Exploring School Curriculum as a Tool for addressing Radicalisation Drivers in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract
The focus for this study was on drivers of radicalization amongst students and how they can be addressed using school curriculum. The objectives that guided the study were (i) To determine the drivers of radicalization amongst students in Kamukunji Sub-County Kenya (ii) To establish ways in which the drivers of radicalization have been addressed using the school curriculum in Kenya (iii) To investigate the extent to which the school curriculum has been used to cater for drivers of radicalization in schools. This study used triangulation mixed method research design and was carried out in Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. Study sample comprised of 259 respondents and the research instruments used were questionnaires and interview guides. Data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings for this study revealed that poverty, peer pressure, religion, need to belong, illiteracy and use of internet were some of the drivers of radicalisation in Kamukunji Sub-County and that very little had been done in addressing these drivers using the school curriculum. The study recommended that a needs assessment study should be carried out in schools in different parts of the country to identify students’ motivations that drive them towards radicalization and address them through a curriculum review.

Keywords
Radicalization, Terrorism, Violent Extremism, Radicalisation Drivers

I. Introduction
Youth is a critical stage of a person’s development. All over the world, youth between 15 and 25 years find themselves in a phase in which crucial, life-changing choices have to be made [1]. This stage is marked by a transition from childhood to young adulthood, and it is viewed as one of the most dynamic stages of human development. Because of this ‘transition process’, [2] argue that radicalisation to violent extremism is more prevalent amongst adolescents and young adults in this age. This poses a significant danger to most of the secondary school students in Kenya and all over the world.

These students are at higher risk of embracing violent extremist ideologies, joining radical organisations, or even self-radicalising if they are not capacitated to withstand the daily stressors and the many influential factors in their lives [3]. This presents unique challenges for teachers and all educators because they are required to identify and understand the underlying conditions that may lead students to violent extremist behaviours and come up with grass root initiatives to help students resist the attractions and lure of such radical organisations [4].

Schools should thus ensure that they are aware of the issues that attract young people towards violent extremist activities and adapt their curriculum to meet these needs [5-6]. They should ensure that the curriculum they offer cultivates beliefs and dispositions that oppose radicalism and extremism because, as long as this ideology is alive, terrorists will always strike [7]. This can be done by equipping young people with knowledge, skills and reflex to think for themselves, to challenge and to debate about different ideas, thus creating a world in which the use of terrorist tactics to achieve political or other objectives is no longer acceptable or the efforts to radicalize and recruit new members are no longer successful [8].

The understanding of the root causes/drivers of young people’s extremist behaviour is thus a significant step towards getting a comprehensive approach towards preventing and eradicating radicalisation and violent extremism through the curriculum. Thorough literature review shows that radicalisation and violent extremism that develops into terrorism amongst youths is not mono-causal, but some elements (motivations) combine to make an individual more vulnerable to recruitment [9]. Though interrelated, these drivers may vary from country to country or even place to place. Some may be more influential than others depending on the context thus requiring more attention. This phenomenon thus varies according to context and interacts with political, economic and social factors, including education [10].

Literature also supports that, all over the world, youths are vulnerable to violent extremism and radicalisation due to economic, social, political, and religious factors/drivers. In fact in most of the studies, findings concerning what drives youths towards radicalization give concurring results with a few exceptions. In summary, the writers agree that there are many drivers to violent extremism and that none of them can be seen as a necessary and sufficient condition for violent extremism or terrorism. But under certain circumstances, some may influence the youths more, and these drivers may require greater attention than others. There is thus need to carry out an investigation that is context specific, and since the researches carried out in Kenya on drivers of radicalisation have been done in different areas other than Kamukunji Sub County, this study primarily attempted to fill this gap and investigated how the school curriculum has been used to address these drivers of radicalization.

II. Objectives
- To determine the drivers of radicalization amongst students in Kamukunji Sub-County Kenya
- To establish ways in which the drivers of radicalization been addressed using the school curriculum in Kenya
- To investigate the extent to which the school curriculum has been used to cater for drivers of radicalization in schools.

