should be strengthened to help the learners deal with emotional, psychological and developmental problems that create complications in their lives impacting

their learning experiences”. Cultural sex-role stereotypes, socio-economic, and social challenges mentioned in this study require dynamic changes in schools to support students’ successful academic achievements.

#### 4.2.12 Other Factors Influencing Teachers’ Practice

Participants indicated in their responses that other than students’ differences, other factors such as experiences from educational and training backgrounds, philosophy of education, and beliefs in themselves as change agents also influence their work in diverse classroom.

Table 7 below indicates teachers’ responses from the questionnaire data.

**Table: 7. Other Influences on Teachers’ Practices**

Item	Not at all significant	Somewhat significant	Fairly significant	Significant	Very significant	Total
Educational Experience		1		23	32	56
School/ Ministry Expectation	2	6		23	25	56
Exam Expectation	1		2	18	35	56
Teacher Training Experience	4	1	4	22	25	56
Beliefs on Roles as Change Agents	1	1		14	40	56
Philosophy of Education	1	2	8	24	21	56

#### **4.2.13 Institutional Support to Teaching and Learning**

Institutions that participated in this study envisioned the central role that guidance and counseling units play in supporting teachers practice and students learning given the social, psychological, and emotional stress that many students undergo. Schools have also realized the need for financial support to their needy students rather than rely on the government bursaries.

##### **4.2.13.1 Guidance and Counseling Units**

The support of guidance and counseling units was highly expounded by participants in the study. The work of guidance and counseling teachers is envisioned to help empower students to deal with the problems facing them in their social settings as noted:

So the guidance and counseling unit comes in and at least build some confidential relationship with the student to help them open up and discuss some of these social problems they go through in their homes.(Chemistry Teacher Site B)

The objective of guidance and counseling unit is to support all students realize their full potentials by guiding them through resolving some of the social, emotional, psychological, and other challenges they may be experiencing. Some of the activities involve providing students with life skills especially in the case of girls to enable them protect themselves against any form of abuse. As explained by the counseling teacher in Site B “we usually have people brought in to talk to girls about HIV/AIDS preventive measures and defense mechanism against rape”.

In spite of the important work of guidance and counseling units in the schools, teachers indicated constraints they experience due to limited resources and in Sites A and B physical space to operate from. As noted by one counselor in Site A:

There is no office space or specific place where one can perform counseling responsibilities in some privacy. Even if you were to sit with a student for some counseling sessions, your space is interfered with as people walk into the room given that this room is shared by all math teachers.

Other challenges come from students' cultural backgrounds as indicated by one counselor in site C "counseling still face challenges from cultural beliefs which creates inhibition on accessing counseling support especially by male students". According to the guidance and counseling teachers, students from certain ethnic communities do not open up to discussions on personal issues, especially with counselors of the opposite sex due to cultural beliefs and attitudes.

According to another counseling teacher in Site A, "changing students attitude to seek counseling support among some groups require that the process starts from the homes and communities to enhance students confidence to speak out". Therefore, sensitizing communities on the importance of counseling for youths should be another extension of the counselors' added responsibility to be able to effectively support students in need.

Lack of training for some of the teachers appointed as counselors was also perceived as an issue that requires immediate attention in order to empower teachers in their counseling roles:

Currently one of the limitations I see in guidance and counseling in the school is that some of the teachers appointed by the Teachers Service Commission to be counselors may not have any relevant skills for doing the work. But if there could be some kind of in-service training as a way to enhance their knowledge and exposure to all kinds of cases including adequate resources to support their work I think that would be very good. (Deputy Principal Site D)

The guidance and counseling units need to be well equipped with the latest resource materials for references as stated by one counselor in site B, "there is also the need for the office to act as a resource center equipped with guidance and counseling books, psychology books, career guidance books and all that". If counselors are to dedicate more time to assist students adequately then "the administration should reduce the teaching load for counseling teachers so that they have more time to support students" stated by one of the counselors in Site A. Often teachers have to balance their counseling duties amid heavy teaching load which does not giving them enough time to organize counseling activities for students. Other school activities aimed at



supporting students learning especially those from marginalized groups is through the introduction of school feeding programs in day schools (Sites A & B).

#### 4.2.13.2 Modalities and Modes of Tuition Payment

As teachers work in school settings, their main concern as narrated has been to identify ways in which the administration can support their classroom efforts in ensuring that every child completes their education. One math teacher argued that “there should be a program put in place to help lift the economic standards of the needy students, so that their learning opportunities can be enhanced”. One way those schools in the study have assisted students to reduce the rate of absenteeism by developing workable strategies for tuition payment plans. In order to make payment of fees manageable, school administrators have developed flexible modalities by which needy parents and guardians can negotiate payment of their children’s tuition to suit their financial positions explained the Principal in site B:

For example we expect that fees payment be made once for the whole term (semester). We expect them (parents & guardians) to pay more in first term with a reducing balance in the following terms but you will find parents or guardians defaulting. At times we even make payment plans for the term and reduce them into monthly payments spread across the four months of the term. We ask parents to pay any amount they can raise within each month but still we continue to have defaulters.

At times schools are forced to offer part-time jobs to parents and students as a way for meeting their tuition payments explained the principal of Site A “we sometimes employ these parents as part-time workers whenever we have openings so that they can raise money for school fees”. A similar sentiment is expressed by the deputy principal of Site D:

We have tried as much as possible to assist students settle some of these fee balances. Sometimes if there is an opening for some work, you find a student like the one now working in our laboratories comes back to school after completing their studies and works in the school. Then part of the money earned goes toward payment of the fee balance. When they complete the payment then the student can collect their documents

from the school. We do as much as we can to help these students but as you can see we don't have many jobs in the school and so not every needy child can be accommodated.

Employment opportunities in school are also dependant on the amount of tuition collected by the school administrators. This is because the government does not pay non teaching staff and therefore, it becomes the schools responsibility to ensure that they keep their employment as low as possible and restricts it only to key positions.

In some instances, the administration does not restrict the mode of payment of tuition to cash payments only, but also accepts any modes of payment including farm produce, as explained by the principal in Site A:

At times when farmers are not paid by the cereal board on time, parents ask if they can make their payments by giving bags of maize, beans, and even milk products. We usually accept this because we use the products in the school kitchen for students' meal program.

The above examples indicate ways in which schools try to assist students from needy backgrounds to be retained in the school system and ensure that they do complete their studies.

#### **4.2.14 Summary**

It was clear from the responses by teachers that students' academic success partly depends on how they address students' diverse needs and the support they receive from the administration. Socio-economic status of students also limited their access to learning resources and supportive living environments placing them in dangers of risky behavior that are not conducive to academic success. Impact of socio-economic status on students' learning was more critical among students in day schools compared to experiences of those in boarding schools. The study also elucidated how levels of English language proficiency affect the equality of students learning opportunities in terms of understanding of content, effective participation, and

relationship with peers and teachers. This subsequently influences individual performance in the national examination.

Students' diversity also situated teachers practice within three overarching components, including ensuring academic achievement of all students, ability to motivate students through enriched learning process, and constant consciousness of the different needs that students bring into the classroom setting. In other words these teachers saw their practice as continually evolving through their reflection on their interaction with the differences that students bring into the learning environment. Teachers in the study view pedagogies that address diverse learners' needs as those that integrate co-construction of knowledge by repositioning students to have control over their learning experience. The approaches also take as central the connection of students' classroom learning to their own background experiences.

According to participants teaching that addresses student differences have challenges and constraints that limit implementation of curriculum in ways they believe is relevant to students. These challenges emanate from among other factors socio-economic status of students. This results in lack of adequate learning resources, absenteeism, low self-image or lack of higher aspirations making it difficult to ensure academic quality and success for all students. Apart from resources the large class sizes and the overloaded curriculum makes it difficult for teachers to address individual learning needs given the limited time to cover the syllabus. All this is compounded with high stakes education policy in teaching and the pressures of national examination. Given the background on participants' experiences in diverse classrooms and the challenges encountered, it is important to determine ways in which these teachers feel their teacher education prepared them for such encounters.

### **4.3 SECTION 3: Teacher Preparation for Diverse Classrooms**

Findings of the study indicated how teachers' understanding of students differences was not only important but a critical focus on how effectively they address issues of diversity and students academic success. In this section I present information addressing question three that guided the focus of the study: To what extent did your teacher education experiences prepare you for work in diverse classrooms? Findings of this study show that there is a strong correlation between the nature of students and the type of instructions they receive based upon teachers' beliefs and attitudes about capabilities of different students. Therefore, it was necessary to understand how participants' training experiences promoted their understanding of personal misconceptions, enabling them to confront some of the deeply engraved cultural and gender beliefs that perpetuate inequalities in schools and classrooms.

#### 4.3.1 Teachers' Reflection on Training Experiences

Teachers in the study were trained at two levels, the majority being Bachelor of Education graduates and a small number with Diploma in Education certification. There were only three participants with Masters of Education credentials (Figure 2). Part of this study was to identify the implications of study findings to teacher education training. Therefore, I found it necessary to probe into ways in which teachers perceived the adequacy of their teacher education experiences in preparing them for the complexities of diverse student population in their classrooms. Findings of this study show the different perspectives of teachers on how they perceived their teacher training experiences and how adequately or inadequately they were prepared to work in diverse classroom settings. Although all participants indicated having basic knowledge of teaching methods and theories of learning from their teacher education experiences, twenty two out of fifty six teachers felt that their teacher education training and

experiences did not prepare them well enough to work with students from diverse backgrounds. They used statements like “very little”, “moderately” and “not very well” to express their perspectives on how they felt about their teacher education preparation for work in diverse classrooms. Eighteen stated that they were not at prepared to work with diverse students.

Responses from these participants indicate their belief that most of their knowledge on how to work with students differences comes from their own classroom practice. According to one participant in Site B there are constant emerging issues in the classroom that teacher education did not prepare him for:

My teacher training assumed all students were at the same level except for abilities and developmental stages of the child. I think the experience on the ground is very different from what you are trained to handle. This is because you find that even as time changes there are emerging issues that impact learning differently for all students.

Another respondent stated how most of his knowledge on teaching for students’ differences has come from classroom teaching and in-service program, and had this to say:

Most of my knowledge is gathered through experiences, you come into teaching and you are learning how to deal with some things. For example my training did not address such issues as gender, religious factors, and ethnicity as factors to be determined when planning a lesson or when executing the lesson in class. However through in-service program planned by the Ministry of Education SMASSE, certain issue like gender awareness has been addressed. (Math Teacher Site A)

Three other teachers who are in the in-service program for math and science teachers SMASSE also expressed similar views that, until they started the program, they were more concerned with cognitive and developmental differences of students than other issues of students’ differences, such as gender.

The teachers believed that classroom experience are essential to enable one to work with diverse student population. They argued that no matter how much preparation teachers may acquire from their training it might never be adequate for the complexities of diverse classroom

settings. As noted by the chemistry teacher in Site D, “experience is the best teacher, what you learn in college and universities does not prepare you adequately for what you get in a real classroom situation with students who come from diverse backgrounds”. This is because teaching in diverse classrooms from their perspective is a process that involves building on one’s teaching skills by adjusting them appropriately to meet the teachers’ objectives, the needs of students they are working with, and the context as stated in this response:

I would say my teacher training did not give me so much because in terms of culture and other factors of diversity, it doesn’t come out clearly during the training. It is only when you go out and you get these differences then you start adjusting depending on the school that you are in. If you are teaching in a boys school and you are a female teacher or in an area that is dominated by one ethnic group that is different from yours, then you may find unique characteristics that may be different from when you have diverse student population that we have in towns. So you adjust because it is you the teacher who should keep on adjusting and also help your students adapt to the changes and their circumstances. (Biology Teacher Site B)

Therefore, indicating the complexity that these teachers find when teaching in diverse classroom settings and that diversity exists in every context of students learning whether it is a single sex school or schools in urban or rural areas.

Basing my understanding of the excerpts from the teachers’ narratives, some of the teachers felt that the way methodology and psychology courses were taught in their teacher training program seemed to be too abstract, theoretical and quite distant from realities they experience in the real classroom context. A participant in Site C indicated how she found it difficult to connect the theory taught during her training experiences to her classroom practice saying that:

These courses were so theoretical and professors were giving examples of some things that were not very relevant to our context. Like now if you are looking at Pavlov, how do you apply that one in class? To me it remains like that animal in the laboratory.

Some of the teachers argued that learning to teach students from diverse backgrounds is in itself a process of experiential learning by the teacher, built upon years of practice and exposure to different institutional contexts. To these teachers, experience counts more in teaching for diversity than theory, as stated by the English teacher in Site A:

In my opinion I believe the most important part of teaching in diverse classrooms is from the experiences one gets from teaching on the ground. The experiences from teaching are far more enriching than the theories one is taught in college.

Teachers in the study stated that understanding on the nature and significant influence of students' differences in their classrooms were based on experiential knowledge gained through situated learning over a period of time. According to the one teacher's explanation, "much of skills in dealing with students' differences have slowly been acquired in my five years of teaching experience".

Eighteen out of the fifty six participants in the study indicated how their experiential knowledge contributed more to informing their practice in diverse classrooms than knowledge gained from their teacher education experiences. They argued that experiential knowledge is more contextualized given that students' differences impact teachers and students differently based on the context, location, and nature of the school:

My actual teaching experience added more to my outlook of learners as opposed to the knowledge I had from college. Teaching students with differences was hinted in the college curriculum and during teaching practice but the nitty gritty I had just to be myself to be able to reach out for students from different backgrounds. Especially when I was teaching within a conservative community for quite sometime and I mean I had to leave first aside the psychology taught in college and try to understand the culture of the community which I think was lacking as far as the psychology taught in college was concerned. (Geography Teacher Site B).

Participants' perceived experiential knowledge as being grounded on personal understanding of students' characteristics and experiences within particular situations and specific contexts.

Sixteen out of fifty six participants felt that their teacher education training adequately prepared them well for work with students from diverse backgrounds. They argue that their training experiences have enabled them to recognize and appreciate that students are different. These teachers also recognize and appreciate ways in which their teacher education experiences broadened their understanding of issues concerning students' differences in behavior:

When I went to college I took courses on educational psychology and developmental psychology, it gave me an understanding of why students behave the way they do. Another thing is that developmental psychology helps me in understanding the fact that ones character is also an out come of experiences and therefore students' environment very much influences their behavior. And this has helped me to relate the behavior of my students with certain circumstances they experience and avoid misinterpretation of their behavior. It has helped me to distinguish between outright indiscipline and certain social adjustments that kids are going through. (History Teacher Site D)

A biology teacher in Site C reiterated how her theoretical grounding on different levels of cognitive development has been supportive when organizing content in her lesson planning for her diverse classrooms:

When we were in college we looked at Bloom's Taxonomy and that was when dealing with content of the curriculum, we were able to look at the levels of cognitive development when teaching content according to those levels. When dealing with those levels you know that you are able to have students who can capture only at the knowledge level, others deeper than that. Then you are able to identify their level of ability to grasp. I think that has prepared me very well because I am able to give work in class which I am able to observe in a very short time and I don't leave these brilliant children bored neither do I cause these other slow learners to be left out of the learning process.

