

## **Influence of School Factors on Development of Academic and Moral Competence of Secondary School Students' in Embu West District, Kenya**

**Mary Murangi Mureithi**

Department of Education (Guidance and Counselling)  
Chuka University  
P.O.Box 109 - 60400, Chuka, Kenya.

**Dr. Veronica K. Nyaga**

Senior Lecturer  
Department of Education  
Chuka University  
P.O. Box 109 - 60400, Chuka, Kenya.

**Dr. Hillary K. Barchok**

Dean, Faculty of Education  
Chuka University  
P.O. Box 109, Chuka. Kenya.

**Monicah Buyatsi Oundo**

Department of Education (Guidance and Counselling)  
Chuka University  
P.O. Box 109 - 60400, Chuka, Kenya.

### **Abstract**

*Schools are expected to holistically develop learner's competence. However, the academic and moral competencies of students have not been achieved. Therefore this study aimed at investigating the influence of school factors on development of academic and moral competence of secondary school students' in Embu West District, Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The target population was 6500 students and 277 teachers in 26 secondary schools in the District. Data was collected using three sets of questionnaires. The findings indicated the following factors as influencing students' academic competence; teacher motivation, teaching and learning resources, syllabus coverage, free interaction between students and teachers, absenteeism of teachers and participation in academic forums. Factors found to influence students' moral competence include; punctuality of teachers, teacher commitment, guidance and counselling programs, competent school administration, friendly interaction between teachers and students, clear rules and regulations and the integrity of the teacher.*

**Key Terms:** Academic, Competence, Moral, School, Student

### **1. Introduction**

Education is a basic need and a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human. Schon (1983) aptly states that every child has a need to attend school. Schools are seen as providers of education as education is an important process that each individual has to go through in life today. This is even so in this digital age as the world is more globalized and information communication technology takes root in every aspect of life. Thus, education is seen as the key to unlock the treasure of knowledge and is a key index of development. Students' performance in National examinations is a major concern because any meaningful development in any part of the world can only be realized if students are academically and morally competent. The trend of performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) in Kenyan secondary schools has not been good. For example, the 2010 KCSE had 213,438 candidates scoring grade C- (minus) and below. The large number accounts for an astonishing 60% of those who sat for the exams.

Whereas, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) registered 357,488 candidates, only 27% obtained a mean grade of C+ (plus) and above, which is considered the minimum university entry bench mark in Kenya. According to the KNEC, over 5,500 secondary schools across the country have limited capacity to prepare their students for higher education and further training. The success of teaching/learning process is dependent upon the quality of students' moral competence. One of the most significant in-school factors that influence students' moral competence is the school's social environment (McManus, 1989; Reynolds, 1989). This refers to the way members of the school community relate and interact with one another. If this climate is favourable, the members are likely to increase their level of interaction and consequently enhance the school learning outcomes. For example, if the principal is a democratic or uses an inclusive approach, teachers and parents are likely to play a proactive role in nurturing learners behaviour towards the desired direction and vice versa (Polland, 1982); Kiumi, 2008).

In spite of the crucial role that disciplined behaviour plays in the overall school outcomes, the condition of students moral competence in Kenya's secondary schools has been rather discouraging. This is because hardly a school term goes by without incidence of violent behaviour being reported in the mass media (Republic of Kenya, 1991). This form of behaviour has more often than not lead to unfortunate incidences such as destruction of school property, assault and indecent behaviour like rape and in extreme cases death of students. Such incidents tend to impact negatively on student academic competence. Micheni (2010), in his research observes that although the government and other stake holders have put in place policies regarding management of education, the learning institutions have been faced by a critical challenge of students misbehavior which seems to be getting worse. There is therefore need to make both immediate long and short term effort to ensure indiscipline does not compromise quality teaching and learning in secondary schools.

Such cases of misconduct in secondary schools indicate that the educational goal of moulding morally competent students has not been fully realized. Hence, the need to investigate school factors influencing development of academic and moral competence of secondary school students in Embu District, Kenya.

## **2. Study Objectives**

The objectives of the study were:

- i. To find out the influence of school related factors on development of academic competence of secondary school students
- ii. To find out the influence of school related factors on development of moral competence of secondary school students

## **3. Methodology**

The study used the descriptive survey research design. The study population was 6777 comprising students and teachers from 26 secondary schools in Embu West District. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to obtain a convenient sample of 360 Form Three Students from 9 secondary schools in the District. Questionnaires containing 10 test items categorized under sections on demographic characteristics, school factors influencing students' development of academic and moral competence were used to obtain the required data. The data was collected during the month of July with approval from the National Council of Science and Technology. The obtained data was coded and entered into the computer for analysis using SPSS version 17.0. The data was analyzed using a few statistics such as percentages and frequencies.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The following results were obtained:

### **4.1 Demographic Characteristics**

The data analysis revealed that male students who participated in the study were 53% while the females were 47%. Teachers who participated in the study were 44.4% male and 55.6 female. The age of the students ranged between 15 years and 20 years with majority; 42.3% being 17 years old. Most teachers according to the findings were between the ages of 40-49 years. The classes were fairly large with 66.7% of students being in classes of between 40-49 students. This implies that teachers cannot give individual attention to students thus affecting their academic performance negatively. Concerning the adequacy of teachers; 74.4% of students and 55.6% of teachers felt that secondary schools in Embu West District had adequate number of teachers.

