



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Core value of love and engagement of grade six competency-based curriculum learners at Wajir School for the Deaf, Wajir East Sub- County, Wajir County, Kenya

Lornah Irene Ayako \*

*Department of Counselling Psychology, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya.*

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### Abstract

Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) is based on learners developing core competencies to shape their characters. Love is an important value in life. Learners in schools are guided to portray a caring attitude of emotional support and interpersonal relationships towards each other. This study aims to investigate the significance of core value of love in promoting class engagement for deaf learners. The study was anchored on the theory of social cognitive by Albert Bandura and took on a quantitative correlational research design. Census sampling was employed to select all the 10 learners in grade six level at Wajir School for the Deaf. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and Engagement vs. Disaffection with learning student-report to measure love and engagement respectively and analyzed using descriptive analysis. From the findings majority of the participants had high levels of feeling love ( $M=4.03$  and  $SD=.534$ ). The results also indicated that level of engagement in class for participants was slightly above the middle point ( $M=3.11$  and  $SD=.455$ ) From the results, the Pearson correlation coefficient value was  $-.063$  which indicated a weak negative relationship between a learner experiencing love and engagement levels in class. The study recommends that it is essential for teachers for deaf learners to increase class engagement using variety of techniques such as interactive activities and visual presentations.

**Keywords:** Competency Based Curriculum; Deaf; Engaged; Learners; Love

### 1. Introduction

The development of competencies known as 21st-century skills are garnering increasing attention through Competence Based Curriculum (CBC). Gruber (2018) describes CBC as a methodology in which learners work at their own pace to demonstrate mastery in the competences necessary for their chosen field in the study. In the year 2018, the Kenyan government implemented CBC.

CBC, still in its formative stage also highlights some of the values it is supposed to inculcate into the learners, with the anticipation that by the end of the education circle they will have been matured into them: responsibility, integrity, love, respect, unity, peace and patriotism (Namwambah, 2020). Education is, at its best, a process that equips minds and nurtures hearts and each aspect should be intentionally and thoughtfully implemented (Koeman, 2018). According to Maslow (2013) love is a positive emotion that is believed to be a basic human need. It has the power to evoke vivid mental images, strong emotions and in some instances a visceral physical response. Zhao and Li (2021) allude that love is the cornerstone of meaningful and successful instruction and its absence makes education a simple training. Love is a mutual expression of respect, trust, honesty, integrity and emotional attachment. Kenya National Examination Council gives several characteristics of a learner who has love. They include resolves conflict, forgives others when wronged, displays trustworthiness, respects others, keeps promises, puts the interest of other before own interest, avoids inflicting pain on others and portrays a caring attitude.

\* Corresponding author: Lornah Irene Ayako

Binfet (2015) mentioned that kindness, from the perspective of young children, is an act of emotional or physical support that helps build or maintain relationships with others. Showing kindness towards others gives a feeling of joy to the recipient. To the deaf learners the common quote of kindness is "Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear" by Mark Twain. Positive psychology school puts focus on how significant emotions are in education. Application of love to education has in recent times gained momentum (Wilkinson & Kaukko, 2020).

In their qualitative study, Terlektsi, et al. (2020) aimed to explore the experiences of peer relationships among deaf adolescents. The findings of the study indicated that the participants reported having positive and rewarding relationships with their peers.

The wellbeing of learners remains a matter of interest internationally and an increasing center of attention of policy in schools. According to Zhao and Li (2021) love manifests itself through a caring environment and can influence engagement. Learners who are engaged show up to class excited to learn, participate in learning and demonstrate a positive attitude.

Chipangura (2014) defines student engagement as the level of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion they show when they are being taught or learning on their own. Learners may be engaged in terms of behavior. Learners behave and don't act out. They bring everything they need during class, follow instructions, work carefully and participate in class discussion. According to Fredricks et al. (2004) engagement is a construct made up of three variables: behavioral engagement for instance obeying classroom rules and participation in classroom activities), emotional engagement like feelings towards teachers, peers, and school, sense of belonging to school and thirdly cognitive engagement like effort directed towards learning.

