

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO POOR PERFORMANCE IN KENYA CERTIFICATE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC DAY PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MWIMBI DIVISION, MAARA DISTRICT, KENYA

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Abstract

Performance of students is a product of socio-economic, psychological and environmental factors. Education plays a significant role in political, economic and social realms of development. Secondary school placement, and to some extent admission, depend on the achievement in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination in standard eight. This study aimed at finding out factors that contribute to poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination in public day primary schools in Mwimbi Division, Maara District, Kenya. Descriptive survey design was used and a sample of 6 head teachers, 51 teachers and 146 standard eight pupils participated in the study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data obtained. The study realized the following as factors contributing to poor performance in primary national examination; inadequate learning resources, inadequate monitoring by head teachers, understaffing, high teacher turnover rate, inadequate prior preparation, lack of motivation for teachers, large workload, absenteeism by both teachers and pupils, pupils lateness, lack of support from parents. The following recommendations were made; more teachers to be employed to reduce workload, Ministry of Education to organize induction courses for head teachers to equip them with managerial skills, parents to be educated on the importance of basic education for their children, mode of rewarding teachers to be established. The study is expected to give insight reference to policy makers, scholars and researchers in order to improve the weak areas.

Key terms: Examination, Factors, Performance, Primary Schools

1. Introduction

The development of the education sector has been a long standing objective of the Government of Kenya since independence in 1963. Education is considered by various stakeholders and players as a basic need and a basic right. Performance ranks high on the national agenda, with educators and policymakers focusing on testing, accountability, curriculum reform, and teacher quality, school choice and related concerns. Conspicuously absent has been an examination of how school conditions affect teaching and learning, even though extensive literature exists that links school facilities to the quality of education and to teacher morale and teacher productivity (Mark, 2003). This study documents factors in school and in the community that affects teaching and learning negatively to an extent of poor performance in KCPE in Mwimbi Division of Maara District.

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in January 2003, following the passing of the Children's Act in 2001, has led to vital educational achievements. Enrolments in public schools increased significantly from 5.9 million in 2002 to 6.9 million in 2003- a 17% increase; representing a Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 99% (102% girls and 97% boys). The Government provides funds, through both the School Instructional Management Book Account (SIMBA) and the General Purpose Account (GPA) to procure need based materials and improve on some infrastructure, thereby raising the quality of education.

The Kenya's education system is dominated by examination-oriented teaching, where passing examinations is the only benchmark for performance because there is no internal system of monitoring learning achievements at other levels within an education cycle. It is generally agreed that the most important manifestations of quality education have to do with literacy, cognitive abilities, performance and progression to higher levels of learning. There is reliance on scores and transition rates as core measures of achievement. In Kenya, examinations are generally acceptable as valid measures of achievement (Maiyo, 2009). Secondary school placement, and to some extent admission, depend on performance of Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination in standard eight (Michael, Miguel & Rebecca, 2004). Although the government has channeled funds into basic education, performance at KCPE shows that most of the students making transition to top schools are from private schools; this creates inequality to access of opportunities to national and top performing provincial schools (Ngugi, 2007). In 2009 KCPE results out of 1374 candidates who sat for the examination in public day primary schools, none gained admission to the well endowed national schools in the country. The KCPE examination is marked out of a maximum mark of 500. Information on Table 1 shows the mean score for some schools from 2005 to 2009 in Mwimbi Division.

Table 1: KCPE Mean Grades from 2005 to 2009

Public Primary School	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Mutindwa	213.24	210.44	214.11	200.67	178.75
Wiru	222.08	203.79	219.47	212.04	198.08
Ndunguri	195.54	223.94	213.69	208.41	199.57
Kirumi	228.04	217.17	187.30	193.74	200.91

Source: DEO Maara District (2011)

Results on Table1 indicate that KCPE performance in the public day primary schools is poor. Pupils may not be admitted to national schools or provincial schools with this kind of performance as it is too low. Therefore, these trends needs reversing and improve performance in national examinations by day public primary schools.