These teachers found their knowledge of psychology to be useful especially when addressing issues of discipline or students motivation in the learning process as stated:

Knowledge of psychology helps you understand ways of motivating your students learning. So of course you give the carrot and the stick when trying to correct them. Once they do well you reward them in order to reinforce the knowledge, if they do wrong, you punish them but you should also be quick to at least go back to them and build your relationship so that they do not develop resentment. (Biology Teacher Site A)



Participants also found classes on teaching methods in their teacher education programs to be valuable in engaging students in diverse classes through different approaches that address differences in learning as indicated by the math teacher in Site D, “my teacher education background enables me to use various teaching methods and resources that are appropriate to teaching in diverse classrooms”. Other supportive courses highlighted by teachers were guidance and counseling, classroom management, and measurement and evaluation.

The guidance and counseling teacher in Site B narrated how her knowledge enabled her to understand and support her students from disadvantaged positions through advocacy as she intervened on their behalf. She said that engaging her colleagues into critical discussions on the need to understand students’ backgrounds when it comes to discipline cases has sensitized teachers in her school to be more compassionate to students. Citing cases that require teachers’ attention, the counseling teacher in Site A said:

Like now with my knowledge in counseling I am able to understand different students’ needs. I see teachers persistently taking punitive action against a student for coming late to school without stopping to critically evaluate and ask questions as to why the student has that persistent behavior. Many times it is discovered that these students come from very far and they have to walk long distances to school. They have no money for public transport and some of them live with relatives who make them do chores in the morning before coming to school. In my view the student needs compassion and not punishment.

This is one way in which this teacher found her teacher education knowledge useful in critically challenging situations that differences in students’ backgrounds bring to the practice of the teacher and which they need to be aware of in order to act appropriately. But a math teacher in Site C argued that the current teacher education programs in public universities cannot adequately prepare teachers for diversity in classrooms because of their conservative and rigid culture:

It is not only the training of teachers that should be addressed but the culture of training institutions. I want to say that our universities are conservative, look at how our

universities are taking long to change their ways of training. This is because of the restrictions on admission guidelines, especially when the institutions enlist too many requirements for entry into the program leaving out a large percentage of teachers who might want to advance in their career. There is no avenue for professional growth which can provide new lenses to teachers for understanding recent research on effective approaches to teaching in diverse classrooms. Teachers continuously re-cycle old knowledge to support their practices.

This indicates the need for continuous professional development to upgrade teachers' knowledge on the latest research findings on effective practices in diverse classrooms.

#### **4.3.2 Summary**

The majority of teachers in the study indicated that their teacher education experiences had minimal or did not prepare them for the challenges they experience working with students from diverse backgrounds. Despite having knowledge from courses on methodology, learning theories, and developmental psychology, these teachers believe that classroom experience provided them with more knowledge on how to address issues arising from students' diverse needs. They argued that these courses did not address other differences for example gender, culture, religious, and regional differences among many other students experiences that they encounter in their classrooms. According to some of the participating teachers, there was concentration on theory during their teacher preparation with very little connection to the practical aspect of what is to be expected in diverse classroom settings. Teachers in the study viewed teaching for diversity as constituting practices that is not structured but requires flexibility as teachers adjust to students needs, the context of the school, and the national education policies. Although differences such as socio-economic, motivation, linguistic, and academic abilities were quite visible to teachers, other differences for example culture, gender, and religion appeared to be normative categories rarely questioned by teachers in the four schools. Summary of the findings and discussion of the study are addressed in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **5.0 Summary of Findings**

In this chapter I summarize the findings of this study and include discussion of emerging themes in relationship with the guiding research questions, previous research, and the theoretical framework. The findings indicate that teachers' practice, students' engagement and subsequent achievement in Kenya's urban high schools were influenced by an array of factors for example socio-economic status, gender, English language proficiency, primary education, and students' motivation among others. Findings also inform us on how teachers in these schools conceptualize diversity within their contexts.

Participating teachers' understanding of students' differences determine their conception of what constitutes effective pedagogies, meaningful and challenging learning environments, and guides the overall process of curriculum planning. These teachers articulated a wide range of teaching strategies and roles they adapted to mediate students' differences and address cognitive, affective, and socio-economic needs of students in order to improve academic performance. Participants also indicated constraints to their approach to teaching that is student centered perceived to be effective with diverse student demographic found in Kenyan urban high schools. Participating teachers' conceptualization of students' differences not only influenced their practice but also defined their roles and relationships with their students inside and outside of the classroom environments.

## **5.1 Teachers' Conceptualization of Diversity**

Question one in the inquiry aimed at elucidating teachers understanding of student differences in their contexts. In this study I have elucidated how Kenya's urban high school teachers in one of the cities in the western region conceptualized diversity in their classrooms. Conceptualizing diversity helps teachers reflect on the values and beliefs they propagate in their practice. According to Ben-Perez (1990) and Seaton (2002), teachers' beliefs and values are likely to influence their philosophy of education as translated through curriculum interpretation and pedagogical practices.

Students' diversity was reflected by participants in a range of different experiences including academic abilities, socio-economic status, entry behavior, gender, ethnicity, English language proficiency, motivation, primary education, religious, and family culture. How these differences influenced teachers' practice and students' performance were articulated explicitly, based on teachers' context, gender, and discipline areas. For example, most participants in single sex schools indicated how gender was not a significant difference influencing their teaching and students' learning. On the other hand most of their colleagues in day schools especially female participants viewed gender as being an influencing difference in their practice and students' academic performance.

To some teachers, religion as a factor was only significant in teaching certain units of the curriculum, while for others it mostly impacted students in day schools. In the case of boarding schools, religion only became an issue when teachers extended teaching outside of the learning schedules and if it conflicted with religious activities of certain groups of students. Studies on diversity (Banks & Banks, 2004; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1999) indicate that teachers' perceptions on the influence of differences on learning achievement depend on how

they perceive specific differences within their context. This determines the level of emphasis placed on each category of differences perceived by teachers in their practice. Intersectionality theorists (Ludvig, 2006; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006) indicate that people are often not conscious of certain categories of differences. Therefore, such categories become normalized and are rarely questioned within certain context. In this study culture and religion falls within the normative categories in the schools that participated in the study.

In this study, diversity was perceived by participants as multiple experiences and identities students bring to the classrooms from the multiple social locations that students come from. This is a perception that acknowledges that significance of these categories of differences are not fixed and the understanding of how students' differences impact teaching and learning must be viewed through the disciplines, gender of the teacher, and the nature of the institutions. This perception of diversity supports the notion of none essentialized, fixed, and homogenized assumptions of identities and differences propagated by intersectionality theory (Harding, 1999; Ludvig, 2006). The theory indicates that individuals belong to multiple groups and are bound to be affected differently in their positioning in their perceptions on specific issues in different contexts. Overall, it was clear from the study that re-conceptualizing diversity provided teachers in the study with a lens in which to analyze and avoid overstating how certain factors constrain or support their practice and students achievements within their contexts and disciplines.

At the same time teachers reflected that they envisioned effective teaching in diverse classrooms to be practices that inspire students active participation, make content relevant to students experiences, and create learning environments that promote co-construction of knowledge. This conforms to views of diversity advocates (E.g. Banks, & Banks; Cochran-Smith 2001; Freire 1994; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1999) who contend that

promoting students' voices is one way of creating democratic relationships in the classrooms as an important aspect of pedagogy in diverse contexts. This is because, as stated by Freire (1994) teachers should adopt pedagogies that engage students to understand their rights and urgency in contributing to their own learning and other social issues beyond the classroom settings, to the larger community. This represents another perceptual approach to diversity in education by the participating teachers, which reflects a social constructivists' view of diversity (Banks, & Banks, 2004; Freire, 1994; Grant, & Sleeter, 1999, 2003) that promotes students experiential knowledge and participation as central in the co-construction of classroom knowledge.

Constructivist approach to teaching diverse students emphasizes learning that is student centered, relevant to students' background experiences. Therefore, curriculum content and pedagogy must be connected to students' experiential knowledge as a way of making learning more meaningful and relevant. According to the teachers in the study, their understanding and acknowledgement of students' diverse backgrounds created a framework in which they based their approaches to teaching and envisioned meaningful and challenging classrooms for their students. Sleeter and Grant (1999), concur that teachers' approach to teaching for diversity is informed by their ideological and epistemological orientations.

A second approach to teaching diverse students emerging from the study is the caring approach. This approach is reflected through the multiple identities that teachers bring into the classrooms for example their parental, friendship, caring, and advocacy identities as they work with students identifying the differences that limit their academic achievement. At the same time teachers focus on the strengths and resources (knowledge and skills) that students bring to the teaching and learning environment to build on in order to develop students' achievement (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Some of the strengths are the cultural values of sharing and teachers were able

to encourage students to share the meager learning resources with each other. Another symbolic capital that both teachers and students brought into the school setting was the communal relationships referred to in Kenya as the *harambee spirit* grounded in most ethnic community's values of pulling resources together to support those who are marginalized. This is what Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) would refer to as making use of social capital resources to contribute to students further acquisition of other forms of capital (knowledge, skills, values) in education. Teachers solicited resources through this process to maintain and retain students from poor backgrounds in the school system. In accommodating the two approaches to teaching diverse student population teachers adopted multiple roles to address students' social and academic needs.

## **5.2 Influence of Students' Diversity in Teaching and Learning**

Teachers in the study indicated how they often re-conceptualized what entails meaningful and relevant pedagogies and learning experiences with diverse learners. They adopted approaches to teaching for diversity that were student-centered and based on the philosophy of ethics of caring relationships. The philosophy of caring enable participants to embody the challenges facing their students' academic success and focused their practice toward nurturing students through values that build on self-worth and resilience. In the process teachers embraced multiple identities to be able to address the diverse needs of their students.

The perception by teachers in the study reflects the views of other studies (E.g. Friere, 1994; MOEST, 2005; Palmer, 1997; Republic of Kitano, 1997) that teaching is both a social and mechanical process. Kitano (1997) noted that, what leads to students' academic success is based on classroom relationships between teachers and students in the learning process. Freire (1994) and Palmer (1997) reiterated that teachers' practice should not only be concerned with issues of

content and methods but should also embrace relationships as part of its component. In this study, there seemed to be a consensus among teachers acknowledging that effective and successful teaching in diverse classrooms requires process and structure. By process I mean the interpersonal relationships between teachers and students and among students as reflected in their interactions, effective communication, and understanding of the social, emotional and cognitive dynamics in students learning. Jensen (1998) and Palmer (1997) argued that good teaching involves the ability of the teacher to engage the intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and ethical aspects of the learners. In other words, teaching must be holistic and address all the aspects of students needs.

Other virtues cited by teachers is providing enriched learning environment that promote a sense of belonging, encourage sharing of experiences, and value collaborative co-construction of knowledge. Previous studies (Jensen, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991) found that classroom climate is important in providing emotional support to students in the learning process. Freire (1994), values collaborative participation among teachers and their students, as teachers too get to learn and appreciate other possible ways of making meaning of the world that may be different from what they are familiar with, which they need to nurture in their classroom practice.

Structure on the other hand refers to setting of goals and defining teaching strategies. In this study teachers narratives reflected how their understanding of students' background were at the center of determining their presentation of curriculum content in ways that were relevant to students' experiences aimed at promoting relational learning and engaging students in active participation. This concurs with Anderson's (2001) argument that, teachers need to be aware of learning styles that students bring into classroom settings because those students who are relational learners achieve more success when learning is connected to their lived experiences, as



opposed to abstract learning of concepts. During my classroom observation in Site B, I noticed that students were more active during the practical lesson and in both Sites A and B when they shared experiences on the topic being discussed. This was contrary to lesson one in Site B that was dominated by note taking and was mostly teacher-centered. Proponents of critical pedagogy (E.g. Freire, 1994; Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003) advocate for empowering approaches as key component of teaching marginalized students as it helps in destabilizing the status quo. The empowerment enables students to take control of their own learning. Freire in particular argues that empowering pedagogy should take into consideration a collaborative effort of both teachers and pupils working together towards the change process.

Participating teachers indicated how engaging students in a variety of learning activities for example, discussion groups, experiments, field work, debates, and research, encouraged participatory learning as opposed to taking down notes dictated to them. These strategies were found to discourage students' dependence on teachers as keepers of knowledge and at the same time maintained their sense of belonging and motivation in the learning process. Fox (2005) and Ainley (2004) concur that motivation is the driving force behind students' positive interests and attitudes to engage with learning in meaningful ways. Therefore, the dynamics of process and structure cannot be separated if teachers and students are to achieve greater education outcomes. Findings from the interview and observation data showed that to a large extent, teachers' practices were student-centered. This is contrary to claims by government reports and research (Ackers & Harman, 2001; MOEST, 2005; Mwenda, 2003; Republic of Kenya, 2005) that Kenyan teachers lack pedagogical skills that promote student-centered learning.

It was clear from the narratives that teachers in this study were aware of what strategies were effective in engaging their students in meaningful, critical, and relevant learning (Table 4)

although the element of note taking still featured. This I believe is partly due to lack of adequate learning resources especially in Sites A & B as indicated by some of the participants. The examination oriented education system and high stakes education policies created uniformity limiting teachers ability to engage on what they perceived as best practices in diverse classrooms. Studies (Anderson, 2001; Lipman, 2004; McNeil, 2000) concur that high stakes teaching limits teachers' practices in addressing socio-cultural needs of students and adopting a more student centered approaches to their work. Most participants favored the use of group work as a powerful strategy and it is important to highlight some of the issues arising from this study on this kind of approach.

#### 5.2.1 Highlights on Teachers' Use of Group Work

Overall the majority of the teachers in the study had the view that group discussion as an approach to teaching can help students achieve richer and deeper understanding of curriculum as they brainstorm and bring out different perspectives on the topic. Although teachers found group work as effective in improving learning, they seem to differ on the formation of these groups. Teachers in favor of ability grouping finds it as an effective way of addressing aptitude differences among learners with a purpose of regulating teaching pace and learning materials to fit each category. It allows the teacher to adjust the pace of instruction, engage on more repetition of information, and reinforcement for slow learners. While for higher achievers they would provide more challenging and independent work opportunities. Despite its effectiveness if not guarded, ability grouping may widen the gap between lower and higher achievers or may lead to what Grant and Sleeter (2003) refers to as the deficit model. In this case teachers may assume that students are the problem without a critical lens to socio-cultural, economic, and linguistic marginalization that students may experience.

This may lead to labeling and negative attitudes toward learning by those framed as low achievers especially when group membership is not changed. The disadvantage is that when these groups are made permanent it might have implications for students' self-image especially when groups start comparing their abilities. Studies (Ainley, 2004; Fox, 2005) indicate how students' engagement in learning is mediated by their level of self-worth which determines their desire to succeed. Therefore, low self image leads to loss of interest in the whole learning process. Having permanent groups also curtails the opportunity of students interacting with other peers in the class. It restricts students' experiences and relationships to a small group narrowing their perspectives. However, when group work is used with clear guidelines and members forge friendly relationships, it can benefit all members by providing peer coaching as well as peer motivation.