III. Research Methodology
This study used triangulation mixed method research design. It was carried out in Kamukunji Sub-County in Nairobi County, Kenya. The target was 4139 students, 175 teachers, seven principals and 28 KICD officers. Two hundred and nineteen students were selected using simple random sampling; 28 teachers were selected using quota sampling whereas five KICD officers were selected using
criterion sampling. All the seven principals participated in this study. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, means, percentages and standard deviation) Qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

IV. Research Findings and Analysis

Establishing the drivers of radicalisation is vital in solving the problem of radicalization in schools at the roots. This is supported by [4-5] who say that educators are required to recognise and understand the drivers or the motivations of radicalisation leading to violent extremist behaviours as this helps them to design grass root initiatives that enable students to resist the temptations and lure of extremist organisations. Without this understanding, the educators may not help the students much against radicalisation.

To establish the drivers (motivations) of radicalisation amongst students in Kamukunji Sub-County, this study sought students’ views through a questionnaire while teachers’ and principals’ views were sought through interviews.

From students’ point of view, certain factors were found to be responsible for youths/students joining terrorist/ radicalised groups. Table 1 gives a summary of these views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers of Radicalisation in Schools</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure plays a significant role in one joining radicalised /terrorist groups</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.1074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who are frustrated in life get easily influenced to join terrorist groups</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.1075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of basic needs leads students to join al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who are not educated easily get convinced to join terrorist groups</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students and youths join radicalised groups due to the influence of the internet</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students join terrorist groups to feel that they belong to a certain group</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students join terrorist groups in order to be famous and to discover new ways of life</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion influences students to join radicalised groups</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students join terrorist groups because their parents influence them to join these groups</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.1105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students strongly agreed (Mean of 4.19) that peer pressure plays a significant role in students joining radicalised or terrorist groups. A Standard deviation of 0.1074 also showed that this view was congruent amongst most respondents. They also agreed (Mean of 3.79) that frustrations in life influence some of the youths to join terrorist groups. The SD of 0.1075 also showed that this view was not disparate among the respondents. These student participants were also in agreement (Mean of 3.56) that lack of basic needs leads students/youths to join al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups. The SD of 1.315, however, meant that these views were moderately dispersed amongst respondents. Students also agreed (Mean of 3.42) that students who are not educated easily get convinced to join terrorist groups and the SD of 0.369 showed that most students held a similar view. A Mean of 3.26 and SD of 1.312 also showed that students agreed that some of them join radicalised groups due to the influence of the internet. These views were however moderately dispersed as indicated by the SD. Some student respondents were on the other hand undecided (Mean of 2.95) on whether the need to belong was influencing some of them to join terrorist groups. The SD of 1.350 also meant that students held diverse views to some extent concerning this view. They were also undecided (Mean of 2.43) on whether youths join terrorist groups in order to be famous and to discover new ways of life. This view was also moderately dispersed (A SD of 1.410) amongst respondents. Similarly for religion, students were undecided (Mean of 3.56) on whether this was a factor leading them towards radicalisation. An SD of 1.294 showed that a few students supported that religion influences students’ radicalisation while others opposed this view altogether. Students finally disagreed (Mean of 1.9) that some of them join terrorist groups because their parents influence them to join these groups. The SD of 1.310 showed that most of them held a similar view.

Most teacher participants (80%) concurred with student’s views that, youth/students join terrorist groups due to poverty and lack of basic needs, peer pressure, lack of education, an influence of the internet and frustrations in life. They also added other reasons for students/youths joining terrorist groups such as; lack of proper parental guidance, being ignorant, fame and the need to belong. School principals were also in agreement that peer pressure, lack of basic needs and illiteracy were among the reasons for youths joining terrorist groups. On peer pressure, during one of the interviews, one principal in this Sub-County reported that many schools in Kamukunji Sub-County had experienced an influx of children from Somalia who were fleeing from war in their country. This principal contended that most of these students were not keen on their studies, but instead saw the school certificate as a passage to western countries where they would train and join radicalised groups. This attitude was said to influence other students negatively by swaying them through peer pressure to join radicalised groups. Amongst the views that the teachers and the students did not agree with included; influence of religion, parental influence, the need to acquire a sense of belonging and the need for fame and discovery. While teachers explained that need to belong was a factor leading students towards radicalisation, the students were somewhat undecided (Mean of 2.95) on whether this led them towards radicalisation. Teachers, however, emphasized that since most of the students are in their adolescent stage, sense of belonging was being sought using such groups for some of them. This is supported by [11] who says that joining violent
extremist groups or terrorist groups help to provide a sense of belonging that some young persons might be lacking. [12] also supports that for many teenagers, the process of radicalisation begins when they start looking for an identity, and they fall in the trap of radicalised groups.