2. Statement of the Problem

Performance in national examinations by day primary schools has been poor. Therefore, this study sought to establish factors that contribute to thier poor performance in KCPE in Mwimbi Division, Maara District, Kenya.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study on factors that contribute to poor performance in KCPE in Mwimbi Division were to:-

- i. Investigate the school based factors
- ii. Find out teacher based factors
- iii. Determine the community based factors
- iv. Establish the pupil based factors

4. Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used in conducting the study. The participants were six head teachers, 51 teachers and 146 standard eight pupils. Questionnaires for the head teachers, teachers and pupils were used to provide the needed data. Data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

5. Results

The following results were obtained from the study;

5.1 School-Based Factors that Contribute to Poor Performance in KCPE

Various school based factors were identified as contributing to poor performance in KCPE examinations.

a) Commencement of Learning

The time allocated for teaching and learning is a factor influencing pupils' academic performance. There are three school terms every year with holidays in between in the months of April, August and December. The study therefore sought to find out when learning begins after a holiday. Results obtained indicate that majority of pupils (55.5%) start learning in the second week after school opens and 43.8% indicated that they start learning after the first week of the school term. This indicates that there is a lot of time wastage before learning begins. Eshiwani (1983) noted that most schools lose many teaching/ learning hours at the beginning of the term, this wastage leads to less work being covered and syllabi not being completed on time hence, contributing to poor performance in KCPE examinations.

b) Adequacy of Learning Resources

The adequacy and use of teaching and learning materials affects the effectiveness of a teacher's lesson. Teaching and learning resources enhances understanding of abstract ideas and improves performance. The study sought adequacy of learning resources like text books, library books, wall maps and the exercise books. Data on Table 2 shows that text books provided in class and exercise books are adequate to but library books and wall maps are not adequate.

Table 2: Adequacy of Learning Resources

Learning Resource	Adequate		Inadequate	
	F	%	F	%
Text Books Provided in the Class	80	54.8	66	45.2
Library Books	14	9.6	132	90.4
Wall Maps	11	7.5	135	92.5
Exercise Books	121	82.9	25	17.1

This makes learning of subjects like Social Studies very abstract to the pupils and could be a factor contributing to poor performance in national examinations. Schneider (2003) found out that school facilities have a direct effect on teaching and learning. Text books enable the pupils to follow the teacher's sequence of presentation and aids in understanding of lessons (Ubogu, 2004).

c) School Administration

The quality of school administration plays a vital role in academic performance as it is concerned with pupils, teachers, rules, regulations and policies that govern the school system. In analyzing the efficiency of school administration, the following aspects were looked into: Frequency of staff meetings, frequency of checking teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans, adequacy of teachers' prior preparation, frequency of class observation by the head teacher.

i. Frequency of Staff Meetings in a Term

Data obtained shows that majority of the respondents (64.7%) indicated that staff meetings are held twice a term, 19.6% indicated once only in a term and 15.7% indicated that they hold staff meetings more than twice in a term. Few staff meetings may lead to less co-ordination of curriculum implementation. Findings by Kathuri (1986) asserted that the first aspect of administration is staff meetings as they facilitate co-ordination of various activities in the school. This implies that there was less monitoring and reporting of the progress of the schools activities to the teachers and this could be a factor contributing to poor performance in national examinations.

ii. Frequency of Checking Teachers' Schemes of work

The responsibility of checking the professional documents like teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans lies in the hands of the head teacher. This may be done in person or he may delegate to the deputy head teacher or the senior teacher. Preparation and use of schemes of work by the teachers enhances sequential teaching and results to improved achievement. The frequency of checking teachers' schemes of work was therefore looked into and all head teachers (100%) indicated that they randomly check the teachers' schemes of work only once a term. This reflects that head teachers do not do any follow up on curriculum implementation during the course of the term. Checking of teachers schemes of work should be done frequently to allow the head teacher monitor curriculum implementation. Lack of this close monitoring could be a factor contributing to poor performance in national examinations.

iii. Frequency of Checking the Teachers' Lessons Plans

Teachers' lesson plan is a professional document prepared by teachers for the purpose of presentation of a lesson. The teacher indicates whether the lesson has been taught and objectives achieved; if the lesson is not taught, then the teacher indicates the reason why and when he intends to cover it; if the lesson objectives are not achieved, the teacher plans for remedial lesson in order to make the concept understood by the pupils.