Another approach to establishing group membership I noted during lesson observations in Sites B and D was letting students choose their own groups. Sometimes it is important to have the teacher's input in establishing groups because leaving students to choose their own groups might lead to students grouping with members of their own ethnic group, gender as was the case in Site B or with their friends. This might be appropriate for students to create a comfort zone in their working relationships. The limitation is that often in such an arrangement, members do not want to challenge each others ideas even though they might not agree with them for the sake of group harmony and maintaining friendship. Proponents of critical pedagogy ((Ainley, 2004; Giroux, 2003; Mwenda, 2003), indicate the need for teachers to encourage students to engage in active questioning and critical thinking. There is need to identify those aspects of group work that may limit such constructs in students as they work together in groups. Ainley (2004) indicates the need for teachers to understand ways in which peer groups may promote or hinder

learning of other members of the group. In such situations constructive learning that was the objective of group work might not be achieved. At the same time grouping students should address issues of individual personality.

Critical theorists (E.g. Freire, 1994; Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003; O'Loughlin, 1995) view learning spaces as characterized with power differential resulting in resistance and accommodation. Hence, the role of the teacher becomes crucial in helping students negotiate their positions in the learning process. During my group observation in Site B biology class I realized how Gedion's soft personality acted as a challenge to making himself assertive enough to draw attention of group members to his contribution. His voice was completely silenced by colleagues who dominated the discussion. Helping students create a space in the group where all voices and individual contributions are valued is central in ensuring effective use of this approach to teaching for diversity (Banks, 1999; Banks & Banks, 2004; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; O'Loughlin, 1995). These studies also advocate the need for teachers to help students forge relationships of respect, inclusiveness, and empowerment of all members of the group.

The teachers observed (Site B & D) assumed that students were capable of establishing, accepting, and maintaining group norms. Yet, clearly helping students negotiate rules of engagement at the beginning would provide guidelines that are helpful for interpersonal relationships and understanding of individual expectations. In Site D students worked within their already established groups created at the beginning of the semester and they worked in these groups outside of the classrooms. My concern was that just having students work in groups does not guarantee equal participation and engagement in meaningful learning. Teachers need to observe and address issues of group dynamics and how this influences power relations and collaborative co-construction of knowledge as a team.

The discussion on teaching strategies employed by teachers in the study reveal their ideology that accountability for enriching classroom learning does not wholly rest with the teacher but is a collaborative with students, as teachers played multiple roles to support the learning process.

### 5.2.2 Exploring Teachers' Multiple Identities

Teachers' narratives reflected how they assumed multiple roles inside and outside of their classrooms in response to the different needs of students. Their interactions and relationships with students reflected ways they defined their roles and identities. Teachers' roles in this case are viewed as the mindset of expectations, assumptions, and goals that these teachers embraced in their task of teaching culturally diverse students. Intersectionality theorists (McCall, 2005; Ludvig, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006) indicate that both teachers and students bring into the classroom multiple layered identities that influence their relationships. Participating teachers' descriptions of their roles reflect clearly other social identities from different social settings. This was clearly expressed by one of the students' in a text message to one of the participant as follows ".....you were a guide, guardian angel, more than a teacher, a parent, a mom, .....a teacher who was more interested with our future lives". This shows how these teachers displayed other identities for example being parents, care-givers, and moral guides apart from their professional identity in their relationship with their students.

From the analyses of questionnaire and interview data, it is clear that teachers who participated in this study recognized that the process of teaching in diverse classroom is not a linear sequence of events but a dynamic phenomenon that requires teachers to adapt multiple roles to assist their students. Teachers described their roles as that of mentors, role models, motivators, friends, facilitators, counselors, and from their narratives care givers. Teachers'

roles reflected their responsibilities and interrelationships with their students as they interacted inside and outside of the learning environments. In this study I perceive teachers' roles as differentiating set of tasks and activities expected of those in the social or organizational positions responding to the diverse nature of their learners. Teachers in the study narrated how they fostered caring relationships with their students in order to build students' self-esteem and a sense of self-worth.

### 5.2.3 Ethics of Caring an Approach to Teaching for Diversity

Teachers engaged students in caring and supportive relationships (figure 5) inside and outside of their classrooms to enhance students' motivation in learning. Most teachers conveyed attitudes of compassion and understanding that was supportive to the emotional and psychological status of students from poor backgrounds and orphans. This encouraged students to perform to the best of their abilities in spite of the difficult experiences in their social lives. Teachers in the study fostered resilience on students by helping them develop a sense of purpose and a belief in a bright future as motivating factor to work hard in obtaining education success. Sarason and Pierce, et, al (1990), reiterate that fostering resilience, caring and respectful relationships in classrooms are more likely to motivate students toward higher academic aspirations. Teachers in the study viewed their classrooms and their institutions as spaces where they could alter or reverse some of the negative experiences that students brought into the classrooms to enable individuals circumvent life stress and manifest resilience in pursuit for successful outcome. Participants provided both financial and counseling support to maintain healthy learning for these students.

Students were guided in developing achievable goals, strived toward higher educational aspirations, and built bridges that helped students develop persistence in their quest for education

success. The participating teachers indicated how they strived to present themselves as positive role models in the lives of students who lacked aspirations in homes and within their social circles. These teachers became their confidants, mentors, role models, and at times acted as advocates on behalf of the students. Findings of this study are consistent with the concerns of the Kenya government (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 1998, 2005) that students from low income households continue to face the risk of falling through the cracks of Kenya's high school education system because of the high cost of tuition and high risks in their social environments. This indicates that such students are likely to have fewer opportunities to realize their potentials, unless teachers act as advocates on their behalf. This is in line with the perspective of studies (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Freire, 1994; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995) that advocate for mediating on behalf of students as part of the moral responsibility of teachers through which they can empower the voices of marginalized students.

This compelled the teachers in the study to forge a relationship of caring for their students beyond the classroom environments. For example, teachers were compassionate and assisted students who had no steady homes accommodation, were in abusive situations at homes, or were orphaned and had no guardians to take care of them. Caring relationship, as explained by some of the participating teachers, provided students with the motivation to succeed in their academic endeavors, especially those who found themselves in difficult situations. Maehr and Midgley (1991) stated that when classrooms become spaces viewed by students as caring and supportive to their needs, their participatory relationship is likely to be maintained as motivation levels are fostered. Diversity advocates (E.g. Banks, 1999; Banks & Banks, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 1999) calls for ethical approaches to teaching for diversity that are based on respect, caring, and understanding of differences.

A culture of caring displayed by these teachers goes beyond teacher-student relationships to building classrooms and school culture that conveyed compassion, financial sacrifice, and understanding of students' difficult circumstances. Studies (Peretz, 1990; Snyder, 1973; Marsh & Willis, 1999) stated that teachers do more than implement the official curricular because there are relationships, social implications, and cultural outcome that form part of the hidden curriculum which must be addressed in the learning process. Freire (1994) reiterated that progressive teachers must be critical of the pitfalls of the hidden curriculum that marginalizes students. Therefore, teachers must provide opportunities and hope for all students despite the existing barriers.

Teachers in the study believed that developing resilience among marginalized students was a way forward to creating classroom spaces where all students can thrive socially and academically. Most significant was the level of commitment expressed by participants to building a vision of hope and a beacon of light for students from troubled households, orphans, and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in education. Sarason and Pierce, et, al (1990), argued that caring and respect is a fundamental human need and that education reforms that ignore these basic needs of both students and teachers are bound to make schools and classrooms alienating places. As teachers embraced roles and pedagogies that accommodated students' differences, they also experienced challenges that limited their efforts.

### **5.3 Challenges to Teachers in Diverse Classrooms**

In the study, teachers raised a number of concerns that limit their efforts in adapting constructive approaches in diverse classrooms. Some of these concerns emanate from the diverse nature of students, while others come from the education policies that shape curriculum implementation. Participating teachers indicated how homes and neighborhood circumstances



of some of the students make it difficult for students to concentrate in their class work impacting the levels of students' performance and teachers' effectiveness in classrooms. According to some of the teachers' in the study, personal problems that students bring to learning spaces can be frustrating not only to the students but also to teachers' as they try to develop patience and creativity in their practice.

These teachers indicated the dilemmas they often experience as they struggle to assist students achieve academic success amidst very difficult work situations like the overloaded curriculum, limited resources, and time to cover the syllabus and prepare students for the national examinations. The Koech report recommended reducing the number of subjects examined at the Kenya National Certificate of Education (high school certification examination) in order to ease the pressure of examination on teachers and students. In spite of reducing the number of examined subjects, the burden of examination on teachers' practices in diverse classroom setting continue to pose challenges. Several studies (Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Anderson, 2001; Ben-Perez, 1990; Eisner, 1991; Lipman, 2004; Mwenda, 2003; Wayne, 2001), indicate that when teachers work become excessively regulated through high stakes policies and examinations, the result is a host of unintended consequences such as selective implementation of curriculum content in fragmented parts, as teachers focus mainly on examinable areas ignoring students needs. Snyder (1973) and Eisner (1991) concur that evaluation practices and high stakes tests are the most powerful influences in school cultures, teachers' practices, and students study habits in the learning process.

These studies indicate that examination-centered system promotes uniformity over diversity. Teachers in the study confirm this claim when they acknowledge how they are often at odds with their vision of best practices for diverse students in response to high stakes policy and

examination expectations. Participants pointed out lack of meaningful and reliable indicators by the Ministry of Education to assess teachers' performance based on other aspects of students' development like the social and emotional competence of students. Yet, they argue how these aspects of students' lives take precedence if they are to nurture marginalized students toward academic achievement. Instead, the Ministry of Education has implemented a policy of performance contracts to enforce teachers' accountability in their work.

The policy views teaching as a process that incorporates planning and execution of the curriculum as a systematic step by step activity involving determination of course of action with set goals within a given time frame. This is viewed as ensuring cost effectiveness and efficiency that is measurable in terms of increased students mean scores. Yet, teachers in the study indicated that teaching in diverse classrooms is not systematic and predictable but a process that requires constantly changing and adjusting ones objectives and strategies based on the students' needs, Ministry expectations, and the levels of support from institutions. For example, teachers have to accommodate students' absenteeism, address issues of differences in English language proficiency, prior knowledge, and amount of resources available to determine the pace at which they can complete the syllabus and ensure in-depth understanding of concepts beyond simply acquiring knowledge.

According to Sleeter and Grant (1999) the formation of such policies that addresses how and what teachers teach are largely based on the misconception that administrative and regulatory measures will lead to better teaching and to increased levels of student achievement. Under these conditions of high stakes the act of teaching and learning in Kenyan high schools seem to be regulated by external plans. Teachers in the study find that their work have become dominated by series of testing for example pre-tests (pre-mock), and post tests (post-mock) to

evaluate increase in students' mean score. This situation not only dominated teachers' work with record keeping and evaluation process but seemed to have reduced effective teachers to mostly performing clerical work. Although studies (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Freire, 1994; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995) also argue that in spite of the structured work of teachers and constraints experienced due to accountability systems, as well as other work conditions, teachers have the moral responsibility and agency to make decisions on what is best for their students.

Teachers found it challenging to motivate students toward setting higher goals in their academics when their lives are mirrored with uncertainties. For example they are hungry, worried about problems at home, tuition fees and rent or believe they are incapable of performing well because they have reached a point of hopelessness. Studies by (LeDoux, 1993; Maehr & Midgley, 1991) found that exposure to helplessness often results in anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and stress. Teachers narrated how some students came to class stressed and anxious because they don't understand the language of instruction, feeling emotionally low due to the loss of loved ones, or worried about parents or relatives who were suffering from HIV/AIDS, and the list seems endless. This was compounded with students' struggle with low self-esteem and preoccupied with building their self image to fit in with their peer groups. These and other arrays of students' personal problems ended up in the teachers' classrooms posing significant challenge to teachers' efforts in helping students realize academic success.

There is no magic wand to wade off these multitudes of students' problems but it takes the efforts, dedication, and commitment of these teachers to walk students through this terrain of uncertainty to compete high school education. What was amazing with the participants, based on their personal accounts, was that they never looked at the negative aspects of their students' lives as hopeless situations. Instead, they displayed personal initiatives, enthusiasm, persistence, and

compassion as they attended to both the social, economic, psychological, and academic well being of their students. These teachers provided solutions and alternatives including financial support to meet students' basic needs in order to ensure that those students who are committed to academic work were retained in the school and completed their education. Another major challenge to teachers' classroom performance and students learning stated by teachers, is the impact of poverty that threatens to limit high school education opportunities for many students.

#### 5.3.1 Effects of Poverty on Teaching and Learning

Findings of the study revealed how students' socio-economic status continues to be one of the major concerns of high school education for the Kenyan youth. This confirms report by the government (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 1999, 2005) that poverty is the immediate factor limiting Kenyan youth's access to high school education. Teachers in the study indicated how the growing numbers of children from needy backgrounds and orphans have made their classrooms more diverse than ever before, making teaching and learning more challenging. Socio-economic status has significant impact on teachers in sites A and B, which are day schools with a disproportionate number of students from the slum areas of the town and neighboring rural areas. Poverty as a risk factor creates a number of challenges in teaching and learning although the study also shows that there are many other factors that determine education success of students. Some of the factors related to poverty identified by teachers in their contexts were, irregular school attendance due to lack of tuition fees. This situation limits students' classroom contact hours making them miss out on a lot of classroom learning in terms of curriculum content coverage.

Participants indicated how students' long absence from school significantly determined their retention in the school unless they received support from the teachers to make up for the

lost learning time. Otherwise when students lag behind in learning they tend to experience frustrations and are likely to opt out of school. This confirms reports by the Ministry of Education (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 1988, 2005) that students' absenteeism due to lack of tuition fees continue to be a major problem for retention of students from low income and vulnerable groups in high school education.

Students from poor backgrounds also lack exposure to enriched learning environments, live in dangerous neighborhoods, and are at high risk of becoming homeless. These are conditions that limit learning opportunities as students' lack home environments that can support their studies after school. Such students lack the time and space to do their home work and prepare for the next days lessons. High risk environments as reflected by participants' narratives, depicts lack of characteristics that can foster effective learning and academic success because often, students lack the kind of role models that can inspire them to greater achievements in life.

Other social issue related to poverty, cited by teachers, was the emotional trauma that students experienced in home settings. Teachers highlighted instances in their schools, when guidance and counseling teachers had to address cases of female students' sexual molestation by their step fathers. This confirms findings of previous studies (Chege, 2004; Republic of Kenya, 2005, UNICEF, 2004) on continued sexual harassment of girls in the society creating emotional setbacks in their education success. Cases of sexual molestation did not only traumatize the girls but provided leverage for possibilities of opting out school because according to the teachers in the study girls in such positions often run away from home to live with their boy friends. The boy friends are in many instances high school dropouts working in low income jobs. Findings of

this study concur with studies by UNICEF (2004) that hostile home environment drives away female students from their homes in search of emotional stability.