Teachers were also of the opinion that religion does influence some of the students to join radicalised groups but the students were not sure (Mean of 2.3) whether religion influences radicalisation. Teachers argued that this Sub-County has many Islamic followers some of who offer distorted wrong religious teaching lead the youths/students towards radicalisation. This in line with findings of a study by [13] which revealed that 87% of the al-Shabaab members in Nairobi and Mombasa (Kenya) use religion or the need to respond to a threat to their religious identity as their motive for joining the organisation. [14] also found out that, ignorance of religious teachings opposed to violence make youths more vulnerable and susceptible to recruitment in radicalised groups.

Teachers also identified a need for fame and discovery as a factor that causes youth radicalisation, but students were undecided on the same (Mean of 2.43). Need for fame and discovery as a driver towards radicalisation is supported by [15] who states that status seeking, longing for adventure, glory, and heroic or iconic status are common drivers of violent extremism amongst the youths. [16] also support that in Nairobi Eastleigh area, status-seeking is one of the drivers to violent extremism.

Another driver of radicalisation, which caused contention between students and teachers, was the parental influence on youths being radicalised. Students completely disagreed (Mean of 1.90) that parents influence some of them to join terrorist groups. Teachers, however, did not agree with this view. They argued that students whose parents or relatives were members of radicalised groups tended to be influenced to join these groups more easily. These students’ views also disagree with findings from a study by [17] which found out that, some parents (who may also be belonging to radicalised groups) have been found to influence or encourage their children, or grandchildren to support radicalised groups. This is primarily done in regions where terrorist organisation has broad community back up. Teachers also argued that parents and family members were influencing their children to join radicalised groups through parental neglect. This is in line with [14] who states that lack of adequate parental guidance to children, significantly contribute to the problem of youth radicalisation. This study therefore confirmed that drivers of radicalisation are many and some are more influential than others in some contexts. This study also affirmed the need for carrying out needs assessment studies in different parts of the country and putting them together in order to generate a comprehensive curriculum that caters for most needs/radicalization drivers.

### A. Ways in which the drivers have been addressed through the school curriculum

The researcher investigated whether the already identified drivers of radicalisation have been addressed using the current secondary school curriculum in Kenya. This was done by asking the student participants to respond to some Likert scale items. Students responded by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with these items provided on the Likert scale. Teachers’, principals’ and KICD officers’ views were sought through an in-depth interview. Table 2 gives a summary of Students’ responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Views on Approaches of Addressing Radicalisation Drivers through the School Curriculum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All children have been exposed to the national curriculum of education through the provision of education to all children in Kenya, and this is reducing illiteracy hence radicalisation reduction</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>2.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students technical subjects such as Agriculture, Woodwork, Metalwork, Power mechanics, Home science Electricity, and Computer among others is helping students to get jobs after school</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.3896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of group works in schools is helping students to develop a sense of belonging, respect and tolerance towards each other</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.1023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have been taught skills on how to resist bad influence from friends and peers</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.3114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have been taught skills in solving problems on their own without waiting for their parents, friends or teachers</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research data 2017