Engaged learners not only enjoy learning but also stay committed to their education. They actively interact with peers, sharing their knowledge and feeling positively challenged, ultimately leading to successful personal development paths. However, it is significant to mention that it is not uncommon for learners to appear less engaged when they are solely focused on completing tasks or assignments. Sometimes, they may be more focused on completing the work rather than fully engaging with the content or embracing a deeper understanding. According to Chua (2017) students who are on tasks may not be highly engaged.

Sullivan and Downey (2015) conducted a study with school personnel to document perspectives of pragmatic shift. The study employed qualitative research design and collected data using semi structured interviews. The findings revealed that the strongest outcomes of competency-based education are increased student engagement. Students are more engaged in the material because they have ownership over their learning. The teacher manipulates learning activities to engage students (Teygong et al., 2018).

Todorov et al. (2021) compared the observed and the self-reported engagement of 16 students who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH) attending mainstream schools to that of matched controls with typical hearing. They express that when compared to their hearing peers in mainstream classrooms, students who are DHH experience more listening difficulties as cited by (Krijger et al., 2020). They echo that this challenge may have implications for their engagement in the classroom. The study concludes that some individual students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing had lower levels of engagement.

Chua (2017) conducted a study on promoting active engagement for children with special needs. He expresses that children with special needs find it difficult to engage with teachers and activities due to factors such as inattention, slow processing speed, boredom, and others. Classroom engagement can be problematic for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing (Todorov et al., 2022).

A significant portion of the research conducted on competence-based curricula has primarily concentrated on the education of mainstream learners. However, the primary inquiry of this study aimed to explore the potential correlation between the fundamental value of love and the level of engagement exhibited by learners at Wajir School for the Deaf.

### **1.1. Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on the theory of Social Cognitive developed by Albert Bandura. Bandura (1991) emphasizes the role of social interactions and observational learning. Love and positive relationships in the classroom can serve as models for behavior and influence how learners engage in the class.

## 2. Methodology

This study used a correlational research method to determine the relationship between variables as it is the most appropriate to investigate the development of love among the grade six learners at Wajir school for the deaf and its relationship with their engagement. According to Cherry (2023) a correlational study is a type of research design that looks at the relationships between two or more variables. The school is the only primary school for the deaf in the county. By employing census sampling, all the 10 learners in grade 6 were selected as participants.

Data was gathered using structured questionnaire and adopted the Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning Student-report to measure love and engagement respectively. The structured questionnaire was constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire had a Cronbach's alpha value of .826 The ideal Cronbach's alpha value is at least 0.7 (Taber, 2018).The questionnaire was thus reliable. The instruments were validated by two experts from Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya.

### 2.1. Ethical consideration

The researcher sought permission from appropriate authorities. Learners were below 18 years hence the researcher requested for consent from the parents. All participants willingly undertook the research. Learners were guided to fill the questionnaire by their teacher who signed for them and assisted them understand words that they expressed they were not able to understand their meaning.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Demographic characteristics

6(60%) of the participants were male and 4(40%) were female. Majority of the participants 4(40%) were 15 years old, 2 (20%) were 13 years old, 2 (20%) were 14 years old and 2 (20%) were 16 years old had participants each.

**Table 1** Love levels of participants

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	S.DEV
I have understanding of the importance of forgiving	1 10%	-	1 10%	5 50%	3 30%	3.90	1.197
I am confident being in the presence of my class mates	-	1 10%	1 10%	4 40%	4 40%	4.10	.994
I am able to feel relaxed in class	-	1 10%	-	5 50%	4 40%	4.20	.919
I enjoy being with my classmates.	1 10%	-	2 20%	3 30%	4 40%	3.90	1.287
I play with my classmates	-	-	-	7 70%	3 30%	4.3	.483
I understand what my classmates need	-	-	3 30%	4 40%	3 30%	4.0	.816
I bond with my classmates	-	2 20%	-	6 60%	2 20%	3.8	1.033
Composite data						4.027	.534

