

This study set out to investigate the issues in the controversy surrounding the introduction of Family Life Education (FLE) in schools. Two protagonists can be identified in this controversy. On the one hand are the researchers on health and government officials who advocate for the inclusion of FLE. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26 of 1948 states that "Everyone has the right to education." The "Everyone" includes all children who have a right to education regardless of their handicap, ethnic background or social status. UNICEF (1994) estimates that 140 million children with significant impairments are living in developing countries and official estimates from such countries put it that for every hundred children with special needs, only one receive some form of schooling. UNESCO report of 1991 notes that in some regions, especially Africa, children with blindness and sight deficiencies form a very large group. In fact Bhalerao (1986) points out that visual impairment is the most crippling disablement.

A UNICEF report of 1994 on the situation of disabled persons points out that there are few educational opportunities for disabled girls and women. In a report by Mogaka (1995) the population of disabled persons in Kenya was estimated at 2.6 million and that girls are the majority among identified cases of children with impairment. Muigai (1995) also notes that the particular situation of disabled girls has not been highlighted adequately.

The study set out to investigate the factors that influence the participation of visually impaired girls in primary education at Thika and Kibos Special School for the visually impaired. Research questions were formulated which guided this study which included cultural and religious attitudes, occupation and educational level of household heads (parents), the effect of household chores and the school based factors and factors responsible for varied participation rates of visually impaired girls in primary education.

The sample for this study was drawn from a population of 388. The population comprised of 328 pupils from both schools, 2 head teachers, 50 teachers and 8 parents. In Thika school, there were 119 boys and 111 girls whereas, Kibos had 59 boys and 39 girls. The sampled population for this study consisted of 175 pupils, 2 head teachers, 12 teachers and 6 parents. Out of the sampled pupils, Thika had 61 boys and 53 girls and in Kibos there were 38 boys and 23 girls. The data was collected through questionnaires administered to head teachers, interviews held with parents and pupils, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) held with selected teachers. Analysis of data was done quantitatively and qualitatively. From the findings of the study, the following factors were identified as influencing visually impaired girls' participation in primary education at Thika and Kibos Special Schools:

- Due to the value attached to socio-cultural practices such as marriage and bride wealth by certain parents and communities, the visually impaired girls are regarded as worthless persons who are not well prepared for motherhood and hence their education is not given priority.
- Negative attitudes and over-indulgence by parents limit the development of mobility and independence skills of the visually impaired girls and this was reflected in their low performance of household tasks.
- Socio-economic factors such as low level of parental education, poor economic status of parents, and the way parents perceive economic benefits accruing from educating the boy-child rather than the girl-child, negatively influence the visually impaired girls' participation in education.
- School related factors that were found to be influencing the participation of visually impaired girls in education included the role of female teachers, teacher-pupil interaction, availability and proximity of schools. Lack of training of some teachers in special education limit their ability to deal with differential needs of visually impaired pupils from a gender perspective. The practical-oriented curriculum and lack of essential facilities also negatively influence the participation of visually impaired pupils in education.

On the basis of the stated findings, the study recommends the following:

- There is need for literacy campaigns to be carried out to create awareness on the value of providing education to visually impaired children irrespective of gender, which may change parents' attitudes and community's perception about them.
 - The curriculum should be revised to cater for the special educational needs of the visually impaired. The training of teachers also need to be intensified and courses offered that articulate gender awareness should be incorporated.
 - Parents should provide household chores to their visually impaired girls as a means of enhancing their mobility and independence skills.
 - NGOs that seek to empower women should devise projects that would benefit visually impaired girls' participation in education and involve visually impaired women in such projects.
- usion of FLE in the school curriculum. They argue that there is need to fill the information gap that is apparent among the young people. On the other, are the religious organisations (the Kenya Catholic Secretariat (KCS), National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) which disqualify the schools in dealing with matters related to sexuality and reproductive health. The controversy comes at a time when the HIV/AIDS scourge, teenage pregnancy, sexual promiscuity and abortion are issues hanging menacingly on the Kenyan adolescent population.

This study employed the purposive sampling technique to identify respondents from governmental and non-governmental organisations (LAGOS) significant in the controversy. These included the KIE, NCPD, CAFS, KCS, NCCCK, and the CCEA. In addition to these organisations respondents were drawn from 15 selected secondary schools in Nairobi Province. The field research entailed conducting interviews and administering questionnaires to the 144 adult and 150 student respondents.

The questionnaire data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The recorded interviews were transcribed into a narrative

form. The results were presented in tables of frequency distributions and percentages. The study revealed that in the indigenous African Communities, FLE was offered in the context of the general indigenous education process from childhood through to adulthood. Other results indicated that changes in familial and societal patterns have also resulted in a relaxation of social constraints on sexual behaviour. With the erosion of the traditional mechanisms for teaching FLE and specifically SE, parents and institutions such as the church and the schools are expected to have a significant role to play. But it is established in this study that to some extent adolescents lack parental guidance on sexuality issues due to lack of communication between parents and the children among many Kenyan communities.

The church-based organizations such as the KCS and the NCCCK have FLE programmes, they only cater for a small percentage of the adolescent population. In school, some aspects of FLE have been taught alongside Home Science (HS) and Geography, History and Civics (GHC) in primary schools and in Christian Religious Education (CRE); Geography and Home Science among others in secondary schools. In this case the depth of coverage has been limited.

As a result of differing opinions, a religio-moral conflict has emerged from the religio-cultural heritage of the church and especially the body-spirit dualism expressed in Greek culture and philosophy. This tradition seemed suspicious of sexual pleasure and safeguarded sex by linking it with procreation in marriage. Christianity has failed to eliminate the dualistic views about sexuality.

The study indicates that if the FLE programme is to be successfully developed and implemented, parents, religious leaders (church leaders), the youth and all stakeholders in the education sector must be fully involved at all the stages. Using Coser's theory of conflict management, it is established that the formation of a national commission of inquiry into the controversy will help address the issues of FLE theory and practice. Drawing from the primary and secondary data, the overall objective of FLE will be to prepare the youth for responsible adulthood.

It is concluded that there is also a need for a radical transformation in the way sexuality is viewed. This can be done by deconstructing the symbolic message that debases sexuality and recover its (sexuality) value. This is possible because the expression of our sexuality is socially constructed.