

Types of Improvisation of Instructional Resources for Social Studies Instruction among Junior Schools in Imenti, Meru County Kenya

Kinyua Mary Kanana, Ogembo John Otieno (PhD), Peter Mabubi (PhD)

Kenya

*Corresponding Author: Kinyua Mary Kanana, Kenya

Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to establish the extent of improvisation of instructional resources for social studies instruction among junior schools in Kenya. It was necessitated by the need to contribute in generating empirical evidence required to contribute in plugging the existing knowledge gap on the extent as well as challenges that Junior School teachers face in undertaking improvisation in the absence of adequate standard resources. Empirical literature indicates that in Kenya, just like most developing countries, a majority of learning institutions suffer from lack of adequate instructional resources due to a number of reasons including limited financial resources. In junior schools, the situation is compounded by the fact that being a new concept, the schools require additional resources to institutionalize implementation of the new curriculum, social studies instruction included. In the absence of adequate resources in most junior schools teachers are expected to innovate in order to enrich the teaching and learning environment. This study sought to generate empirical literature on the extent to which teachers innovate to generate instructional resources in this challenging instructional environment. The study also sought to establish the challenges that teachers face in the process of improvisation. The study targeted junior schools in Imenti, Meru County, Kenya. A descriptive survey research design was employed to obtain information from grade eight learners, teachers of social studies and heads of institutions. Data was collected from 359 participants using questionnaires and interview schedules. Data obtained was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively based on the study objectives. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically while quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using frequency and percentages with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 30 computer software. Findings indicated minimal innovative improvisation of resources for social studies instruction. Teachers reported high extent of improvisation of graphic materials such as maps, charts and photographs, average extent for constructions such as models but very low extent for audio and digital resources. The study recommends that social studies teachers be facilitated for innovative improvisation to enable an enriched instructional environment.*

Keywords: *Social studies instruction, Improvised instructional resources, innovation, standard instructional resources, frequency of use, improvisation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Improvised instructional resources, often made from everyday materials, offer a cost effective alternative to expensive educational tools especially in underfunded settings Husseini et al., (2024). These materials promote critical thinking and problem solving by encouraging hands on, experiential learning. Improvised materials are teaching aids created from locally available resources, often with expert help, to substitute standard tools while achieving similar learning outcomes, Ahmed, Sharif and Ahmad, (2017). This practice, known as improvisation, ensures uninterrupted learning using accessible resources Ezegbe & Attahkum, (2020). Improvisation supports all three educational domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

Wambui, Wanjiku, and Otieno (2023) emphasize that improvised materials are not just stopgaps but flexible, context sensitive tools that enhance instruction across disciplines. Stephen (2023), in a UK based study on social studies, highlighted the importance of teacher skill in creating and using such materials. Amadi (2024) notes that improvised resources include maps, models, photos, cultural artifacts and student made portfolios all vital for effective teaching in resource limited environments. A related study explored improvised materials used by social studies teachers in Imenti sub counties, Meru County, Kenya.

1.1. Types of Improvised Instructional Resources

Effective social studies instruction, like other subjects, requires diverse teaching resources. According to Ding, Kim, and Orey (2017), students retain more information when they actively engage with learning materials. Thus, instructional aids especially improvised ones enhance learning by involving learners in seeing, hearing, and doing. Nilsen and Gustafson (2016) advocate using locally made or acquired materials for both formal and informal education. Improvisation involves creatively using local materials when standard tools are unavailable Bariham, Ondigi & Kiiro, (2021). Examples in social studies include maps, diagrams, flashcards, pictures, artifacts, and audiovisual tools. Though often topic specific, these can be adapted across subjects. Maeland and Espeland (2017) explored how Norwegian teachers perceive improvisation, identifying four types: design, communication, repertoire, and context. Challenges included limited knowledge, pressure for accountability, and reduced teacher autonomy. They recommend integrating improvisation into teacher training. Mensah (2023) studied improvised materials in teaching chemistry in New Mexico. Using household items and cabbage based pH indicators; experiments showed that improvised tools achieved similar learning outcomes as standard lab equipment.

Adamu (2015) surveyed junior high schools in Bauchi State, Nigeria, revealing a lack of improvised resources like audiovisual and written materials. Mkapa (2019) analyzed Tanzania's social studies curriculum and found both projected and non-projected aids improved learning across topics. Ngendabanga, Nkurunziza, and Mugabo (2025) studied improvised materials in Rwandan chemistry classes. Though theory dominated due to limited resources and large class sizes, teachers used everyday items like eggshells and lemon to support practical learning. Karaigua (2013) examined the use of culturally relevant materials in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study found science instruction primarily used realia such as water, soil, and leaves, though overall resource availability was low particularly in preprimary schools. This research highlights the need to examine how often improvised materials are used in social studies instruction.