Forgiveness is the best way to socialize with friends. Results show that 5(50%) of the participants agree 3(30%) strongly agree to be forgiving to their classmates. This shows that majority of the participants (M=3.9 and SD=1.197) consistently forgave their classmates when wronged. Research findings also showed that 4(40%) of participants strongly agreed and 4 (40%) agreed to be confident. The research therefore suggests that a wide range of participants (M=4.10 and SD=.994) had confidence in themselves. On whether they felt relaxed in class, 5(50%) agreed and 4(40%)

strongly agreed. This implies that a larger number of participants ( $M=4.2$  and  $SD=.919$ ) were comfortable in the class environment. Love can also help create a sense of belonging and community in the classroom. Probed further on if they enjoyed being with their peers, 4(40%) strongly agreed and 3(30%) agreed. This means that many of the participants ( $M=3.9$  and  $SD=1.287$ ) enjoyed being with their classmates. Through play, children learn about relationships. The research outcomes showed that 7 (70%) agreed and 3(30%) strongly agreed. This means that all the participants ( $M=4.3$  and  $SD=.483$ ) cherished play. When asked if they understood their classmates needs, 4(40%) agreed and 3(30%) strongly agreed. This implies that most of the times ( $M=4.3$  and  $SD=.816$ ) had concern about their classmates. Lastly, findings revealed that 6(60%) agreed and 2(20%) strongly agreed to have bonded with their classmates. This can be interpreted that many participants ( $M=3.8$  and  $SD=1.033$ ) had an attachment with their classmates. Taken as a whole, majority of the participants felt loved ( $M=4.03$  and  $SD=.534$ ) participants expressed that they had a sense of being loved. This finding supports Terlektsi, et al. (2020) whose study indicated that deaf adolescents reported having positive and rewarding relationships with their peers.

**Table 2** Engagement Levels of participants

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Engagement levels of Participants	10	3.11	.455
Valid N (listwise)	10		

The levels of engagement of participants ( $M=3.11$  and  $SD=.455$ ) indicates that on average, their level of engagement falls slightly above the middle point of the scale. Interpreted by the standard deviation the results suggest that the level of engagement among deaf learners in class is relatively consistent. The finding is in agreement with Todorov et al. (2021) who concludes that some individual students who are deaf and hard of hearing have lower levels of engagement.

**Table 3** Relationship between Love and Engagement of participants

		Love levels	Engagement levels of Deaf learners
Love levels	Pearson Correlation	1	-.063
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.863
	N	10	10
Engagement levels of Deaf learners	Pearson Correlation	-.063	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.863	
	N	10	10

From the results, the Pearson correlation coefficient value  $-.063$  which indicates a negative relationship, meaning that as the levels of love increase, the levels of engagement decrease, and vice versa. The correlation coefficient of  $-.063$  indicates that this relationship is very weak and close to zero. Therefore, the relationship between love levels and engagement levels in this case is negligible. The findings are in contrast to Zhao and Li (2021) who allude that love manifests itself through a caring environment and can influence engagement. Lack of engagement in class by deaf learners is also supported by Chua (2017) who expresses that children with special needs will find it difficult to engage with teachers and activities due to factors such as inattention, slow processing speed, boredom, and others.

#### 4. Discussion

The core value of love recognizes that learners who feel loved and valued are more likely to be academically engaged. Creating a classroom that fosters love and engagement is critical in promoting academic achievement, social development and overall well-being among deaf learners. It is important to note that correlation does not imply causation. The negative correlation between love and engagement levels does not necessarily mean that one causes the other. Other factors or variables may be influencing the relationship between love and engagement in this context. There are challenges that deaf learners may face in accessing and participating in the classroom environment. One of the difficulties facing deaf learners in education is language. Kenyan sign language is still a growing language with variations. Some words without signs will lead a teacher to fingerspell which the deaf normally take time to

comprehend. Deaf learners may also face visual distraction, poor lighting, not able to clearly see the teacher in front of the classroom. In addition, those seated near doors or windows with high amounts of school population -traffic or commotion may have difficulties in focusing on the teacher's instruction thus making them less engaged in classwork.

### *Recommendations*

- Teachers to foster a positive learning environment where learners' feel valued and respected. This can be achieved through promoting teamwork and collaboration, creating opportunities for learners to share their thoughts and opinions and encouraging kindness and empathy towards others.
- Teachers to understand that children learn differently and how best an individual learner can be best assisted.
- Teachers to increase engagement using a variety of techniques such as interactive activities and visual presentations.
- Teachers use positive reinforcement and praise to acknowledge and encourage participation and create a classroom culture where each one's ideas are valued.
- A similar study to be carried out in a different population.

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### **Compliance with ethical standards**

#### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

#### *Statement of ethical approval*

The study was approved by the Catholic university of Eastern Africa, Department of Psychology ethical committee.

#### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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