Table 3: Frequency of Checking Teachers' Lesson Plans

Number of Times	Percent
Once a month	83.3
Once a term	16.7
Total	100.0

Information on Table 3 shows that majority of the head teachers (83.3%) check teachers lesson plans once a month and 16.7% indicated that they are checked once a term. Head teachers should monitor lesson plan preparation frequently; otherwise it may lead to poor performance by in national examinations.

iv. Adequacy of Teachers' Prior Preparation

Adequate prior preparation before a teacher goes to class leads to good performance by the pupils. This promotes sequential presentation of concepts by the teacher to the learners. Information on Table 4, head teachers indicate that teachers' prior preparation is fair (66.7%).

Table 4: The Adequacy of Teachers' Prior Preparation

Rating	Percent
Good	33.3
Fair	66.7
Total	100.0

This is an indication that head teachers are not satisfied with the teachers' prior preparation. Always, prior preparation by the teachers leads to systematic delivery of concepts to pupils and enhances performance. Therefore, teachers prior preparation was not sufficient and could be a factor leading to poor performance by the pupils.

v. Observation of Classes by Head teachers

One of the roles of the head teacher is to carry out internal supervision of curriculum implementation in his/her school. This involves physical observation of teachers' lessons in progress. Results on Table 5 shows the frequency at which the head teachers observed classes conducted by the teachers.

Table 5: Observation of Classes by the Head-teachers

Number of Times	Percent
More than twice	33.3
Not at all	66.7
Total	100.0

Majority of the head teachers (66.7%) do not at all observe classes conducted by the teachers in a given term. One of the head teachers' roles is regular class supervision in order to promote curriculum goals. Failure to do so may lead to poor performance in national examinations.

d) Teacher-Based Factors

These are the factors within the teachers that could hinder or promote academic performance of pupils in their schools. The study sought to analyze the following aspects of teacher based factors: teacher commitment, teachers' frequency of absenteeism, teachers' motivation and teachers' work load.

i. Teacher Commitment Level

Good performance is as a result of high commitment levels by the teachers. All head teachers (100%) indicated teachers' commitment as moderate.

No teacher was rated as having high commitment to their work. Ubogu (2004) asserts that teachers who lack enthusiasm are unable to teach effectively, making pupils not to learn well. This could be a contributing factor to poor performance by the pupils in national examinations.

ii. Frequency of Absenteeism among Teachers

Teachers' rate of absenteeism was looked into and majority of the head teachers (66.7%) rated them as moderate, while 33.3% indicated their rate of absenteeism as low. When teachers absent themselves from school frequently, pupils go unattended and do not do well in examinations. Absenteeism by teachers reduces the amount of instructional time and this result in the syllabi not being completed. This in return results to lower output of work by the pupils (Ubogu, 2004).

iii. Teachers' Motivation

Majority of the head teachers (66.7%) said that teachers were not motivated, while 33.3% indicated they are. World Bank Report (1986) acknowledges that teacher satisfaction is generally related to achievement... satisfied teachers would concentrate hence enhancing academic performance of their pupils.

iv. Teacher Turn-over Rate

The teacher turnover rate in the last one year was also looked into. Results obtained indicate that 50% of teachers were transferred once, 33.3% twice and 16.7% were transferred five times in a year. This is a factor that contributes to poor performance in examinations. According to Schneider (2003) high teacher turn over forces schools to devote attention, time and financial resources attracting replacement of teachers.

v. Teachers' Workload

The number of lessons teachers take per week out of possible 40 lessons was looked into and majority of the teachers (80.32%) had a work load of between 36 and 40 lessons, 19.68% had lessons between 31 and 35 lessons out of a possible 40 lessons. This implies that teachers are not overloaded hence; their output in terms of national examinations performance should be good.