1.2. Challenges Teachers Face in Improvising Resources for Social Studies Instruction

Social Studies is a key subject in Kenya's competency based curriculum, aimed at fostering informed, rational decision making and civic engagement Obodo and Thompson, (2020); Fadhili, (2019). Despite its importance, instruction often suffers due to a lack of resources and teachers' limited ability to improvise. Stephen (2015) identified key barriers: insufficient funding, lack of skills, large class sizes, rural school locations, limited time, and poor access to materials. Internationally, studies in the UK and the Philippines Marín et al., (2021); Putri & Mangunsong(2021) highlighted similar issues teacher workload, limited tech skills, and inadequate support. These studies recommend better training, updated curricula, and stronger institutional backing.

In Africa, research from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Rwanda reveals challenges such as poor training, low teacher motivation, lack of policy support, and minimal creativity in creating improvised materials Chimereogo et al., (2023); Assefa, 2019; Yaw, (2024); Ndiokubwayo et al., (2018). Studies also stress the need for regular workshops and mentorship. Kenyan research shows preprimary and primary teachers often lack qualifications and skills for improvisation, which leads to underuse of instructional materials Wambui, (2013); Ndirangu et al., (2023). Gacego (2019) found that many teachers are unmotivated or reluctant to use improvised resources unless required.

Macharia et al. (2022) observed that teacher enthusiasm for improvisation often fades once they become permanent staff, due to lack of incentives and skills. Similarly, Wandia et al. (2021) found that improvisation demands time, resources, and precision often limited in most schools. While improvisation enhances learning and engagement, most existing research focuses on science subjects. There is limited empirical study on its application in Social Studies at the junior secondary level. This study aims to address that gap by examining the scope and challenges of improvisation in Social Studies education.

Research Questions.

The study was guided by the following research questions?

- What type of resources do social studies teachers improvise for use during instruction in junior schools in Imenti, Meru County, Kenya?

- What challenges do teachers face in improvisation of resources for social studies instruction in Imenti, Meru County Kenya?

2. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Multistage sampling was used to select 293 grade eight learners, 44 teachers of social studies, 16 heads of institutions and 6 CSOs. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data from sampled respondents. Data was collected from 289 grade eight learners, 43 teachers of social studies, 16 HOI's and 6 CSOs giving the study a return rate of 98.51%. Qualitative data obtained was analyzed thematically while quantitative data was cleaned coded and analyzed descriptively and inferentially with the aid of the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30.0 computer software. Frequency and percentages were used to describe the existing relationship between the variables while hypothesis was tested using Chi square analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to determine the types of instructional resources teachers improvised for social studies instruction. It also sought to determine the challenges that teachers faced during the improvisation of resources for social studies instruction in Imenti sub counties, Meru County, Kenya.

3.1. Types of Improvised Instructional Resources.

The first objective of the study sought to determine the types of resources teachers improvise for use in social studies instructional process. Teachers and learners were provided with a set of instructional resources to indicate the ones commonly improvised. Findings obtained are summarized in Table 1.

Table1. *Types of Resources Improvised for Use in Social Studies Instruction*

Type of resource improvised	Teachers		Learners	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Graphic materials				
Maps	79.1	20.9	70.9	29.1
Diagrams	88.4	11.6	61.2	38.8
Charts	83.7	16.3	63.0	37.0
Photographs	39.5	60.5	31.4	68.6
Civic posters e.g. on human rights	16.3	83.7	15.6	84.4
Constructed materials				
Models of historical buildings	9.7	90.3	8.0	92.0
Mock traditional houses	7.0	93.0	5.6	94.4
Models of human skull	13.7	86.3	12.5	87.5
Currency models	14.0	86.0	12.3	87.7
Improvised audio resources				
Recorded oral stories	15.2	84.8	14.0	86.0
Recorded audio lessons	13.5	86.5	11.6	88.4
Audio diaries	13.8	86.2	12.3	87.7
Digital resources				
Teacher made videos	27.9	72.1	20.4	79.6
Digital story boards	20.9	79.1	18.7	81.3
Virtual field trips	9.3	90.7	9.7	90.3
Virtual maps	14.5	85.5	7.0	93.0