Other cases involve strained relationships between single mothers and their sons because of the nature of their life styles. Studies (Fox, 2005; Jensen, 1998; LeDoux, 1993) also indicate how lack of emotional nurturing can lead to feelings of inadequacy, impacting students' self-image. Therefore, teachers' needs to adapt strategies that can help students reduce stress, eliminate threats, and feelings of hopelessness in their classrooms as a way of motivating them toward academic excellence. Apart from building positive relationships in their practice, teachers provided emotional support to students through counseling. They acted as role models to inspire their students, and in some instances addressed their basic needs. Maehr and Midgley (1991) stated that students are motivated and engaged in classroom learning if they perceive their teachers, family, and school as supportive to their learning. Teachers stated how they addressed the culture of poverty by becoming sensitive to the vast arrays of needs that students from poor backgrounds bring into their classrooms and by inculcating in the students, a culture of resilience. Other than developing a culture of resilience, teachers have also instilled in students the value of sharing resources to support the learning of those students who cannot afford required facilities.

In analyzing the impact of poverty, teachers concluded that despite the high risks of poverty, the reciprocal interactions between students and teachers in the classroom and school policies can have a powerful impact on the academic achievement and success for marginalized students. English language proficiency is also perceived as a major challenge to students' academic success.

### 5.3.2 Language Discourse in the Classrooms

Teachers' narratives showed that there is a strong correlation between English language proficiency, and students' performance in all disciplines. Lack of English language proficiency had a significant impact on students' understanding and interpretation of content, limiting their participation in class discussions. English language was viewed by teachers as exerting a lot of pressure among students who used their mother tongue and *sheng* predominantly at home and in their socialization process. Therefore, participating teachers seem to be confronted with multiple challenges because of the multilingual composition of their students. .

Emerging from the findings was the dual representation of English language as a medium of instruction in high school classrooms. On one hand, English language proficiency was represented as a means to empowering students' voices because it enhances the possibilities in their academic and subsequently economic success. Yet on the other hand, English language became disempowering to those students who spoke predominantly ethnic languages or the urban youths who speak *sheng*. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) and Freire (1994) cautions that teachers need to be aware of how English language can be perceived as an oppressive tool by students who come from backgrounds that use other languages other than English. Students in the four schools who came from social structures, which placed high value on ethnic languages or *sheng* experienced disadvantages in the learning process because they entered the high school system at different levels of English language proficiency that created communication barriers in their learning process. Students who came from low income primary schools, rural and slum areas were the most impacted.

During the interviews, teachers indicated ways in which they supported their students to cope with the learning process in spite of their limitation in the use of English language.

Teachers put structures and policies in place to help improve students' English language proficiency. Engaging students' participation in club activities for example drama, debating, and essay writing competitions among other activities were found to be effective strategies in encouraging them to verbalize in English, as a way of promoting students voices. Teachers also indicated how they took into account students' differing levels of English proficiency when planning and executing the curriculum. During their teaching, they simplified the language to the levels of the learners. Macdonald (1990) and Probyn (2001) argued that students' variations in English language proficiency may limit the teachers' ability to engage learners in constructivist approaches to learning. This is because they spend more time simplifying content for students understanding creating dependency on teachers to construct knowledge while leaving students as passive receivers.

During my classroom observation in Sites B and D, I noticed that lessons, which were not activity or discussion oriented were dominated by note taking and writing of spellings on the blackboard by the teacher. These lessons were not engaging to students compared to other lessons with the same teacher that involved students' participation through hands on activity and discussions that encouraged students to share experiences on the topic of the lesson. In my view simplifying English language to the level of students also has the risk of limiting the development of students vocabulary use to advanced level necessary in higher order thinking.

According to the teachers, another observation that limited students' use of English language was the tendency to form groups of the same ethnic speakers or urban youths during socialization outside of class where they communicated in their mother tongue, Kiswahili, or in *sheng*. This exclusive homogeneous groupings according to participants placed barriers on learners' ability to improve their English language proficiency. From the interviews, I identified



two varied perceptions of teachers when addressing issues of English language proficiency in their teaching and learning. One category of teachers emphasized on the learners' English language proficiency during their teaching besides ensuring students abilities to understand content. Such teachers limited communication in the learning process to only English. In this case students who lacked proficiency in English language are likely to be less engaged in the learning process and were erroneously labeled as *slow learners*. Wright (1993) and Rubagumya (1994) indicated how meaningful learning for students who lack proficiency in English is often curtailed due to communication barrier. Propagates of multilingualism (Brock-Utne, 2005; Bunyi, 1999; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001) indicate that differences in English language proficiency results in unequal education and economic opportunities for students. Mazrui (1997) reiterates that the use of international languages in education effectively advantages the children of the elite marginalizing students from the other social classes in the society. In Site C for example the school has a strict policy of speaking English only in the school environment and punishment was administered to students who were perceived to be resistant to the policy. Although the policy was instituted in good faith to nurture students toward English language proficiency, students perceived the policy as oppressive evoking resistance when they colluded to do away with the "disc" that was labeling them as deficient in English language.

The school administrators and teachers in this school misinterpreted students reaction to the language policy to mean resistance to speaking in English, to which they responded with punitive action against those perceived to be resisting. In such cases it seems that the message is not just about bilingualism and English language as a medium of instruction but more fundamentally it is a message about what kinds of identity are acceptable in the classrooms, the school, and the mainstream work environment. Studies (Mazrui, 1997; Bourdieu & Passeron,

1990; Freire, 1994; O'Loughlin, 1995) indicate how language can represent the key to power of the dominant group in this case the Kenyan elites and an oppressive tool to the marginalized groups in the society. As stated by O'Loughlin, students come to the learning setting with their own emergent identities, influenced by their membership in particular cultural groups. Yet students are forced to give up their own framework of meaning in order to adopt school discourses on the schools' terms. Hence the need for Kenyan high school teachers to recognize the multiple intersecting discourses of the learning setting and create opportunities for students to negotiate using their own narrative modes.

My interpretation as a researcher in this situation was that students were resisting the policy and not the language because they all know the academic advantages of being proficient in English language. Studies (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Brock-Utne, 2005; Bunyi, 1999) indicated that other languages too have value within specific social contexts, and yet schools promote the value of English language above other indigenous languages. The authors contend that schools should nurture the use of all languages in the schooling process given their cultural values as instruments of socio-cultural identity formation of students.

A second category of teachers focused on students' understanding of concepts and embraced multilingualism in their classrooms as a way to enhancing students' participation. These teachers indicated how they allowed students to use *sheng*, Kiswahili, and English in their communication as long as it enabled them to understand the concepts. Brock-Utne (2005) and Bunyi (1999) explicates the potentials of multilingualism in the education system of the African states as it enhances students' literacy development. Gender as a factor was also viewed as significant in influencing students' performance by some of the teachers, especially those in co-education day schools.

## **5.4 Gender Influence in Classrooms**

A major troubling issue arising from the study is the participating teachers' perception of the influence of gender differences in their practice and students learning. Thirty six out of fifty six teachers did not view gender differences as significant in their implementation of the curriculum. Those who found gender to be significant (20/56), a large proportion were female teachers in co-education schools (Sites A & B). Teachers in the study who did not perceive gender as an influential factor in their practice and students' learning may not be able to challenge practices that subordinate and dominate gender relationships in the classrooms. This confirms findings by Chege (2006) and Ndunda (1998) that there is still need to sensitize people at the community level and in teacher training programs to enhance pre-service and in-service teachers understanding of gender inequality and how to address it.

It is only when teachers acknowledge and address gender differences in their classrooms that they will be able to address issues of gender equity in the curriculum content and implementation processes. This means that the Kenya government's policy framework on gender and education (MOEST, 2005) that focuses on creating equitable access to education of boys and girls as a measure of success toward gender equality need to be reviewed. This seems to make invisible other characteristics of gender especially in single sex schools given the large numbers, which depicts a large proportion of girls or boys in single sex schools as equitable access to gender in high school education. Ludvig (2006) argue that gender is a category that is often normalized in most social settings since individuals are often not conscious and rarely questions it. This can partly explain why teachers in co-education schools in the study saw gender as a factor but not their colleagues in single sex schools.

Gender difference in co-education schools involved in the study is definitely an issue of concern as stated by participants given the low enrollment of girls (figures 1). In Site A, girls were only twenty six percent compared to seventy four percent of their male counterparts, while enrolment of girls in site B was even lower; twenty-three percent were girls compared to seventy-seven percent enrolments for boys. Teachers explained girls' low enrolment in these schools as resulting from parents' preference to enroll their daughters in single-sex boarding schools, which they perceived to provide better education opportunities than day co-education schools. Research by UNICEF (2004) and Chege (2003) confirms parents' preference for boarding facilities for girls given the risky challenges facing them on their way to schools and household responsibilities that limits their study time at home. Co-educational day schools are assumed to bare more risks on girls' education than it does to their male counterparts. This indicates that the Kenya government recommendation to establish more co-education day schools as a way to expanding access to high schools (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005) for students from arid, semi-arid, rural, and slum areas of the cities are not likely to benefit education of girls in the society.

Teachers in co-educational schools (Sites A and B) cited academic differences resulting in girls poor performance in national examinations compared to their male colleagues. Although they agreed that girls are not academically inferior to boys but rather they argued that the cultural roles and domestic tasks tend to foster different gender's perceptions of their different strengths and dispositions in co-education classes. As a result of the differential socialization experiences, different genders bring to the class different interests and confidence levels in learning that needs to be taken into account by teachers. Research on gender and government reports (MOEST, 2005; Chege, 2004; UNICEF, 2004) indicate the strong cultural influence on the different

expectations of societal gender roles in determining levels of inspiration for girls and boys in academic achievement. It reveals the view of gender differences in academic achievement within certain cultural lenses depending on ways in which individuals' have been socialized in their communities. Norton (2000) and Chege (2004), indicates how students' identities provide ways to leverage social status and power within specific context such as classrooms. These authors argue that schools are key socializing sites for construction of identities such as gender.

Factors identified by participating teachers in co-educational schools as contributing to academic differences in gender performance are: first, the proportionately smaller numbers of female students in these classrooms that is believed to create feelings of vulnerability among girls, affecting their self-esteem. This, according to teachers' observations, limits girls' participation in the learning process, especially when they receive less support from their male counterparts. The second factor is when the youths engage in relationships, teachers found this to impact girls' concentration in class and their academic work more than it did to the boys, more so when those involved are in the same classroom space. The participating teachers indicated that in the lower classes (freshmen and sophomore years) girls performed as well as boys and sometimes even better, but their academic performance starts to decline as they enter into their senior years.

Research and government reports (MOEST, 2005; Chege, 2004; UNICEF, 2004) indicate the high drop out rates of girls due to early marriages and pregnancies. In the three schools (Sites A, B, & D) girls' dropout rates resulting from pregnancy or early marriages was not a common phenomenon. This has been attributed to the support from the guidance and counseling units in these schools, which was perceived to be very effective in guiding girls' through what teachers termed as responsible behavior. Although the dropout rate for girls in the participating schools

improved, teachers indicated that gender disparities still exist due to cultural factors especially among students from conservative communities. These communities have preferences for boys' education putting girls at a disadvantage, especially when there are limited resources. Such communities still marry off girls at an early age, depriving them of opportunities to education.

This phenomenon impacts girls in both co-educational and single sex boarding schools because teachers argue that it creates a sense of complacency among these girls when it comes to setting education goals. Because these cultures do not place high aspirations for girls' education, girls from these communities do not set high academic goals for themselves. This claim by teachers is supported by findings of recent research on gender and Kenya government reports (Chege, 2004; Ndunda, 1995, 1998; Republic of Kenya, 2005; UNICEF, 2004), which concur that realization of girls' equal access to education continues to be impeded by inadequate policy guidelines, poverty, cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

Teachers in the study viewed the government policy (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005) that allows girls with children or those from early marriages to re-enter into high school to be a positive effort toward addressing gender disparity education. However, teachers felt that there were limitations with this policy in achieving the intended objective. According to these teachers, the policy fails to rationalize the psychological and emotional challenges that such girls experience among their peers and the school community, given the stigma placed on them for having children outside marriage. Most Kenyan ethnic communities still stigmatize having children outside marriage, especially girls from low socio-economic settings since parents would not find it viable spending the families' meager resources on their education. This, according to the participants, restricts girls' re-integration into the school system unless they enroll in schools outside their locality where their status was not publicized.

Deducing from the emerging issues raised by these teachers on the increased numbers of students with financial need and vulnerable students in these schools, it is unlikely that the policy of girls' re-entry into the education system recognizes the plight of girls from low socio-economic status. Such girls might not afford to have baby sitters or may be forced to work to support themselves due to lack of economic empowerment, reducing their chances of continuing with their education. Studies by UNICEF (2004) indicate child labor as one prominent evil practice that impedes education of girls from poor families in Kenya. Therefore, while the policy may benefit greatly girls from affluent class, it is not likely to have a significant impact on the education of girls in the low socio-income stratus. Therefore, the intersection of culture, gender, and economic positioning of girls becomes significant factors that need to be understood when implementing the government policy of girls' re-entry into education. This confirms the argument put forth by intersectionality theorists (E.g. Harding, 1997; Klinger, 1995; McCall, 2005), that policies which address issues of inequality from a single dimensional perspective obscures other forms of marginalization resulting from intersection of other existing individual identities and differences.

Another policy that has been implemented to support girls from poor backgrounds cited by teachers is the bursary system (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005) aimed at attracting girls from slums and rural areas to overcome cultural barriers by providing financial support for education of such girls. According to participating teachers, the policy has not been effective given the governments' decision to allocate bursaries through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) instead of the schools as was the case in previous years. The system has not been beneficial to many students in financial need in these schools. Ndunda (1995) argued that gender inequality is entrenched in Kenya's policy development and that gender inequality intersects and

exacerbates other forms of inequality such as poverty and ethnic chauvinism. Therefore, such policies are not likely to address gender inequality effectively in social settings. In this study I argue that gender inequality is often addressed in isolation and that recognizing the intersectionality of gender inequality with other forms of inequality would greatly enhance education opportunities especially for girls from conservative and poor backgrounds.

#### 5.4.1 Theorizing Gender in Co-education Classrooms

Girls in co-education learning environment were constructed by teachers as shy, because they felt intimidated by their male colleagues making them feel insecure, given that they were minority in these spaces. Characterizing girls as shy can be problematic because that might make invisible, other unique characteristics that girls bring into the classrooms that need to be addressed during the learning process. Studies and government of Kenya education reports (Chege, 2003; MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005; UNICEF, 2004) indicate the need to sensitize teachers on gender equity in their practice. Teachers need to take into consideration differences in learning styles, interests, and teaching approaches that may be appealing to boys and girls. Mathematics teachers in the study identified examples in topics like commercial arithmetic and learning activities in probability for example playing cards, chase, and darts that does not resonate with girls. According to these teachers, such examples and activities promote stereotypes of gender abilities limiting girls' participation in the classroom discussions in the topics, while giving an edge to boys in the learning process.