According to this analysis, students strongly agreed (Mean of 4.41) that provision of education to all children in Kenya is reducing illiteracy hence radicalisation reduction. A standard deviation of 2.6555, however, suggested that the view was highly disparate among the respondents. Teachers also held different opinions concerning the provision of education to all children as a strategy that is helping to address radicalisation in schools. They argued that although the government is emphasizing that all children should be taken to school, the current curriculum does not cater for their literacy largely. When asked whether teaching the students technical subjects such as Agriculture, Woodwork, Electricity, and Computer are helping the students to get jobs after school, the students strongly agreed (Mean of 4.24) that these subjects are helpful. A Standard Deviation of 0.3896 also suggests that most respondents concurred with this view. This was supported by some teachers who said that the current secondary school curriculum is preparing students for the job market in subjects such as Computer Studies and Agriculture. Technical subjects such as Woodwork and Carpentry were also seen to be trying to reduce joblessness. This is in line with KICD (2016) which states that the purpose of introducing the 8-4-4 system of education (more so the technical subjects) was to provide a curriculum that would assist learners to get practical skills, knowledge and competencies to enable them to become self-reliant in the society. [18] also argues that the 8-4-4 system of education was meant to improve the student’s employment potential thus making them self-reliant.
Some teachers, however, opposed the view that the current curriculum is preparing students for the job market and helping them to become self-reliant. They argued that the current secondary school curriculum is not well-tailored to enable learners to secure jobs after school. Even in subjects such as Business Studies and Agriculture, the thoroughness of the skills learnt is very shallow. In fact, in one of the interviews, one teacher made the following remark: “This curriculum is only tailored towards white-collar jobs, and it is shallow in terms of preparing students for the job market” (Teachers’ Interview, February 20, 2017). One KICD officer also concurred with these teachers’ views when he stated this:
The 8-4-4 system of education could be having a gap in one way or the other, and maybe that is why we are considering a curriculum reform. At the introduction of the 8-4-4 system of education, there was great emphasis on vocational education whose major goal was to even cater for students who would not continue with education. This education was aimed at making these students self-reliant. However, the major problem with the current curriculum was at its implementation. Though it was articulate, it did not achieve many of its objectives (Cross-Cutting Issues Curriculum Development Officer’s Interview, March 18, 2017).

Teachers also argued that the education curriculum in Kenya is too exam-oriented and it does not emphasise the application of education. In support of this, one of the principal interviewees said; “This curriculum does not address learners’ socio-economic needs, but instead it drills the students in academia. This result in well-learned people who are not able to handle social-economic problems such as radicalisation” (Principals’ Interview 7, Feb 27, 2017). The curriculum was therefore faulted for failing to prepare students for self-survival.

Concerning group work, students strongly agreed (Mean of 4.02) that the use of group works in schools was helping them to develop a sense of belonging, respect and tolerance towards each other. An SD of 0.1023 is not a significant deviation from the mean thus indicating a level of congruence on students’ responses across board. Similarly, a mean of 4.02 concerning the statement that students have been taught skills on how to resist bad influence from friends and peers showed a strong level of agreement whilst an SD of 0.3114 indicated that the deviation in the views among respondents was not much. Most students were however undecided (Mean of 2.62) on whether they have been taught skills in solving problems on their own without waiting for their parents. This view was also disparate amongst respondents as shown by a SD of 2.314.

Problem-solving skills are fundamental in radicalisation prevention, but most of the teachers also agreed that they do not teach these skills since they are not part of their syllabi. To elaborate on this, one of the teachers had this to say:
Although problem-solving skills are very helpful in radicalisation prevention, most of us teachers do not teach this to our students. These skills are not there in most of our subject syllabi. This may only be applicable in subjects such as Life-Skills Education subject, which is rarely taught in most schools (Teachers’ interview, February 14, 2017).

It was therefore clear that although the current secondary school curriculum could be helping in radicalisation prevention in schools, it is to a very small extent. In fact, even in cases where the drivers had been addressed through some subjects, most of the students were left out because most of those subjects with relevant content to radicalisation prevention were elective subjects in most schools.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations
This study revealed that several factors influence students towards radicalisation which should be addressed through the school curriculum. These factors/drivers include poverty and unemployment, illiteracy, peer pressure, religion, use of the internet, lack of sense of belonging and lack of proper parental guidance. On investigating whether the current curriculum has been able to address these drivers of radicalisation, findings from the study showed that this has been done minimally through providing education to all to curb illiteracy and through the provision of subjects such as Agriculture, Computer, Woodwork, and Metalwork, which equip students with skills that would help them become self-employed after school hence reducing poverty. These subjects were however faulted for preparing the students in a very shallow manner for the job market. This study thus concluded that there is more that needs to be done on the current curriculum to address needs that are motivating learners towards radicalisation.

VII. Acknowledgement
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