

Local Institutional Strengthening for Peace Building: A Case of Amani Clubs in Kenyan Educational Institutions

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Abstract

This research paper explores the role of local institutional strengthening in promoting peace building within Kenyan educational institutions, with a focus on Amani Clubs. These clubs serve as a microcosm of local peace building efforts, providing valuable insights into the challenges and successes of grassroots initiatives in conflict-ridden regions. Through a comprehensive desktop research approach, this paper analyzes the evolution, implementation, and impact of Amani Clubs, shedding light on their effectiveness as a model for promoting peace and social cohesion in Kenyan institutions.

Keywords: Amani club, local institutions, peace building.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Africa, it's evident that we have yet to fully adopt a culture of peace, one that recognizes the inherent worth in each individual. The concept of peace education holds the promise of transforming our society, shifting it away from a constant state of fear of conflict to an atmosphere of serenity. In this environment, every culture is respected, and people coexist harmoniously, sharing the abundant resources provided by God for the enjoyment of all humanity.

The establishment of peace education in our institutions is not only possible but crucial. To make this a reality, Chelule (2014) proposes that we should begin the development and implementation of the necessary resources, drawing insights from those who have already made progress in offering such programs. He also emphasizes that our future generations need peace to alleviate the academic pressures, grading systems, and certifications that often promote competition and neglect those who don't meet the minimum qualifications. Peace education centers on cooperation, rather than rivalry.

1.1 Background

The promotion of peace and stability in regions affected by conflict is of paramount importance for social progress. In Kenya, a nation marked by a history of

ethnic tensions and violent disputes, numerous efforts have emerged to advance peace and reconciliation. These endeavors involve collaborations between the Ministry of Education, Technology, and Science, the former Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion, and Constitutional Affairs, the former Ministry of Provincial Administration and Office of the President, as well as international organizations like UNICEF and IGAD. They jointly implemented the National Peace Education Campaign (NPEC), which includes Amani Clubs. Amani Clubs, a national organization, have gained recognition for their role in nurturing peace and fostering unity among young Kenyans in various educational institutions. This research paper investigates the concept of strengthening local institutions for peace-building, with a particular focus on Amani Clubs as a case study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem:

Peace and stability are essential for the growth and development of any nation. In Kenya, like many other countries, historical and contemporary challenges have posed significant threats to peace and social cohesion. Ethnic tensions, political conflicts, and social inequalities have, at times, resulted in violence and instability, particularly in educational institutions. Recognizing the urgency of addressing these issues at the grassroots level, Kenyan educational institutions have

implemented various peace-building initiatives, one of which is the Amani Clubs.

The Amani Clubs are local student-led organizations in Kenyan educational institutions dedicated to promoting peace, unity, and conflict resolution among students and the wider community. While these clubs have shown promise in their mission to build peaceful environments within educational institutions, there is a growing need to assess and strengthen their efficacy. By doing so, the research aims to study the contributions of Amani clubs in the promotion of a peaceful and stable environment in Kenyan educational institutions, which can have broader positive implications for society at large.

1.3 Research Objectives

This paper aims to:

- a) Investigate the challenges faced by Amani Clubs in their peace-building efforts.
- b) Examine the strategies employed by Amani Clubs to promote peace and conflict resolution.
- c) Assess the impact of Amani Clubs on local peace and stability.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This research paper is grounded in a comprehensive theoretical framework of Education and Social Change Theories. Education and Social Change Theories states that Education is a powerful tool for shaping attitudes and behaviors. Education and Social Change Theories inform our understanding of how Amani Clubs, operating within educational institutions, influence students' values, beliefs, and behavior in the context of conflict and peace. These theories highlight the potential for education to transform individuals and communities and contribute to peace building.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.5.1 Historical development and evolution of Amani Clubs.

In the research done by Juma (2019), traces the initiation of peace clubs in institutions. Peace clubs serve as a vital component of peace-building infrastructure, offering a hands-on method for instilling peace education within schools and communities. Comprising dedicated volunteers, these clubs convene to deliberate on the various conflicts prevalent in their school and broader environments. Engaging in role-play exercises to address these conflicts is a prevalent practice, serving to equip members with essential conflict management, resolution, and transformation skills. Pioneered in Zambia in 2006, the concept of peace clubs has since proliferated across Africa, with active chapters in numerous countries, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and South Sudan.