When teachers discussed the impact of girlfriend and boyfriend relationships, girls were presented as passive partners who were emotionally incompetent and incapable of differentiating their love life from academic interests. Boys on the other hand were constructed as distracters to girls' academic achievement depicting them as exploitative individuals who caused girls to loose



interest in their school work. At the same time boys emerged as being emotionally superior with greater abilities to balance academic success with their love relationships. This kind of representation is problematic, given that the Ministry of Education (MOEST, 2004; Republic of Kenya, 2005) aims at sensitizing teachers to develop learning environments that empowers both girls and boys. The discourse of distraction portrays boys as potential predators and girls as victims, therefore, perpetuating the societal stereotype of women as the weaker sex. This representation of girls in inferior positioning was confirmed, when teachers indicated that girls involved in a relationships if they happen to come from the same class were separated into different classrooms as a way to improving the academic success of girls. This representation of boys and girls fails to make visible the unique characteristics that each gender brings into the learning spaces that may be supportive to each others learning.

Gender relationship in the classrooms need to encourage both boys and girls to seek out their peers as potential sources of academic support in order to increase the social capital for academic achievement. Therefore, teachers need to emphasize in their classrooms the virtue of collaboration among sexes. Classrooms need to provide spaces for students to articulate and negotiate their cultural and gender identities (Chege, 2004; Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003; Norton, 2000). Norton and Chege reiterated that classrooms are spaces where culture, ethnic, and gender are connected, with power and status as a central part of students' struggle for identity. Hence the gender struggles are produced in classrooms in a way that both teachers and students participate as gendered agents. It also makes invisible individual characteristics because being a boy or girl is only a general characteristic, but there are other differences among members of the same gender that needs to be explored and addressed. Therefore, teachers need to conceptualize gender differences beyond the comparison of boys and girls, and keep in mind

that gender bias does not only affect girls. It also affects boys, because when they see their female counterparts not participating actively in the classroom or being perceived as emotionally incapable, they are less likely to treat girls as equals and with respect. In this case teachers need to be sensitized on the need to reconstruct boyfriend and girlfriend relationships to reflect responsible partnerships.

McLaren (2003), argue that when teachers acknowledge that curriculum is a form of cultural politics then such perspectives empower them to view classrooms differently. Such a perspective provides teachers with a lens to critically analyze how classroom relationships work to sustain gender stereotypes or create genuine reciprocal relationships in the learning process. Participating teachers' views on how they perceive their teacher education experiences in preparing them for work in diverse classrooms were elucidated to provide insight on their preparation to work with students differences.

## **5.5 Teacher Preparation for Diverse Classrooms**

Noted from the findings were the different views by participants on how their teacher training experiences prepared them for work in diverse classroom settings. Majority of the teachers felt that their teacher preparation for work with diverse student population was either minimal or did not adequately prepare them for most of the issues they have encountered in their classrooms. Only sixteen teachers found their teacher education training and experiences to have been adequate. They found their knowledge from psychology and methods courses to be valuable in their work with diverse students.

Teachers who felt that their teacher education training and experience was not adequate were of the opinion that teaching diverse student population is a practical wisdom. They found experiences acquired during their teaching more useful than the theories learnt in their teacher

education programs. Teachers stated how building their understanding on the nature and significant influences of students' differences in their classrooms was based on experiential knowledge gained through situated learning over a period of time in their teaching process. They stated that experiential knowledge is grounded on personal understanding of students' characteristics which can only be gained through interactions with students in real practical situations and within specific contexts. According to these participants, being able to effectively teach students from diverse backgrounds requires that they engage in a process of experiential learning building upon years of classroom exposure to different institutional contexts. This supports Indoshi's (2003) argument that new teachers graduating from teacher training can only gain self-actualized status gradually through a time period of experiences in actual classroom practice. Schon (1983) propagates the importance of authority of experience as the only way by which pre-service teachers can advance their teaching practice.

All participants indicated having some knowledge and training in psychology, theories of learning, and teaching methods from their teacher education background. They identified knowledge in psychology as having been very useful in enhancing their understanding on cognitive development, developmental stages of youths, and appropriate ways of measuring students' levels of knowledge and understanding. Others viewed their knowledge in sociology of education as having enhanced their understanding on challenges impacting learning of students from marginalized backgrounds. These courses as argued by participants provided them with a framework from which to develop strategies that support emotional and psychological impacts on the youths from emerging social issues in order to improve their academic achievement.

Despite participants' appreciation of their knowledge in psychology, they indicated that it was not adequate as a stand-alone subject in addressing some of the cultural issues they encounter in the classroom setting. They argued that their theoretical base was too abstract since they were taught without reference to the realities of the classroom context. Liberman (1990) concur that most novice teachers enter the profession with theoretical understanding but often there is a missing link with the practical reality about the needs and challenges of the youth in high schools. Participants specifically took issue with the way psychology was taught indicating that the theories were based on western perspectives especially theories on child development. According to these participants, the psychology courses offered assume a universal standard of youth development ignoring the cultural context in which Kenyan children are brought up in that has significant influence on their nurturing. They argued that certain context of youth development varied among ethnic groups, especially after initiations, and need to be understood within a specific culture and cannot be applied or generalized across students from other groups. Therefore, teachers understanding of the cultural values of students is necessary if different from their own.

Giroux (1988) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) stated that students bring into the classrooms different histories, social, and cultural backgrounds which shape their interests and behavior and so teachers need to understand and go beyond the knowledge of psychology. Some of the female participants indicated the strain on classroom relationships caused by behavior of some of their male students' who were socialized in their cultures to believe that women were inferior resulting in lack of respect for women. Studies by Chege (2004) indicate how teachers and students identities are in constant negotiation in the classroom settings. This is

because teachers interactions with students from the opposite sex appear to be deeply rooted in a complex cultural gender power relations.

However some of the teaching colleagues viewed the challenge facing the female teachers to first and foremost be understood within the complexities of the cultural contexts of some of the male students if they are to bridge the strained relationships, avoiding assumptions and stereotypes. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) maintain that helping teachers reflect on personal misconceptions enables them confront embedded prejudices they may hold about students from differing cultural background.

It was evident from the findings that some teachers did not view their practice as being informed by a theory, which is problematic because practice need not stand outside of a theoretical framework. The missing link between theory and practice may be explained by the concern raised in the government reports (MOEST, 2005; Kamunge Report, 1988; Republic of Kenya, 2005) on how teacher education is overburdened with too much theory and subject content but very little practice. The Kamunge Report viewed disconnect as arising from the inadequate training period allocated to teacher education programs at the university level. This does not provide ample time for teacher educators to ground pre-service teachers in theory and practical aspects of teaching. With the current increase in the duration of teacher preparation at the university to four years (Mackay Report, 1981), there is need to re-evaluate the teacher education programs to establish ways in which they now assist pre-service teachers to weave theory and practice as they work in their classrooms.

## **5.6 Relationship of Findings to the Study's Theoretical Frameworks**

The key components of intersectionality and critical theories provided in-depth understanding of this study given the array of differences and identities explicated by teachers as

influencing their practice and students' learning (Crenshaw, 2001; Davis, 1992; Freire, 1994; Giroux, 2003; Klinger, 2006; Ludvig, 2006). These factors tended to interact in a complex way and hence could not be addressed as separate factors according to the teachers in the study. Instead, they perceived a cluster of factors such as English language proficiency, motivation levels, socio-economic status, entry behavior, primary education, and cultural backgrounds among other differences as having greater influence in teaching and learning and subsequent academic achievements. For example socio-economic status of students determined their primary school experiences, the level of English language proficiency, entry behavior, supportive learning resources, and subsequently education opportunities of each gender. This perception supports the views of intersectionality theorists (Anthias & Yuval-Crenshaw, 2001; Davis, 1992; Klinger, 2006; Ludvig, 2006) that investigating a single factor may not provide accurate information on how it enables or disables teaching and learning given the existence of other factors that intersect influencing the process of teaching and learning.

Findings in the study bring out the aspect of intersubjectivity as an important aspect in diverse classrooms that teachers need to be aware of (Crenshaw, 2001; McCall, 2005). In diverse classrooms both teachers and students in Kenya's high schools bring into the learning environment multiple identities and differences as reflected in the discussion in Chapter Four Section 1 (Figures 1- 4). Therefore, making classrooms part of the microcosm in which teachers' and students' multiple identities intersect during their interaction in the learning process. This determines individuals' multiple perceptions, cognition, appreciations, practices, and differing abilities to respond to teaching and learning experiences and classroom relationships.

Female teachers cultural and gender identities created tension in their relationship with male students who they viewed as not respectful to them because of the way women are represented within differing cultural settings embedded in male students' perceptions of women. They argued that male students' behavior results from conservative cultural values engrained in communities that continue to perpetuate male dominance over women. Therefore, it was important to elucidate how teachers provided spaces for negotiating different perspectives between themselves and students and among students from different cultural settings in the learning process. Critical pedagogy theorists (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003), reiterate that classrooms are spaces characterized by contestation and resistance resulting from its diverse nature. The authors indicate that teachers should play a central role in guiding students through this process of negotiating positions and transforming identities to avoid students developing low self-perceptions and teachers against undue stereotypes of their students' behavior.

Another example of identity negotiation was evidenced in the power dynamics in Site C where the institutional policy established English as the only acceptable medium of communication in the school environment. The message is not basically about multilingualism and the use of English as the medium of instruction, fundamentally it is interpreted by students in the school to mean the kinds of identities acceptable in the school and classrooms. As stated by Freire (1994) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) language serves as a focal point for cultural identity as it provides a common bond for individuals with similar linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, teachers in Site C need to understand and recognize the value of and how students' mother tongue, Kiswahili, and *sheng* a language spoken by urban youths form an integral part of their cultural and social identities. Students' resistance toward the English-only policy in Site C reflects their struggle to redefine their own identities. Critical pedagogy advocates (Chege,

2003; Freire, 1994; Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003) indicate that teachers should support students in questioning the validity of institutional policies and structures perceived as oppressive.

In this study using intersectionality theory helped to examine how categories of differences and identities presented through teachers' narratives interplay and intersect within Kenyan urban high school classrooms. This was useful in analyzing the relationships and interactions between teachers and students from diverse backgrounds within the classrooms as presented from interviews and questionnaire data. The aim was to make visible some of the specific identities and differences mentioned by teachers in contributing to the discussions of the dynamism of subjectivities and power relations experienced by students and teachers.

Findings of this study also confirm the limitations of intersectionality theory cautioned by Klinger (2006), that because the list of differences and identities is seemingly indefinite, it becomes challenging to take into account all the differences. According to Klinger, the approach starts to get blurred when questions are raised on the prioritization and recognitions of differences by individuals which require individuals to define a point of closure. The teachers' point of closure during the study was when differences were identified within context, gender, and discipline. As a researcher, my point of closure was defined by the scope and context of the research framework, which were the four urban schools that participated in the study. Hence the employment of intersectionality theory in this study, provided a lens through which teachers and myself as the researcher, analyzed the dynamic interplay of different education policies, institutional structures, classroom cultures, societal, and home cultures in influencing teachers performance and students' academic achievement (Ludvig, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Findings of the study also confirms critical pedagogists' (Giroux, 1988, 2003; McLaren, 2003; Freire, 1994) notion that schools can become sites of resistance as well as sites for



democratic possibilities. This comes about through concerted efforts of teachers and students working together to transform their learning environment. There were concerted efforts expressed by teachers in the study to create democratic classrooms in which all voices were promoted during the learning process. Other efforts included provision of basic needs, emotional and psychological support in order to retain students in the school system. The struggle by the participating teachers aimed at unveiling education possibilities for marginalized students to enable them participate in the socio-economic realms of the mainstream society.

## **5.7 Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed findings of the study based on the three research questions, relationship with previous studies, and theoretical frameworks to identify how teachers in the study conceptualized diversity in their practice. How teachers conceptualized students' differences informed their approaches to teaching and the identities they adopted when addressing students' social, psychological, and academic needs in their contexts. Teachers' philosophical orientation on constructivism and ethics of care informed their practice and relationships with their students. Analyzing from teachers responses how their teacher education training empowered them to work in diverse classrooms, a majority indicated that their experiences in the classroom were more supportive. They indicated limitations of their teacher training as having not been able to connect theory to classroom practice and that it narrowly defined differences to ability and developmental characteristics of learners. In this discussion I acknowledge the multiple challenges that limit teachers' effective transformation of their practice and learning.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusion, Implications, Recommendations, and Further Research**

#### **6.0 Conclusion**

In this study I elucidated how urban high schools in one of Western Kenya's towns teachers conceptualized students' differences in their classrooms and ways in which these differences influenced curriculum implementation and students learning. These teachers faced the reality that urban high schools in Kenya continue to become learning spaces where increasingly heterogeneous student and teacher population come into contact. This means that as individuals they bring into the schools and classrooms different histories embedded in gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic, prior education, motivation, entry behavior, proficiency in English language, and religious differences (Crenshaw, 2001; Freire, 1994; Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003; Harding, 1997) that shape their needs and behavior in many complex ways.

Although there were divergent views on how certain factors like religion, culture, and gender influenced teaching and learning depending on participant's gender, the type of school, and the discipline, there was consensus that differences do exist and must be addressed. Therefore, if teachers are to achieve the targeted mean scores as per the Ministry of Education's requirement and students' successful completion of high school education, then understanding the impact of these differences is important. The process of illuminating teachers' perceptions of students' differences and their reflection on influences of these differences on teachers' practice and students' learning processes appeared to be fruitful. It was successful both in terms of eliciting a rich and detailed accounts of teachers' perceptions of and practice in diverse classrooms and as a developmental process for those teachers concerned about their students at a more personal level. My best attempts to answer the research questions comprised my sincere

hope to engage teachers in the discourse with a view that they would see the need to become transformative intellectuals that Giroux (1988) emphasized in his work as a virtue that teachers need to emulate.

## **6.1 Summary of Findings**

Chapter four's sections 1 of this study revealed a range of multiple layered differences and identities that both teachers and students bring into their classroom settings. These differences are outlined in figures 1-2 and table 2. These findings were in response to the first question of this study that aimed at illuminating: What are Kenya's urban high school teachers' perceptions of students' differences in the classroom? According to teachers in the study, understanding students' differences assisted them in challenging the notion of uniformity instead they viewed students as individuals with different needs and privileges as they enter the learning environments. Wlodkowski and Ginsburg (1995) argued that when teachers do not acknowledge the variation of differences in experiences among students, they are likely to view students based on common norms and expected behavior. Critical pedagogy advocates (Banks & Banks, 2004; Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003), maintains that for teachers to provide inclusive learning environments, they must recognize arrays of factors that create power differentials in classrooms.