5.2 Pupil-Based Factors

These are the factors within the pupils that could enhance or hinder their academic performance. In the pupil based factors; the following aspects were looked into: pupils' language use, pupils' rate of absenteeism and pupils' lateness to school.

a) Pupils' Language Use

Data on language used by pupils in class among themselves is indicated on Table 6.

Table 6: Pupils' Language Use

Language Used	F	%
Mother Tongue	18	35.3
English	5	9.8
Kiswahili	26	51.0
English and Kiswahili	2	3.9
Total	51	100.0

Majority of the pupils (51%) used Kiswahili to communicate among themselves, 35.3% use their mother tongue, 9.8% use English, and 3.9% use both Kiswahili and English. Pupils who interact using English language tend to understand it better and do well in examinations as all examinations are written in English language; pupils who use mother tongue for interaction are disadvantaged as they end performing poorly in examinations which are written in English. Ubogu (2004) asserts that the prevalence of the use of local language means that pupils would lack a lot of vocabularies in English, which would be needed to understand teachers' lessons and the textbooks they read.

b) Pupils' Frequency of Absenteeism

The aspect of how frequent pupils absented themselves from school was looked into and 41% indicated they moderately miss school, 29.4% indicated their rate of absenteeism is high and 29.4% indicated low. When pupils absent themselves from school, they tend to lose many concepts and definitely may not do well in exams.

The effect of absenteeism and irregular school attendance is that materials taught is difficult to understand when studied on one's own. Continued loss of classes results to loss of content and knowledge. Assignments and exercises would not be properly and correctly done leading to poor performance (Ubogu, 2004). From the analysis above, quite a number of pupils absent themselves from school and therefore this could be a factor contributing to poor performance.

c) Pupils' Lateness

Information on Table 7 shows majority of teachers indicated pupils' rate of lateness as frequent. This would definitely lead to poor performance in examinations.

Table 7: Frequency of Lateness among Pupils

	Frequency	Percent
Very Frequent	31	60.8
Not Frequent	20	39.2
Total	51	100.0

5.3 Community-Based Factors

Community based factors are factors within the community that impede or enhance pupils' academic performance. In analyzing the community based factors, the following aspects were looked into;

a) Parents' Consultation with Teachers

Good performance is realized when parents work in consultation with the teachers in order to understand their children better. The study therefore sought to find out how often parents consult the teachers on matters pertaining their children's education. Data obtained indicate that majority of parents (62%) rarely consult teachers on education matters of their children, 20% indicated they sometimes consult and 8% do often consult but 10% never consulted teachers. This is an indication that most parents were not so much concerned about education of the children. Ubogu (2004) indicated that parents' interaction with teachers enables them to know what their children are encountering in school and what could be done to deal with the problems. It would also put pupils on alert and study in school as they would know that their parents would inquire about their performance. Parents may not be able to provide much guidance and help their children's performance improve when they are ignorant of what happens in school.

b) Parental Response to Provision of Learning Materials

Results on Table 8 shows, parents' poor response to provision of learning materials.

Table 8: Parental Response to Provision of Learning Materials

Rating	F	%
Good	5	10.0
Satisfactory	17	34.0
Poor	28	56.0
Total	50	100.0

Ubogu (2004) asserts that lack of basic school needs like learning materials could not provide a stable mind and conducive environment for the pupils to study. Lack of learning materials contribute to poor performance in national examinations.

c) Parents' Willingness to Participate in School Development

Results on Table 9 indicate Parents are not willingness to participate in the general school development. Schools where parents are actively involved in school development do well in exams as pupils are encouraged by both the teachers and the parents.

Table 9: Parents Willingness to Participate in School Development

	F	%
Willing	2	33.3
Not willing	4	66.7
Total	6	100.0

d) Assistance Pupils get at Home

Majority of the pupils (69.2%) did not get assistance to do homework at home, but 30.8% does. Those students who do not receive assistance at home to do homework end up performing poorly in national examinations.

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