The peace education program was initiated in February 2008 after the post-election violence. Therefore, we can say that peace education program in Kenya is an emergency program. It was after 2008 when

partners like UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR and other came together to formulate the peace education program. It is however important to note that's since independence, the curriculum has had content on peace education for instance in history and government and also social studies we have aspects of peace education. The problem was that it was an academic approach. For instance, they teach causes of violence and how to resolve them. From 1992 Kenya, has had sporadic ethnic violence mainly related to elections the worst being the 2007/2008PEV. Notably most of those who were involved in post-election violence as perpetrators are mostly youth who have come through our system of education. The question therefore was if they really internalize what they learn in school. The examination-oriented approach has made them concentrate only on scoring in the subject other than building a holistic person. Peace education therefore came into supplement what was already inexistence. Promoting harmonious co-existence, inculcating the appreciation of diversity and instilling peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms The Kenya Vision 2030 underscores security, peace building, conflict management participatory governance, legal reforms and inculcation of a culture of respect for sanctity of human life as key for development in Kenya The Constitution of Kenya 2010 stipulates national values and principles that should guide Kenyans in realization of peace, it spells out the basic rights and fundamental freedoms, therefore we have the necessary policy documents but we don't internalize. These documents put things in perspective. Why Amani clubs Starting to turn around Kenya towards a peaceful country requires efforts that specifically target the youth particularly those in school. This is because our first institutions of socialization (the family) are failing and that is why we are targeting the second one. The youth in our schools and colleges are at a stage of experimenting and accessing a lot of information (adapted from introductory letter to Promoting harmonious co-existence, inculcating the appreciation of diversity and instilling peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms 19th March, 2018).

a) The goals of Amani(peace) clubs

1. To inculcate the appreciation of diversity amongst students from different ethnic, racial and religious communities.
2. To instill peaceful conflict resolution mechanism and establishment of peer mediation structures in the schools.
3. To promote good relations and harmoniousco-existence amongst students themselves and between schools and their neighboring communities.

b) The objectives of Amani clubs

1. Influence young people on matter of positive ethnicity, nationhood and inclusivity.
2. Lobby the youth to abhor ethnic, religious and racial intolerance and discrimination.

3. Inculcate the use of dialogue and other peaceful means of resolving conflicts promoting harmonious co-existence, inculcating the appreciation of diversity and instilling peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms and disagreements within and outside the schools.
4. Advocate for forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and tolerance of differences amongst the youth.
5. Promote good relations, harmony and peaceful co-existence between schools and their neighboring communities. I thus request you (principals and headteachers) to appoint teachers into posts of Amani club's patrons in your respective schools so that they may launch these clubs and have the relevant activities kick off in time. Conflicts are soon ending in schools if we embrace this noble idea. Kindly let us cultivate peace in our schools so that the learners take this noble virtue home.

1.5.2 Community Engagement and Participation

Community is a group of people with the same goal to achieve. Community engagement and participation is very vital for any institution to run. Institutions are made up of stakeholders who in turn run the clubs. According to Ochieng, Inganga, and Ngala, (2022) in their TJRC commission, uncovered several instances of injustices rooted in harmful cultural practices. These practices sometimes foster prejudice and bias against various social groups within the community. TICA, initiated conversations with cultural leaders and influential figures within communities to recognize these injustices and establish methods for promoting equal opportunities and fair resource distribution. Often, within numerous cultural contexts, the marginalized groups encompass women, youth, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly.

Ndwiga, Momanyi, and Mwal'wa (2022) in their studies, found out that student council leaders effectively utilized various methods to improve discipline within the school community. They engaged other students in peace talks, clubs, peace rallies, peer counseling, and motivational programs aimed at resolving their issues. Ndwiga *et al.*, (2022) concluded that schools where student leaders actively participated in maintaining discipline outperformed those where they did not. Outdoor adventure education has the potential to serve as a tool for fostering social integration, given that the outdoor environment naturally promotes the development of social and interpersonal skills. This perspective holds promise for contributing to peace-building efforts through educational means (Ooko, Muthomi, & Odhiambo, 2015).