Section two of chapter four focused on addressing answers to question two on: how do students' differences influence the way teachers plan for teaching resources, learning activities, implementation of curriculum content, teaching strategies, and students learning? It is eminent from teachers' explanations that to scaffold students through successful academic outcomes they must understand the characteristics of learners. Findings show ways in which the participating teachers struggled to address the diverse needs of students by embracing multiple roles and strategies in teaching in order to make learning relevant and participatory. Teachers' in the study

explained how their roles expanded due to emerging responsibilities created by students' different needs within and outside of the classrooms. At the same time it was clear that certain differences like culture and religion were deemed invisible by a majority of participants.

Elucidating Kenya's urban high school teachers' perceptions of diversity in their classrooms is one way of tracing core elements of their teaching and instructional differentiations. It was clear that teachers' understanding of students' differences were supportive in their decisions when planning and executing pedagogical strategies that were viewed as inclusive to students' differences. It was also clear from the findings that when teachers build self-confidence among students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with low academic achievement and limited proficiency in English language, then students were more determined to making efforts to improve on their limitations and have the confidence to succeed in their learning. When the teachers in the study defined their roles in terms of promoting equal education opportunities for all their students, it reflected how their interactions with diverse students can embody transformative potential that challenges relations of power (Giroux, 2003; Harding, 1997; McCall, 2005) as manifested in the classrooms and the school contexts

Findings also revealed how school policies are central in supporting teachers work in diverse classrooms and ensuring academic achievement of students irrespective of their diverse backgrounds. Although institutional policies that provided negative reinforcement in turn led to resistance and contempt in students' institutional authority despite the good intentions of the policy framework. At the same time it was significant that teachers' practice continue to be greatly defined by external policies like the Ministry of Education's policy of performance contract and national examination impacting their decisions on how to implement the curriculum. Participants indicated how high stakes policy and national examinations dissuaded

them from focusing on teaching approaches deemed to be effective in making curriculum content relevant to students' diverse experiences. Instead they sometimes focused on curriculum coverage as opposed to building on learners' in-depth understanding of content.

Findings illuminated the overwhelming challenges that Kenya's urban high school teachers face as they work with students from diverse backgrounds to achieve greater educational achievements in a rapidly changing society in which some groups have greater opportunities than others. This is compounded with the number of orphans in schools due partly to the effect of HIV/AIDS pandemic and the growing levels of poverty status of many students especially those living in single female headed households, rural, arid, semi-arid, and slum areas (Ayako & Katumanga, 1997; MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Teachers' narratives indicated their struggles to make a difference in students' education in these difficult and challenging circumstances created by complexity of students' diverse nature while lacking the time, resources materials, and equipments to work with. These conditions limited teachers' ability to pursue effective change in students learning not only in the classrooms but also beyond these classrooms.

At the same time findings revealed that there are alternatives to addressing the current trends and conditions limiting academic achievement of students from marginalized groups but this cannot be realized without the active engagement of teachers on behalf of the students (Freire, 1994; Giroux, 1988). As transformative professionals Kenyan high school teachers can embrace the responsibility for educational and social activism in order to improve students' academic performance beyond classroom learning. Unless and until teachers become actively engaged in the struggle against current oppressive conditions (Freire; 1994; Giroux, 1988, 2003; McLaren, 2003), which threaten the education of marginalized and vulnerable students, then

Kenya's high schools will continue to mass produce human capital for the rich while simultaneously failing to meet the needs of poor students. The way forward as revealed in this study is helping to build teaching as a caring profession that Freire (1994) so clearly envisioned.

The third research question highlighted participating teachers' perspective on how they viewed their teacher preparation in enhancing their knowledge and skills to work with students from diverse backgrounds. The purpose was to elucidate: In what way do teachers perceive their teacher education as having prepared them for work in diverse classrooms? The Kenya government reports (MOEST, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2005) have raised concerns over the adequacy of high school teacher preparation in meeting the needs of the students and their communities. Arising from participants responses indicated the divergent views on how teachers perceived the adequacy of their training. Most of the participants viewed their teacher education experiences as having been too theoretical and lacked the connection with the realities in the classroom. These teachers believed that their experiences in their practice were more useful in addressing students' diverse needs. This perspective has been echoed in the Kenya government Report (Koech Report, 2000) and studies by Liberman (1990). Liberman indicated how new teachers enter the profession with more theoretical grounding and less experiential knowledge.

## **6.2 Implications of the Study**

This study is significant to high school teachers, school administrators, and teacher educators by elucidating the need to develop more effective educational activities that can respond to the current emerging issues in the study influencing learning of Kenyan high school youths. Results of this study will help school administrators, teachers, and those involved in secondary education to know and understand the extent to which students' differences identified by participants influence teachers' classroom performance and students' overall academic

achievement. The knowledge constructed will assist teachers strategize on ways of improving students' academic, social, and economic skills needed for survival in the education system by acknowledging ways in which students' differences enable and disable teaching and learning.

Moreover the information can be used by the Ministry to illuminate teachers' views on the current policy on performance contract, which threatens to make teaching profession high stakes. The Ministry of education can use the information from this study also to evaluate the success of the on-going initiatives for example: (1) Professional development for mathematics and science teachers through SMASSE aimed at enhancing teaching approaches that are more student-centered. (2) Assessing the effects of initiatives aimed at sensitizing teachers toward developing gender sensitive learning environments and maintaining the continuation of education of girls from low socio-economic, conservative cultural backgrounds, and those with children outside marriage or from forced marriages. (3) Evaluate the effectiveness of the current disbursement procedure of bursary scholarships to needy students through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). (4) Evaluate the current Ministry of Education recommendation aimed at increasing day schools in low income areas as way to addressing high cost issues in education hoping to increase students' access to high school. Findings of this study show that the current co-education day high schools benefit boys more than girls and this need to be addressed.

Participating teachers' views of diversity are significant in framing a situated theory for curriculum in teacher education that would appropriately prepare pre-service students and provide professional development for current practicing teachers. The nature of the curriculum should put into perspectives the emerging challenges presented by teachers in this study experienced in diverse classroom environments. Findings also challenge teacher education

institutions to evaluate their current teacher education programs with the purpose of aligning them to the needs of high school youths.

Teachers' views on the role of theory and experiential knowledge is particularly important to teacher educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers in evaluating the adequacy of the current teacher education curriculum in preparing teachers for the diverse student population in Kenyan high schools. Helping teachers integrate theory into their practice need to be addressed at the training level. Findings reported in this study adds to the body of literature on teachers' professional development with regard to how preparation of teachers can address effectiveness of teachers work within the ever changing students' differences in classroom environments. It brings into the fore of the on-going discourse of classroom improvement in Kenya's high schools a different lens that emphasizes the need to incorporate the hidden curriculum as an important aspect of teaching in diverse classrooms.

#### 6.2.1 Contribution of Findings to Diversity Theory

Findings of this study also contribute to the body of literature on diversity in education from the perspective of the Kenyan high school teachers' contexts. The body of literature on diversity that informed this study was based on North American perspective. The literature provided different aspects of approaches to diversity emphasizing different ideologies depending on the social, educational, economic, and political orientations and context of the studies (E.g. Banks & Banks, 2004; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990). The diversity advocates either focused more narrowly on awareness on specific issues for example bilingualism or cultural diversity or advocated for a broader critical approach (Sleeter & Grant, 1999) to diversity as transformation framework of the education system.



Emerging from the findings is how teachers in this study presented their understanding and practice in diverse classrooms reflecting their perspective of diversity as an ever-expanding awareness of the dynamics of intersections of several factors and identities. This definition perceives teaching for diversity as a set of conscious practices that involves recognizing and understanding these differences as categories that are not fixed but dependant on the context, gender of the teacher, and discipline. Participating teachers also show how teaching for diversity in the Kenyan context should embrace a caring relationship approach especially when addressing the needs of economically disadvantaged and vulnerable students. Therefore, reflecting that teaching for diversity in Kenya embrace pedagogy of care as an effective strategy.

The conception of diversity by North American scholars may have a slight difference from that of teachers on the study based on the aspects of emphasis on the different tenets of diversity. For example North American debate on diversity in some instances is framed within an approach of sharing of cultural knowledge from diverse groups to enrich students understanding and appreciation of those cultures different from theirs. The purpose is to redress the socio-cultural stereotypes that have been historically constructed along the demarcations of the diverse demographic population of the North American society (Banks, 1999; Grant & Sleeter, 2003). Teachers in this study depart from this conceptualization of ethnic cultural differences as accounting for educational attainment of students. Ethnic differences was rendered invisible through the process of normalization that majority of students came from urban areas. Although a majority of participating teachers viewed ethnic backgrounds of students as not significant in their practice and learning, we cannot understate the significance of ethnicity in terms of socio-economic and political power in the Kenyan context. Students are

advantaged or disadvantaged in many aspects in the Kenyan society on the basis of their ethnic affiliations (Ayako & Katumanga, 1997) and teachers need to be critical of this.

Another point of divergent is the approach to diversity by the North American scholars focusing on marginalization of students from minority groups, therefore aiming to challenge the domination of power by the dominant groups. This kind of perception of minority/dominant group only featured on issues of gender equity in co-education study sites. The reason for the invisibility is probably due to the fact that students who may find themselves as minorities in any of the schools might not necessarily belong to a minority group at the macro level. Overall the perspective of diversity in education by teachers in the study and North American scholars have a common vision, to address issues of equity created by students' diversity given that schools are contested public spaces (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2003). The objective is to focus on innovations of curriculum and pedagogies that reflect relevance and equity of access in response to students' diversity in order to avail education opportunities for all.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made from the current challenges facing Kenya's urban high school teachers' work with a diverse student population. First, findings of the study indicate the inability of the current disbursement of bursary scholarships through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in cushioning students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable groups against adverse effects of escalating costs of tuition fees. The philosophy behind the scheme was to ensure that no child who is qualified for high school education is denied access due to inability to pay school fees. Yet, teachers argue that the majority of the poor and vulnerable students in their schools are unable to access the benefits accruing from bursary scholarships.

Through this study I recommend that the CDF bursary team work in liaison with the schools since teachers and administrators immediacy to students and their families enables them to identify students who are in need of the bursary. Schools in turn need to come up with efficient bursary monitoring system that will include:

1. Adequate guidelines on how to identify needy students for bursary.
2. Develop a record-keeping system for follow-up purposes.
3. Ensure genuine and equitable allocation of funds to the very needy students.
4. Ensure good financial management and transparency.
5. Ensure sustainable funds sourcing from other avenues rather than depend on the Ministry funding.

This way, the bursary funding will ensure meaningful impact on needy students who are currently at the point of dropping out of the school system if teachers and the administration do not assist. The major challenge experienced during data collection was accessing archival documents on the number of students currently on bursary or who have applied for bursary in the schools that partly resulted from record-keeping procedures.

The second recommendation arises from the differing perspectives on the impact of gender on students' learning. It seemed that gender issues were viewed in terms of an academic comparison between boys and girls making gender issues invisible in single sex schools. This means that the ongoing Ministry of Education initiatives that target girls only can create invisibility on gender issues in girls' only schools. This is because such frameworks view girls as an essentialized category, yet there are other unique differences highlighted in the study that intersect affecting individuals differently. It was also evident that gender differences were more pronounced in co-education schools but not in single sex schools, which is problematic given

that male teachers teach in these schools as well. Therefore, both female and male teachers have a role of motivating students towards academic achievements especially in disciplines that have been stereotyped as male domains like mathematics and science. Therefore, there is a need to perceive gender equality and equity in its broader dimensions as an inclusive process that targets both girls and boys. If schools and classrooms are to become places where boys and girls feel safe and secure then there is need to raise the level of gender consciousness by helping teachers become aware of gender norms in the school curriculum and classroom setting.

Thirdly from the study, I have realized that there is need for teachers' professional development. Most of the teachers who participated in this study have taught for more than ten years but have hardly undergone any in-service training. The current Ministry of Education initiative for in-servicing of teachers focuses only on mathematics and science teachers, excluding teachers from other disciplines. In this case I suggest that all teachers be encouraged to undertake in-servicing through a similar program like SMASSE. Teaching for differences should go beyond gender and ability differences to include other aspects such as culture, religion, proficiency in English language, and socio-economic issues among other factors.

Currently SMASSE only addresses issues of gender sensitivity in their training programs. Fourthly, findings showed the importance of counseling units in the schools in supporting classroom learning and teachers practice. Yet teachers raised a number of challenges facing counseling teachers for example lack of professional development, resource materials, working space, and time allocation. I would recommend that guidance and counseling units be strengthened by providing teachers involved with the necessary professional development growth, facilities, and resources. In order for the teachers to dedicate more time to assist students, there is need to reduce their teaching workload.

Finally findings reflect under-representation of girls in co-education day high schools and subsequently their poor performance. In one of the government reports on education reforms (MOEST, 2005), it was recommended that more day schools be established in low income neighborhoods to reduce the cost and increase access to high school education for children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and girls. But findings of this study show that increasing more co-educational day schools would not benefit girls given the challenges perceived as hindering girls learning in such settings. In this case I recommend that the government increase the number of single-sex day schools, particularly girls' schools to improve access of girls from poor backgrounds into high school education.

#### **6.4 Further Research Direction**

There are three issues that are worthy of further research emerging from this study. First this study provided evidence that teachers' were aware of and acknowledged students' differences in their practices. It would be productive to undertake a longitudinal study and monitor how these perceptions translate into effective approaches in real classroom practice. I was not able to do this because of the limited time frame. In this longitudinal study it would be appropriate to bring in the voices of students. Students play a big part of the whole process, thus understanding their experiences in diverse classrooms and their relationships with peers and teachers is essential when implementing curriculum and designing learning strategies. Therefore, research is needed to explore how students examine the impact of differences in their learning and ways in which they view teachers, peers, and schools as supportive.

Second, findings highlighted the differing perspectives of how their teacher education programs prepared them for work with diverse student population. A very small number of teachers indicated that they were adequately prepared while the majority felt that their teacher

education program did not address a broad spectrum of issues on students' differences that they later encountered in the classrooms. Some of the teachers did not see the correlation between the theories taught and the applications in the classroom practice indicating disconnect between theory and practice. This suggests further research on the nature of the current teacher education programs to understand their effectiveness in preparing teachers for the current emerging differences in high school classrooms.

Finally, there is need for further research to explore teachers' conceptualization of gender differences in their classrooms beyond comparison of girls and boys performance. Teachers' understanding and definition of gender as they encounter new social and cultural contexts in their practice is important. In this study, twenty out of fifty-six teachers indicated that gender was not at all significant in their teaching or students' learning while those in single-sex schools found gender to be somewhat significant. This makes it necessary to further pursue these teachers' understanding of gender within their contexts. This is because teachers' prior experiences and notions of gender and gender norms are more likely to contribute to how they construct meaning and ideas about gender in their classrooms.