Information obtained relative to graphic resources show that a majority of teachers sampled indicated improvising maps (79.1%), diagrams (88.4%) and charts (83.7%) while fewer teachers indicated improvising photographs (39.5%) and civic posters (16.3%) for use in social studies instruction. Findings imply that a majority of teachers of social studies (61.4%) confirmed improvising graphic materials for use in social studies instruction. This observation was corroborated by slightly less than a half (48.42%) of sampled grade eight learners who indicated that their teachers of social studies improvised graphic materials. Specifically, more than two thirds indicated that their teachers improvised maps (70.9%), a majority said they improvised diagrams (61.2%) and charts (63.0%) while fewer than half confirmed that they improvised photographs (31.4%) and civic posters (15.6%) for social studies instruction. Information obtained on constructed materials show that very few teachers improvised models of historical buildings (9.7%), mock traditional houses (7.0%), model of

human skull (13.7%) and currency models (14.0%). Findings mean that a minority of the sampled teachers of social studies (11.1%) improvised constructed materials for use in the instruction of social studies. This observation was confirmed by less than a quarter (10.1%) of sampled grade eight learners who indicated that their teachers of social studies improvised constructed materials. Specifically, very few grade eight learners indicated that their teachers improvised models of historical buildings (8.0%), mock traditional houses (5.6%), model of human skull (12.5%) and currency models (12.3%).

Similar observation was made as regards improvised audio resources less than a quarter of sampled teachers acknowledging improvising recorded audio stories (15.2%), recorded audio lessons (13.5%) and audio diaries (13.8%). This means that very few teachers equivalent to 14.17% indicated improvising improvised audio resources. This observation was corroborated by less than a quarter of sampled grade eight learners (12,63%) confirming that their teachers of social studies integrated audio resources for use in instruction of the subject. Specifically, less a quarter of the sampled grade eight learners indicated that their teachers improvised recorded audio stories (14.0%), recorded audio lessons (11.6%) and audio diaries (12.3%).

As regards digital resources, about a quarter indicated improvising teacher made videos (27.9%), less than this proportion improvised digital story boards (20.9%), virtual field trips (9.3%) and virtual maps (14.5%). Findings mean that less than a quarter of the sampled teachers (18.15%) acknowledged improvising digital resources for use in instruction of social studies. Their observation was corroborated by findings from very few sampled grade eight learners (13.95%) who confirmed that their teachers of social studies improvised digital resources for use in the instruction of the subject. Specifically, less than a quarter of the sampled grade eight learners indicated that their teachers of social studies improvised teacher made videos (20.4%), less than this proportion improvised digital story boards (18.7%), virtual field trips (9.7%) and virtual maps (7.0%). Descriptive findings thus confirmed that graphic materials such as maps, diagrams and charts are the most preferred instructional resources that improvised for social studies instruction. Waigera (2013) in a study on teachers' use of culturally relevant and improvised instructional materials in secondary schools in Nakuru County found that realia, pictures and charts were the only materials used in teaching science. Mkapa (2019) in an analysis of the junior secondary school social studies curriculum in Tanzania, to identify the educational technology materials that could be frequently used in teaching the various specific contexts of subject matter found that for every unit or topic both projected and non-projected aids could be effectively used for teaching.

Information was also sought from heads of institution as regards the extent to which their teachers of social studies embraced improvisation and the most common instructional resources they improvised for social studies instruction. On whether teachers of social studies undertook improvisation, almost all head teachers of the junior schools confirmed that teachers of social studies sometimes embraced improvisation. According to the junior school head teachers, it is graphic materials such as maps, charts and photographs that are the instructional resources often improvised.

3.2. Challenges of Improvisation of Instructional Resources

The second objective was to establish the challenges that teachers face in the course of undertaking improvisation of resources for social studies instructional process in Imenti region, Meru County, Kenya. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the research question on the possible challenges that teachers face. Respondents were required to respond to a Likert rating scale on the statements provided. The results obtained are shown in the table 2.

Table2. *Challenges of Improvisation*

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Total
Accessing materials for improvisation may be a challenge to teachers	-	-	4.7	9.3	86.0	100.0
Amount of time required for improvisation can be a challenge	-	2.3	4.7	37.2	55.8	100.0
Teachers level of training	2.3	2.3	7.0	32.6	55.8	100.0
Teachers attitude towards resource improvisation	2.3	4.7	9.3	34.9	48.8	100.0
Large classes	-	-	4.7	32.6	62.7	100.0
Teacher's self-efficacy	9.3	2.3	4.7	25.6	58.1	100.0
Materials for improvisation can be costly	-	-	7.0	27.9	65.1	100.0