Francis (2016) suggested that the primary discoveries revealed that a significant portion of secondary schools provides the following intervention programs as effective measures to combat radicalization:

promoting a culture of peace, engaging in sports and leisure activities, participating in cultural events, involving students in drama, music, art, and dance. The researcher adds that educators should impart skills for handling proactive situations, instill moral values and intellectual development, promote physical and mental fitness, and implement both theoretical and practical approaches through drills. A significant portion of secondary schools provides the following intervention programs as effective measures to combat radicalization: promoting a culture of peace, engaging in sports and leisure activities, participating in cultural events, involving students in drama, music, art, and dance.

For the successful implementation of Peace Clubs in schools Owande, Okoth, and Shiundu, (2020), suggests the significant factors to be considered. These include students' participation in peace programs, the prevailing school culture, funding allocated to peace initiatives, the allocation of time for peace-related activities, students' religious backgrounds, teacher training in Peace Building, the availability of instructional materials, and the academic qualifications of peace instructors

Zanoni, K. (2017). The WISH program actively involves Kenyan girls in a transformative peace education approach, equipping them with the essential skills and knowledge needed to become future leaders in building lasting peace in Kenya and globally.

1.5.3 Success Stories and Impact Assessment

One of the significant positive impacts observed as a result of the Peace Clubs strategy is the remarkable discipline exhibited by Peace Club members, who also serve as exemplary advocates for peace in their respective communities. These outcomes affirm the effectiveness of the approach in fostering a culture of peace among students (Rukaria, & Wanjiku, 2020). Mwani, (2014) Revealed that the implementation of peace-building programs in schools is still incomplete. It also uncovered varying levels of effectiveness among these initiatives in fostering a peaceful school environment and, subsequently, a harmonious society. The majority of teachers and administrators expressed a positive reception to these peace-building endeavors. Furthermore, a positive correlation was observed between students' training in peace-building initiatives and the overall level of peace within the school. Additionally, a positive relationship was established between the presence of social and educational infrastructure in schools and the maintenance of a peaceful atmosphere. The training of school leaders and their influence on peace-building initiatives also exhibited a positive connection.

Mundim *et al.*, (2022) explain that to achieve an enduring peace requires the implementation of effective political, economic, and social reforms. Positive peace entails striving for social and political fairness, ensuring

equal access to economic opportunities, healthcare, and other essential aspects. At the core of this endeavor is peace education. By transforming violent cultures into peaceful ones, peace education plays a pivotal role in this discourse. It sensitizes future generations to attitudes essential for harmonious coexistence, offering valuable opportunities for creating a more peaceful society.

In Owande (2022), the absence of Peace Club activities in most schools is a concerning finding, as these clubs can serve as a vital mechanism for promoting peace, conflict resolution, and unity among students. The fact that many students were unaware of these activities further underscores the need for increased awareness and promotion of such initiatives. Mundim *et al.*, (2022) while the development of peace education curricula is a substantial undertaking demanding significant effort and dedication, there are practical steps that must be taken. The Initial discussions can occur within grassroots peace workshops and peace clubs within formal educational settings. Academics and practitioners with an interest in peace education must actively participate in public scholarship as part of a broader movement aimed at creating curricula that impart the values of peace education. This might involve the incorporation of specific subjects, courses, and modules. Knowledge sharing and dissemination can occur through various means, such as writing articles, providing commentaries in local mainstream newspapers, utilizing radio and television platforms, and engaging with social media. Ultimately, the practice of peace education should entail collaboration between practitioners and scholars with educational institutions, civil society organizations, and grassroots groups to promote and popularize the ideals of positive peace. Additionally, it should be integrated into various aspects of Kenyan society, facilitating conflict transformation through national reconciliation, cohesion, and harmonious coexistence.

Moreover, the inactivity of Peace Clubs in schools where they were established points to a need for improved management and coordination of these clubs. It is not sufficient to merely create these clubs; they must also be actively engaged in promoting peace and harmony within the school community (Owande, 2022).