In conclusion findings of the study reveal how teaching and learning in a heterogeneous classroom environment are mediated by intersections and arrays of multiple layered identities and experiences of both teachers and students. This exposes both teachers and students to different types of privileges, challenges, advantages, and disadvantages in the Kenyan high school education system. It is also clear from the study that understanding the nature of and acknowledging these differences by teachers helps them engage in inclusive teaching and caring relationships that is supportive for all students' academic achievement irrespective of their background experiences.

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## Appendix A

### Participants' Informed Consent Letter



Faculty of Education  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Dear Sir/Madam,

Ref: Participation in Research Studies

I wish to request for your participation in a survey of my study entitled “Kenya’s urban High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Diversity in Education: Implications for Curriculum and Pedagogy.” The purpose of the study is to investigate Kenyan high-school teachers understanding of the nature of differences (ethnic, gender, socio-economic, religious, and linguistic) that students bring into their classrooms and how these differences influence teachers’ interpretation and planning strategies for implementing curriculum.

The outcomes of this study will inform you as teachers, policy makers, curriculum developers and public university teacher educators on the significance of students’ differences to high school classroom practices and teacher education programs. This is necessary in improving learning achievement for marginalized students and promoting social justice in our high school classrooms. The study forms part of the fulfillment of my doctor of Philosophy degree in Curriculum Studies.

If you are willing to participate please fill out the information required in the attached questionnaire to the best of your knowledge and the questionnaire will be collected from you at an agreed date. If you have any questions, clarifications, or desire further information about this study you may contact Co-Investigator Jenipher Owuor or Dr. Samson Nashon, principal investigator. If you have any concern about the research investigation or the researcher you may contact the Research Subject Information at the University Of British Columbia Office Of Research Services.

Thank you.

## Appendix B Questionnaire

### Instructions

Please answer all questions to the best of your knowledge. Do not write your names on the questionnaire. Check in the appropriate box where required.

**Note:** You may attach to the questionnaire any other information that you find to be useful in informing this study.

Name of institution \_\_\_\_\_

Area of subject specialization

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Gender      Male ☐                                      Female ☐

2. In what age group are you?

☐ 18 – 25

☐ 26 -35

☐ 36 – 45

☐ 46 – Above

3. Religious affiliation:

☐ Catholic

☐ Islam

☐ Protestant

☐ Traditional

☐ Hindu

☐ Bahai

☐ Presbyterian

☐ Seventh Day Adventist

Others Specify \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please indicate your ethnic community:

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Which of the following best describes your professional qualifications?**

☐ Diploma in Education

☐ Bachelor of Education

☐ Higher National Diploma in Education

☐ Masters in Education

Other types of certification \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Years of experience in teaching:**

☐ 2 or less

☐ 3 to 5

☐ 6-10

☐ 11-17

☐ 18 or more

**Indicate by circling the categories (on a scale of 1 to 5) below:**

7. (a) To what extent do you consider the following factors when planning your lessons, learning resources and teaching strategies?

(Not at all significant =1, Somehow significant =2, fairly significant =3, Significant=4, Very significant =5).

Item	Not at all significant	Somehow significant	Fairly significant	Significant	Very Significant
Socio-economic Status.	1	2	3	4	5
Religious affiliation.	1	2	3	4	5
English/Kiswahili language proficiency.	1	2	3	4	5
Ethnic background.	1	2	3	4	5
Students' disability.	1	2	3	4	5
Gender	1	2	3	4	5
Students' Giftedness.	1	2	3	4	5
Others Specify.	1	2	3	4	5

7. (b) To what extent do the following factors influence your role and responsibilities as a teacher in the classroom?

(Not at all significant=1, Somehow significant =2, Fairly significant =3, Significant=4, Very significant =5).

<b>Item</b>	<b>Not at all Significant</b>	<b>Somewhat significant</b>	<b>Fairly significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Very Significant</b>
Personal values of education.	1	2	3	4	5
Personal beliefs about education.	1	2	3	4	5
Personal education experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher training background.	1	2	3	4	5
Professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of the school/Ministry.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of the Examination Outcome.	1	2	3	4	5
Beliefs on your role as a change agent.	1	2	3	4	5
Others Specify.	1	2	3	4	5

8 . To what extent have the following factors influenced the way you view students' responsibilities and roles in learning process?

(Not at all significant =1, Somehow significant =2, Fairly significant =3, Significant=4, Very significant =5).

<b>Item</b>	<b>Not at all Significant</b>	<b>Somehow significant</b>	<b>Fairly significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Very Significant</b>
Personal values about education.	1	2	3	4	5
Personal beliefs about education.	1	2	3	4	5
Personal education experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher training background.	1	2	3	4	5
Professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of the school/Ministry.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of Examination outcome.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of Students' gender roles.	1	2	3	4	5
Perceived students' abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
Others Specify.	1	2	3	4	5

**9. To what extent have the following factors influenced your approaches to teaching?**

(Not at all significant =1, Somehow significant =2, Fairly significant =3, Significant=4, Very significant=5)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Not at all significant</b>	<b>Somewhat significant</b>	<b>Fairly significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Very significant</b>
Personal values of education.	1	2	3	4	5
Personal beliefs about teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
Education experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher training background.	1	2	3	4	5
Professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of the school/Ministry.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of the Examination Council.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of Students' gender roles.	1	2	3	4	5
Perceived students' abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
Others Specify.	1	2	3	4	5

**10 . Please circle the number that best corresponds to your level of agreement with each statement below:**

(Strongly Disagree =1, Do not Agree= 2, Somehow Agree=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Do not Agree</b>	<b>Somehow Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Students are passive listeners in the teaching and learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
Gender influences students' level of participation in classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
Students' experiential knowledge influence how they learn new knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
Students have similar abilities and characteristics, which require using similar approaches to teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
Students have unique abilities and characteristics that need to be nurtured for academic success.	1	2	3	4	5
Students' socio-economic status does <b>not</b> determine their level of intelligence.	1	2	3	4	5
Students' socio-economic status determines their academic achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching is a process that involves transfer of knowledge from teachers to students.	1	2	3	4	5
Students' faith (religious affiliation) has <b>no</b> influence on how they learn.	1	2	3	4	5
Students' ethnic background has <b>no</b> influence on how they learn.	1	2	3	4	5



**10 b. What are some of the challenges you have experienced when teaching classes with students of various backgrounds socio-economic, linguistic, religious and cultural?**

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**11. Which are some of the *significant* differences that students bring into your classroom?**

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**12. What makes these differences *significant* to your teaching?**

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**13. In what ways do you involve your students in decision making on issues that concerns learning and classroom relationships as part of the daily classroom experiences?**

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**14. To what extent do you think your teacher education experiences prepared you to reflect on your teaching in the context of students with diverse backgrounds?**

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**15. What teaching approaches would you consider for students from diverse backgrounds?**

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**Thank you very much for your time and insightful responses provided in this questionnaire. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated.**

## **Appendix C    Interview Questions**

1. From your experience working with students from diverse backgrounds, how would you categorize the nature of differences that students bring into your classroom settings?
2. What makes these differences significant to your teaching?
3. Do you always consider students' differences when planning your teaching strategies, group activities, and learning resources?
4. What are some of the challenges you experience if any working with diverse student population? What are the advantages of diversity in your classrooms?
5. How do you perceive your role as a teacher in terms of classroom relationships with your students in the learning process?
6. What do you consider to be students' roles and responsibilities in the learning process?
7. What teaching approaches do you prefer to use and which you perceive as being effective with diverse student population?
8. How does students' gender difference in particular influence your approach to teaching and students participation in the learning process?
9. What institutional policies support or impede your work in diverse classroom settings?
10. In particular how does national examination and current policy of performance contract influence your work in pluralistic work environment?
11. What changes in the Ministry of Education and institutional policies would you want to see put in place that would be beneficial and supportive to your current position in diverse work settings?
12. To what extent do you find your teacher education experiences having prepared you to work in diverse classroom settings?
13. Which specific course areas of your teacher education program helped to prepare you for work in diverse classrooms?
14. What experiences in your teaching practice have so far helped you cope with the challenges of students' diverse nature?

## Appendix D Observation Coding Form

Site: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class/subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Description \_\_\_\_\_

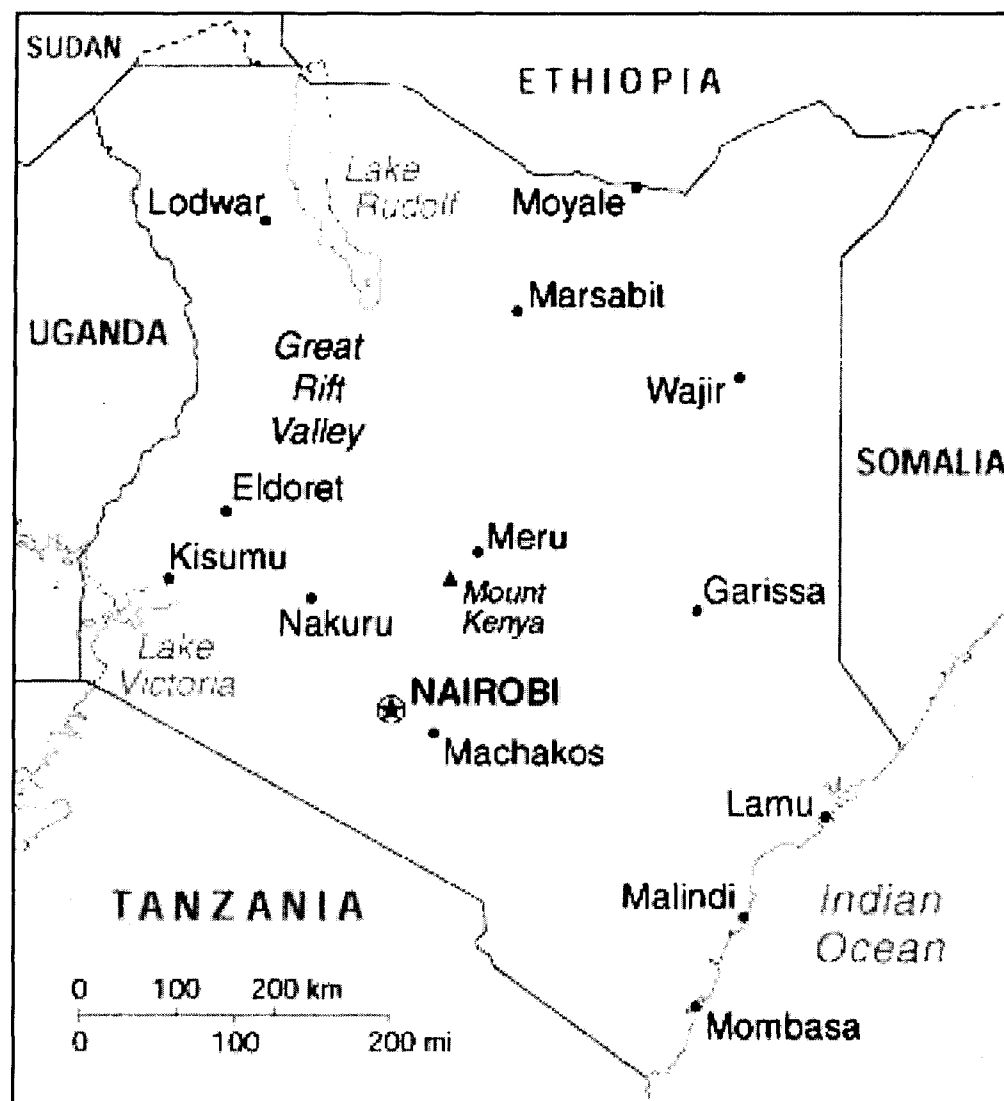
Total no of Students: \_\_\_\_\_ Absent \_\_\_\_\_

Males: \_\_\_\_\_ Females: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E   Observation Checklist**

- 1. Sketch the classroom layout or plan showing the teachers sitting position in relation to students and the researcher.**
2. Map out and code students by numbering the classroom-seating layout. This will help to document specific incidences relating to specific students and making reference to students' interactions and activities.
3. Single out groups, clicks and active individuals and observe the interactions in terms of one to one, horizontal interaction among peers, vertical interaction with the teacher and other dominant group members.
4. Monitor individual participation levels in terms of very active and passive students' participation in the learning experiences.
5. How are classroom responsibilities assigned? To whom and why? Was the process democratic?
6. Observe assertive or dominating behavior from groups and individuals. How is the teacher addressing the behavior in relation to other members of the class?
7. Observe coping behavior of individuals and groups being dominated.
8. In what ways does the teacher encourage/ engage/interact with students perceived to be struggling to cope with the learning of the discipline?
9. Does the teacher call upon individuals to respond to questions asked?
10. Does the teacher provide prompts to guide students who are struggling to encourage verbalization?
11. Does the teacher complete statements/sentences on behalf of the student?
12. How do other students react to struggling students?
13. How do individual students negotiate their positions in group activities and with the teacher?
14. Are there incidences of group or gender appropriation during group activities?
15. What is the level of help seeking behavior by groups, gender or individuals from the teacher and colleagues? How immediate does the teacher respond to students request for help?
16. What is the feedback rate across groups and individuals from the teacher?
17. Are teacher directed questions uniformly distributed or focused to specific individuals/ groups/ genders?
18. Were instructions for group activities clearly stated and provided for in different medium of communication?
19. How did the teacher respond to students' different needs and interest in general?
20. Report any classroom incidences that inform the study inquiry.

## Appendix F Map of Seven Provinces of Kenya



## **Appendix G - Classroom Observation Notes**

### **Classroom Observation: Site B – Agnes's Form 3 Biology Class**

I had a total of three classroom observations with this particular teacher, two were in the classroom and the other was a laboratory practical lesson in the laboratory.

#### Lesson One – Reproduction in Animals.

**Place:** Classroom

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007

**Time:** 2:10 P.M. (45 minutes single lesson)

The number of students registered for this class was forty three and during this particular lesson, there were thirty five students; nine girls and twenty six boys with eight students absent. Students were arranged to sit in a mixed gender format. When we entered the class there was an anatomy of a cow sketched on the blackboard and the teacher started her lesson with a greeting to her students and briefly explained my presence in the classroom. The students were already familiar with my presence because I was working with them in another project, so we were not strangers to each other. The teacher then proceeded with the lesson by appreciating the contribution of the student who drew the sketches for the day's lesson on the blackboard. She then went on to give an overview of the previous lesson before starting on to the new concepts.

#### General Observations of the Lesson

The lesson was dominated by the teacher dictating notes to students and writing of difficult terms on the blackboard. There were pauses in between the note-taking, to either refer to the diagram on the board to illustrate concepts, or to ask questions as a way of engaging

students in the conversation. The illustrations on the board were useful in enhancing the learning of those students who are visual learners. Most of the students responses were in the form of chorus responses, which although may seem to provide good feedback to the teacher, indicating students concentration, may easily subsume individual participation. The teacher is likely not to identify those individuals who do not really understand the concepts or those who may not be attentive. Because the teacher repeatedly used this technique to solicit students' response and engagement in the lesson, my concern was that such students would just fade into the background.