Data obtained showed that a significant proportion of teachers (95.3%) acknowledged that accessing materials for improvisation, the amount of time required for improvisation (93.0%) as well as teachers' level of training (88.4%) could be a challenge. Other challenges highlighted by significant proportion of the respondents include teachers' attitude towards resource improvisation (83.7%), large classes (95.3%), teacher's self-efficacy (83.7%) and the fact that materials for improvisation can be costly (93.0%). Findings therefore show that a significant proportion of the sampled teachers of social studies (90.34%) indicated existence of challenges that impede improvisation of resources for social studies instruction in junior schools in Imenti sub-counties, Meru County Kenya. Stephen (2015) in a similar study previously established that problems associated with improvisation include lack of financial support from the school principals, lack of skills and strategies for improvisation and large class size arising from free and compulsory Secondary education, school location where most Secondary Schools are located in rural areas, time constraint, unavailability of producer goods or tools, inability to identify local materials and lack of exposure on improvisation on the part of teachers. Cayabas and Sumegang (2023) in another a study on Challenges and Interventions in Developing Instructional Materials: Perspectives of Public School Teachers in Basic Education in the Philippines, highlighted two primary critical issues including the scarcity of time due to heavy workloads and the difficulty of keeping pace with technological advancements. Teachers reported significant challenges related to insufficient skills, knowledge and understanding of instructional materials, limited policy support and inadequate administrative assistance.

Qualitative information was sought from heads of institution as regards the challenges that teachers of social studies face in the course of improvisation of instructional resources for social studies instruction. A majority of head teachers of the junior schools acknowledged the presence of a number of challenges. According to them, possible challenges of improvisation include;

Time constraints, teaching workload, negative attitude towards improvisation

Limited financial resources to facilitate improvisation, lack of technical skills

Lack of professional support for improvisation and large class sizes

Their observation was supported by that from CSOs who in their assessment noted that robust improvisation of resources for social studies in junior schools in Imenti area, Meru County is hindered by among other factors;

Availability of materials for improvisation, teacher efficacy and level of training for improvisation, time constraints, work overload and teachers' negative attitude towards improvisation

Findings from interviews thus show an acknowledgement of the interviewee of the presence of a number of challenges that could be limiting the extent of improvisation of instructional resources for social studies instruction. Cayabas and Sumegang (2023) did a study on Challenges and Interventions in Developing Instructional Materials: Perspectives of Public School Teachers in Basic Education. The results of the study highlighted two primary critical issues faced by teachers: the scarcity of time due to heavy workloads and the difficulty of keeping pace with technological advancements. Teachers reported significant challenges related to insufficient skills, knowledge and understanding of instructional materials, limited policy support and inadequate administrative assistance. Chimereogo et al. (2023) conducted a study that Explored Teachers' Creativity in Improvisation of Instructional Materials in the Teaching and Learning of Chemistry: Implication for the 21st Century Learners in Nigeria. The findings revealed that using improvised materials during the teaching sessions proved very helpful but was greeted with a number of challenges among which are; lack of creativity and the skill to design, time constraint, limited skills in improvisation, cost of locally sourced materials, lack of support, lack of policy statement to encourage teachers, large class size, among others

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study aimed at examined how improvisation of instructional resources influences social studies instruction among junior schools in Imenti, Meru County, Kenya. Specifically, it sought to find out the types of resources social studies teachers improvise for use during instruction and find out the challenges faced by teachers during improvisation of resources for social studies instruction in junior schools in the study area. The first objective sought to find out the types of resources social studies

teachers improvise for use during instruction; Findings indicated that graphic materials such as improvised maps, diagrams and charts are the most preferred instructional resources improvised for social studies instruction. It can therefore be concluded that graphic materials such as improvised maps, diagrams and charts are the instructional resources improvised by most teachers for social studies instruction.

The second objective sought to find out the challenges faced by teachers during improvisation of resources for social studies instruction. Descriptive findings showed that a significant proportion of the sampled teachers acknowledging the existence of a number of challenges that impede improvisation of resources for social studies instruction in junior schools in Imenti sub-counties, Meru County Kenya. Teachers reported that accessing materials for improvisation, the amount of time required for improvisation, teacher's level of training on improvisation, teachers attitude towards improvisation, large classes, teacher's self-efficacy and the fact that materials for improvisation could be costly were possible challenges encountered in the course of improvisation. Qualitative information from head teachers and CSOs showed an acknowledgement of the presence of a number of challenges that could be limiting the extent of improvisation of instructional resources for social studies instruction. It can therefore be concluded that there exist a number of challenges that impede improvisation of resources for social studies instruction in junior schools in Imenti sub-counties, Meru County Kenya.

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