1.5.4 Challenges Faced by Amani Clubs

Challenges constitute the primary obstacles to the establishment and operation of Peace Clubs within educational institutions. Owande (2022), found out that Peace Club initiatives are largely absent in the majority of schools, with many students being unaware of their existence. Even in schools where these clubs are established, most remained inactive. In addition, absence or lack of activity in Peace Clubs is identified as a significant factor contributing to the unrest among students in schools. Owande recommended revising of the current policy governing the establishment of Peace Clubs in schools and implementing regular supervision

to ensure their active presence and participation in school activities.

Ndwiga *et al.*, (2022) However, student councils face challenges such as disobedience from some students, confrontations, bullying, lack of respect, and difficulties balancing academic responsibilities with their leadership roles. They added that, due to these challenges school leadership should focus on strengthening induction and capacity-building programs for student leaders. These initiatives would equip them with innovative leadership skills, enabling them to fulfill their duties more effectively.

Rukaria and Wanjiku (2020) in their study demonstrate a range of notable accomplishments within the project, including the establishment of Peace Clubs and the creation of a Training Manual designed for Peace Club Facilitators. However, the implementation process has not been without its share of challenges. Some schools have perceived the intervention as an additional burden, and there have been obstacles in securing necessary funding for peace building initiatives.

Owande, Okoth, and Shiundu (2020) in addressing these challenges require a multi-faceted approach that involves students, teachers, school administrators, and potentially external organizations. Strategies may include increasing awareness and buy-in among students, fostering a more peace-supportive school culture, securing additional funding, adjusting school schedules to accommodate peace activities, promoting inclusivity, providing teacher training, and ensuring the availability of relevant instructional materials. By tackling these challenges, schools can work towards the successful implementation of Peace Clubs and the promotion of peace and conflict resolution among students

1.5.5 Additional suggestions

According to Mwani, (2014) findings hold significant implications for the field of peace-building initiatives. Notably, there is a need for increased training of teachers in the domain of peace-building initiatives. While the concept of "Amani club" or peace clubs is commendable, its adoption remains limited, with many students not participating. This suggests that students may not fully comprehend the purpose and function of the Amani club.

In addition, Mosomtai (2017) discoveries significant implications for social cohesion. For example, there is a pressing need for increased training of teachers in the domain of social cohesion. While the establishment of peace clubs, such as the Amani club, is a commendable initiative, it has not gained widespread acceptance, as a majority of students are not enrolled as members of this club. This suggests that students may not have a complete understanding of the purpose and activities of the Amani club.

Mundim *et al.*, (2022) Suggest that achieving enduring peace requires the implementation of effective political, economic, and social reforms. Thus, one of Kenya's challenges is the pursuit of "positive peace" as defined by scholars like Johan Galtung. Positive peace entails striving for social and political fairness, ensuring equal access to economic opportunities, healthcare, and other essential aspects. At the core of this endeavor is peace education. By transforming violent cultures into peaceful ones, peace education plays a pivotal role in this discourse. It sensitizes future generations to attitudes essential for harmonious coexistence, offering valuable opportunities for creating a more peaceful society. A Peace education in its evolution has also partly integrated values of non-violence inherent in the teachings of the two major world religions, Christianity and Islam.² Given that these are the two largest religious groups in Kenya, it would be useful for universities and religious leaders to collaborate in developing peace education curricula. Peace studies should also be context-specific in order to address the pressing issues in the Kenyan context. Particular attention should be paid to the reconciliation of bitterly divided communities.³ It is also important that peace education focuses on addressing the critical challenge of "peaceful co-existence" in the country (Mundim, *et al.*, 2022)

And lastly, Nyakwaka (2021) results indicate significant strides made by Kenya in pursuit of SDG 16, bolstered by the implementation of various strategies. These include the enactment of a new Constitution, the introduction of several pivotal Acts, such as the Children's Act, the establishment of an independent Judiciary, a National Police Service, and the formation of key Commissions like the Gender Commission. To ensure the complete realization of SDG 16, it is imperative to allocate increased financial resources to sustain these institutions, while concurrently fostering a climate of political commitment and cooperation.