The first twenty minutes I noticed that the teacher's questions were not being responded to uniformly across gender. A few of the boys responded to all the questions since they were the ones with their hands up most of the time when the questions required individual responses. I assumed the teacher wanted to call on those students with their hands up first before calling on the others although this led to the discussion focusing only on these few individuals. At some point the teacher tried to call on those students with their hands down especially the girls soliciting for a wide variety of opinions or comments in the whole class which was one way I assumed of drawing shy people into the classroom conversation. When individuals were hesitant to speak, the teacher provided prompts to guide the student in order to encourage them verbalize.

Often, the teacher did not insist on the student providing the right answer but moved on to build on the discussion by sometimes adding follow-up or extending questions to other students. I thought this was an approach which the teacher employed to try and balance the privacy needs of shy students or those who lacked confidence by encouraging them to speak without making them feel intimidated. In my view, this strategy was necessary in building confidence of students who might not believe that their contribution was worthwhile.



Boys dominated the class participation and they spoke out with a lot of confidence which was quite the contrary of their female counterparts who spoke in very low tones, almost inaudible to most of their colleagues, given the reactions observed from the others. My conclusion of the entire lesson presentation was that it was more teacher-centered, because the questions were asked by the teacher and the nature of the questions were such that it solicited for factual responses. The teacher was not able to draw students into an engaging discussion in the lesson.

Another observation on the physical layout of the classroom was that the space was too cramped up for the forty three students. There was hardly any space between the rows of desks for the teacher to move around during the lesson, a condition that restricted her movement in front of the class near the blackboard. This, in my view would create challenges to the teacher if she was to engage students in group discussions. After forty five minutes, the lesson ended and it was at this moment that the teacher asked students if they had any questions regarding the lesson to which there was no response. Students were then requested to volunteer for the task of drawing the next diagram for illustration on the board before the start of the next lesson. It is a common practice for the teacher to assign a student to do this before the start of the next lesson in order to save on class time. Again, it was only the boys who had their hands up to volunteer for this activity.

### Lesson Two – Group Participation in a Biology Laboratory

**Place:** Biology laboratory

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> July 2007

**Time:** 2:10 P.M. (90 minutes for a double lesson)

**Lesson Description:** Dissecting a Rabbit to Identify the Reproductive System.

During group activities my interest focused on selection of groups, and participation levels of all group members. I viewed all working space to see how it supported or restricted students' and teachers' movements. During the activity I observed groups of students as they interacted in their groups identifying groups' norms on collaboration and team work in accomplishing tasks. I also observed interactions among students in their groups as they worked together dissecting the rabbit. I noted whether any one person was dominating the activity or whether all members of the group contributed to the process in a respective manner to establish group members' relationship to each other during the activity. The other purpose of my observation was to determine the role of the teacher in establishing guidelines for the lesson objectives and instructions for group participation.

### Group Activity

The laboratory was a much larger space with benches arranged at the center of the room leaving more space for movement between groups. When we entered the laboratory students were already seated waiting for the teacher and my attention was quickly drawn to the level of silence in the class and the way students clustered themselves based on their genders. There were nine girls and twenty three boys present in this lesson with eleven students absent. The front row of the class was occupied by eight girls and one of the girls who came in class as we were going in joined the boys occupying the last benches in the laboratory.

The teacher started the class discussion by greeting the students and from there went on to explain the process and guidelines of the procedures to be followed in the activity they were about to embark on. They only had two rabbits [male and female] to work with which were apparently donated by some students since the school could not afford to provide the specimens for the activity according to the teacher's explanation. The instructions of the activity were

clearly articulated by the teacher and she asked students to also refer to the same instructions which were in their textbooks. The teacher instructed group members to read these instructions aloud step by step as they proceeded with the process of dissection. Students were also instructed to write down the observations they made systematically as they go along with the activity.

At the end of the instruction and activity guidelines, students were asked to divide themselves into two groups and elect their group leaders which should be one boy leading one group and a girl leading the other. So the option of which group appoints which gender to lead them was left to students to make that decision reflecting some form of democracy in the group decision making protocol. Groups were then formed based on the way students were seated and this automatically put the eight girls into group one and one girl into group two. Group one consisted of fourteen members and group two had eighteen members despite the teacher's instructions that groups be comprised of equal number of members. In my observation the groups were too large for such an activity and at the beginning I noticed that group leaders had challenges trying to maintain group control and coordination. After shuffling for a while group members naturally resorted to pairing up into two's and three's taking turns in reading the instructions and discussing the procedures involved before engaging into the actual practical exercise. Each group had about six textbooks being shared among the members which seemed to be enough since other members concentrated more on the dissection exercise.

#### Observed Incidences Arising from Group One

Group one having almost equal number of girls and boys (eight girls & six boys) seemed to interact with each other very freely and almost every member of the group was actively engaged in the process except Gedion. The group had six copies of the designated textbook to

share among the members to follow the procedures as instructed earlier on. There were three boys and three girls in this group who were extremely domineering and took over the whole process of the dissection without letting the others take turns in experiencing the procedure. The group definitely had coordination problems as they turned reading aloud procedures into a shouting match. Everybody was struggling to get their opinions across to their colleagues. Those who were aggressive enough were successful in doing so. Most of the time the six domineering members of the group consulted with the teacher at every stage of the procedure as though they did not quite trust what their colleagues were telling them to do. The teacher spent almost the entire time assisting this group and moved on to assist group two only once. The group completed the activity way out of the stipulated time frame extending the exercise into the time that the teacher had allocated for groups to share their findings.

#### The Story of Gedion and Group Acceptance

At this point I would like to narrate my observation of Gedion's case that I found to be an interesting example, reflecting group acceptance or group accommodation in group work activities. Gedion was not actively engaged in the group participation for the first twenty minutes. Instead, he sat quietly without uttering a word to anybody, trying to read through the procedures until he observed that the group had missed out one step in the set of instructions as indicated in the text book. He frantically tried to bring the issue to the attention of his group members who seemed not to be paying much attention to his protests.

One girl who seemed to be attracted to what Gedion was saying took the book away from him and started reading it aloud but after a while she also continued listening to the six domineering members of the group. After a while, Gedion tried to re-possess the book from the girl who quickly retrieved it back from him. I wondered what was going on in his mind when he

sat back and stared at the space for a while. Finally, he reached out and took a dissecting blade from one of the girls who seemed not to pay attention to him and reached out to participate in the dissection process. The girl suddenly realized that she did not have the blade. She stretched her hand and took it away from Gedion once again without courteously requesting for it.

After several fruitless attempts to actively participate or give suggestions to his colleagues, Gedion resigned to the position of an observer and went on to read the textbook, which he finally managed to pull away from one of the boys sitting next to him. Gedion seemed not to be aggressive and loud like the rest of the group members whose voices overshadowed his soft spoken tone. What was interesting about the young man was that he seemed not to be discouraged from trying to participate practically or by giving suggestions apparently to a group that was not responding to him. At the end of the activity I wanted to find out more about Gedion from the teacher. I was informed that Gedion was a newcomer in the class and had just joined the school from a neighboring boarding school at the beginning of the semester.

#### Observed Incidences Arising from Group Two

There was only one girl in this group and her presence was completely ignored by the rest of the group members. Everyone in this group was so engaged in the activity apart from the one girl who totally became an observer as the boys dominated the whole process. In this group there was more sharing of tasks in terms of ideas, and even the actual practical work as people took turns to actually participate in the dissection. They seemed to work quite independently and were able to complete their dissection before the time allocated and had more time to discuss with the teacher their observations before sharing with the rest of the class. Generally there was more collaboration and teamwork in this group than in group one.

At the end of the dissection exercise, the teacher asked the groups to share their findings given that group one was dissecting to identify the reproductive organs of a female rabbit while group two were working on male reproductive organs. Group leaders were to remain in their respective positions to explain their findings to members of the rest of the class and answer any questions raised. I noticed that students in this class generally avoided asking questions.

### Lesson Three - Reproductive Systems of Animals – Development of Fetus.

**Place:** Classroom

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2007

**Time:** 9:20 a.m. (45 minutes single lesson)

This particular classroom observation was supposed to take place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2007 and had to be re-scheduled because more than half the class had been sent home for school fees. The teacher felt that it would not make sense going on with the lesson with only a small group yet she would have to repeat the lesson again when the rest of the group resumed classes. Therefore, those students who were in class on that day were asked to either have private studies in the library or have group discussions on the next topic before the next lesson.

The lesson started with a summary of the previous lesson through question and answer technique to gain feedback from students on their understanding of the previous concepts. This lesson was dominated by the teacher's dictation of notes to students. This time around more questions were directed to individuals and were distributed uniformly across gender, as opposed to the unison responses from students which characterized the previous class lesson. The teacher solicited for students' experiences with the topic when she asked individuals to narrate personal experiences such as when they encountered real situations with animals delivering young ones. She then went on to share with the students a personal story when she witnessed her own cow

giving birth to a calf. Students who keep animals at home were very articulate when narrating their understanding of the process of delivery when they were demonstrating their ideas as they answered the questions asked by the teacher. Although there was still very minimal student activity in the lesson presentation, this time students were more engaged in a more lively discussion especially during the sharing of personal experiences with the topic.

### **Classroom Observation: Site B – Martha's Form 3 English Language Class**

#### **Lesson One – Class Discussion**

**Place:** Classroom

**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2007

**Time:** 10:10 A.M. (45 minutes single lesson)

#### **Lesson Description:** Discussion on Racial and Gender Discrimination

The total number of students in this class was thirty six and they were all present during the lesson. The teacher started the lesson with greetings and introduced me to the students. Again in this case I was not a stranger to the students because I had worked with them for two weeks in another project. Some of the students in the class were quite familiar with me given that I had my daughter studying in the same school and others had lived with us in the same residential area. The discussion for this lesson was based on a passage from a book entitled *Black men in public space* by Brent Staples Harpers (1997). The discussion was centered on issues of racial and gender discrimination in public spaces in the cities/towns. In Kenya we have only three cities namely Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu. Other urban areas are referenced as towns by the ministry of local authorities.

The teacher asked the students to read the passage silently for fifteen minutes. At the end of the fifteen minutes students were asked to volunteer to read the passage loudly by show of

hands. When calling on students, the teacher tried to balance participation by rows, selecting from the front, center and at the back of each row. It was a bit of a challenge for the teacher to remember whose hands went up first and in which order because almost everybody in the class was enthusiastic to participate and so numerous hands were up simultaneously. Students who read the passage did so with a lot of confidence and clarity gauging from the loudness and the emphasis in their intonations. This exercise was carried out for about ten minutes and the remaining twenty minutes was dedicated to class discussion.

### Lesson One Discussion on Racial and Gender Discrimination

Before the discussion, the teacher gave guidelines on the direction on how the discussion should proceed. She highlighted key points to be addressed from the passage and used that to draw parallels between the evil practices reflected in the passage and real happenings in their own contexts. Students were asked to narrate their own experiences if they have encountered any form of discrimination or stories from the experiences of people they know for example friends, relatives, or incidences witnessed in public spaces. During the discussion most of the students were engaged and expressed themselves in a very articulate manner.

The teacher also shared personal stories with her students on occasions when she experienced discrimination in some public institutions. She enhanced the depth of the discussion by acknowledging the importance of sharing this kind of information and sometimes added follow up comments or broadened the discussion by asking or encouraging members of the class to ask questions to the narrator. At the end of the forty five minutes students were given instructions on the activity to prepare for the next lesson. They were to work in their respective groups and conduct research on the pros and cons of the conduct of policemen in Kenya and those in the United States. In their discussion they should draw any parallels in terms of



perceived similarities and differences in the conduct of policemen in these two countries.

Students were asked by the teacher to be objective and critical in their discussion in order to provide a balanced argument in their presentations.

### Lesson Two Group Presentations

**Place:** Classroom

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> July 2007

**Time:** 10:10 A.M. (45 minutes single lesson)

**Lesson Description:** Group Presentations: Comparing Public Relations Conduct of Kenya's Police Force Vs American Police Force.

There were six groups presenting their research findings and the teacher asked that the presentations be made on a numerical order, in which case group one was the first to present. The repertoires from each group came to the front of the class to give their findings but during question time all members participated in responding to questions raised by their colleagues. The teacher guided the discussion at the beginning and gradually pulled back from being the controller of the discussion, as students started to co-ordinate the questions and responses in a more coherent manner. Students were able to respond to each other more effectively in a respective way. Members of the groups were very articulate as they tried to draw parallels on the perceived behavior and actions of policemen and women in the Kenyan and United States context. Students showed a lot of confidence when defending their positions, giving clear examples of incidences on police activities in public realms from which they based their arguments and conclusions arrived upon in their presentations.

## Appendix F

### Research Ethics Approval Certificate

Page 1 of 1



The University of British Columbia  
Office of Research Services  
Behavioural Research Ethics Board  
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

### CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</b> Samson M. Nashon	<b>INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:</b> UBC/Education/Curriculum Studies	<b>UBC BREB NUMBER:</b> H07-00560				
<b>INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:</b>						
<table border="1"> <tr> <th>Institution</th> <th>Site</th> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">N/A</td> </tr> </table> <p>Other locations where the research will be conducted: The setting of the study will be four public high schools in the Western part of Kenya. The schools are located in Eldoret town, Uasin Gishu District in Rift Valley Province. The research sites will involve two district co-education (mixed) schools, one all girls (single-sex) National boarding school, and one all boys (single-sex) provincial boarding school. The schools are located within an urban setting and represent the social and cultural diversity of the Kenyan population that is relevant and appropriate for this study.</p>			Institution	Site	N/A	
Institution	Site					
N/A						
<b>CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):</b> Jenipher Owuor						
<b>SPONSORING AGENCIES:</b> N/A						
<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b> Kenya's High School Teachers' Perceptions of Diversity in Education: Implications to Curriculum and Pedagogy.						

**CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE:** April 23, 2008

<b>DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:</b>	<b>DATE APPROVED:</b> April 23, 2007	
<b>Document Name</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Consent Forms:</b>		
Participants Interview Consent Form	version 2	April 22, 2007
Participants Interview Consent Form	Version 1	February 22, 2007
Subject Consent Form	Version 1	February 22, 2007
Subject Consent Form	Version 2	April 22, 2007
<b>Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:</b>		
Tentative interview questions	Version 1	February 22, 2007
Tentative Questionnaire	Version 1	February 22, 2007
<b>Letter of Initial Contact:</b>		
Ministry of Education Request Letter	Version 1	February 22, 2007
Principal's Consent Letter	Version 1	February 22, 2007
<b>Other Documents:</b>		
Participation Consent	2	April 22, 2007
Observation Coding Form	Version 1	February 22, 2007
Observation Guidelines	Version 1	February 22, 2007
Tentative interview questions	Version 1	February 22, 2007
The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.		
<p>Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:</p> <p>Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, Associate Chair Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Associate Chair Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair</p>		

<https://rise.ubc.ca/rise/Doc/0/FKI6GSPPL6A413RN5I5M1G9841/fromString.html>

6/19/2008