From the literature it is evident that less research has been done on Local Institutional Strengthening for Peace Building a Case of Amani Clubs in Kenyan Educational Institutions by doing so, the research aims to study the contributions of Amani clubs in the promotion of a peaceful and stable environment in Kenyan educational institutions, which can have broader positive implications for society at large.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted library research by examining existing research findings in books, journals, and on the internet. The literature encompassed various aspects of Peace Education, including its background information, definition, historical context, United Nations recommendations for peace education, and the role of education in achieving peace. Data Collection done by gather data from various sources, such as academic journals, reports, official documents, and

websites. Sources may include: Government publications on education and peace initiatives, Reports and publications from international and local NGOs working in Kenya, Academic research articles on peace-building in educational institutions, and any available data or documentation related to Amani Clubs and their activities. Data Analysis of the Qualitative content analysis of the literature was thoroughly done. Comparative analysis of Amani Club initiatives in different regions of Kenya was reviewed. Thematic analysis of the challenges and successes documented in the sources. The research design was a case study of Amani Clubs in Kenya.

1.7 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Owande (2022) the research revealed that Peace Club activities were largely absent in the majority of schools, with a lack of awareness among students about their existence. Furthermore, even in the schools where these clubs were established, they were often inactive. As a result, the study concluded that the absence of inactivity of Peace Club initiatives played a role in fueling the student unrest observed in educational institutions. To address this issue, the study recommended a revision of the current policy concerning the establishment of Peace Clubs in schools. Additionally, it advised the implementation of routine oversight to guarantee the full and effective functioning of Peace Clubs within schools

1.8 DISCUSSION

In summary, the findings highlight the potential of outdoor adventure education as a means of fostering social integration and, in turn, contributing to the promotion of peace through education. By creating opportunities for individuals to develop social and interpersonal skills in an outdoor setting, this approach can help bridge social divides and encourage cooperation among diverse groups, ultimately working towards a more harmonious and integrated society.

The provided statement discusses the WISH program's purpose, which is to engage Kenyan girls in a specific type of peace education with the goal of empowering them to become influential contributors to sustainable peace efforts in Kenya and beyond. Let's break down the statement and discuss its key elements:

1.9 CONCLUSION

Lack of Peace Club activities contributes to student unrest suggests that there is a direct correlation between the presence of such initiatives and a more peaceful and conducive school environment. This finding underscores the importance of fostering these clubs in educational institutions.

WISH program's mission and objectives, focusing on active engagement, a transformative educational approach, the development of critical skills,

and the global impact it aspires to make. This more detailed discussion helps convey the program's importance and potential significance in the field of peace education and peace building.

Rukaria & Wanjiku (2020). It is reasonable to conclude that the Peace Clubs strategy has achieved success in promoting peace and conflict resolution in the targeted schools. As a recommendation, the study suggests replicating this model in other educational institutions and introducing peace education as a distinct and integral subject in the national curriculum. This step would not only extend the positive impact of the project but also contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious society as a whole.

1.10 Recommendations

The study's recommendations, which include revising the existing policy on Peace Club creation and implementing regular oversight, provide a practical roadmap for addressing this issue. By modifying the policy, educational authorities can make it easier for schools to establish and maintain active Peace Clubs. Furthermore, regular supervision ensures that these clubs are not just token gestures but actually contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious school environment.

Additionally, the paper suggests that educators should impart skills for handling proactive situations, instill moral values and intellectual development, promote physical and mental fitness, and implement both theoretical and practical approaches through drills (Mwani, 2014).

1.11 Suggested Study areas

Mwani, R. S. (2014). Moreover, it is advisable to explore additional areas of research. One valuable avenue would be to conduct a comprehensive study on the factors that influence peace-building initiatives within the broader Kenyan society. Such research could shed light on the overarching challenges and opportunities for fostering peace in the country.

A separate study could be initiated to delve into the factors influencing peace-building initiatives within institutions of higher learning.

Mosomtai, R. (2017). Moreover, there is a call for further research in several areas. One such avenue is to conduct a comprehensive study on the factors that influence social cohesion within the broader Kenyan society. Additionally, there is merit in investigating the factors that impact social cohesion in institutions of higher learning. This research can shed light on whether social cohesion exists within these institutions, how it is implemented, and its significance in the context of higher education.

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Appendix I. Photographs and Visual Representations of Amani Club Activities



Photo 1: Amani club members from different schools and races interacting during Amani Club National Debates at Gatanga Muranga County August 2023