This suggests that some schools are understaffed. The students' general performance at the primary level examinations was average to below average with only 8.4% scoring above average marks. This trend in performance is the same in secondary schools since the study revealed that 75.49% of the students scored grade C (plain) and below. Teachers have the required professional qualification since 67% of them had a Bachelor degree as required of teachers in secondary schools.

#### 4.2 School Factors Influencing Academic Competence

Information on table 1 and 2 shows the views of students and teachers on their level of agreement with given statements on factors influencing academic competence of students. The responses were valued on a 5 level likert scale ranging from strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The information in the tables indicate that majority of the students and teachers strongly agreed or agreed that school factors greatly influenced the development of student academic competence. The factors include motivation of teachers, textbook ratio, and academic symposiums, syllabus coverage, teacher absence and free interaction between teachers and students. Schools where teachers interact freely with students tend to perform well. Students who trust their teachers are more motivated and hence perform better in school (Crosnoe *et al.*, 2004). The resources provided by the school also contribute to student performance. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report of Kenya's education sector, poor performance in examinations results from limited resources allocated to the actual instruction each year. Teacher absence contributes to poor academic performance. However, teachers who are motivated in their work and organize academic symposiums for their students enhance their academic competence. A motivated teacher tends to participate more than expected in the process of management, administration, and the overall improvement of the school (Ofoegbu, 2004).

#### 4.3 School Factors Influencing Moral Competence

Information on table 3 and 4 shows students and teachers opinions on their level of agreement with given statements on factors influencing development of moral competence of students. The responses were valued on a 5 level likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The information from the tables indicate that majority of the students and teachers strongly agreed or agreed that school factors influenced development of student moral competence. The findings reveal that schools play a pivotal part in shaping the morals of the next generation. School factors that influence development of moral competence of students include; punctuality in lesson attendance by teachers since it develops honesty in students, teachers commitment to work which develops the virtue of respect in students, guidance and counselling programs for teaching moral values, competent school administration to enhance student discipline, friendly interaction between school staff and students to develop responsible students, clear rules and regulations to develop obedient students and the integrity of the teacher which determines the general moral development of students because teachers are supposed to be role models who teach by example. The findings are supported by Kohlberg's theory of moral development. According to Kohlberg (1972), moral development can be taught in the classroom through the behaviour of teachers. Therefore a teacher who spends extra time after school to tutor an academically weak student teaches a caring attitude. Mwiti (2005) also observes that strikes and riots in learning institutions are due to lack of good role models and examples to emulate.

#### 4.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The Ministry of Education through the Teachers Service Commission should employ more teachers to address the problem of teacher shortage in schools. This will ensure that teaching loads of teachers are greatly reduced thus allowing more time to give individual attention to slow learners.
- ii. Schools should recognize and award students who improve in behaviour. This will ensure development of students' moral competence as positive behaviour is regularly acknowledged.
- iii. Secondary schools should encourage student academic-oriented activities like symposiums. This will ensure that students exchange ideas and hence improve their academic competence.
- iv. All schools should strive to teach life skills to develop students who can make moral decisions as they encounter different experiences in life.
- v. Secondary schools should have professional counselors to handle student indiscipline and other issues following the ban on the use of the cane and the disintegration of supportive social life

## 5. Tables

**Table 1: Students' Opinions on the Influence of School Factors**

Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Teachers who are highly motivated contribute to good performance of the students.	61.8	29.8	3.1	3.6	1.7
The higher ratio of text books in relation to the students the better the academic performance.	38.4	35.9	5.0	15.3	5.3
Schools which frequently organize academic symposiums for their students usually perform well.	56.0	33.7	3.9	5.8	0.6
Teachers who are frequently absent from school contribute to poor academic performance.	48.5	28.7	3.9	12.8	6.1
Teachers who cover their syllabuses on time enhance their student's academic competence.	66.6	26.5	2.8	3.6	0.6
Teachers who relate freely with students enhance their academic performance.	74.7	21.7	1.9	1.7	0.0
Average	57.7	26.1	3.4	7.1	2.4

**Table 2: Teachers' Opinions on the Influence of School Factors**

Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
The level of teachers' motivation determines students' performance.	44.4	55.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
The higher the ratio of text books in relation to the students the better the academic performance.	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Schools which frequently organize academic symposium or contests for their students usually perform well.	44.4	55.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Teacher absence from school contributes to poor academic performance of students.	33.3	44.4	11.1	0.0	11.1
Teachers with higher teaching load contribute to poor performance of students.	22.2	66.7	0.0	0.0	11.1
Teachers who cover their syllabuses on time enhance their student's academic competence.	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Free interaction between teachers and students results in good performance.	77.8	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average	46.0	47.6	3.2	0.0	3.2

**Table3: Students' Opinions on the Influence of School Factors**

Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Teacher integrity has an impact on student moral development.	41.2	44.3	8.6	5.3	0.6
Teachers who keep time in lesson attendance influence students to be honest.	37.0	35.7	10.9	13.4	3.1
Competent school administration enhances student discipline.	52.4	33.7	8.9	5.0	0.0
Friendly interaction of school staff and students help students to become responsible.	51.5	35.1	5.6	6.1	1.7
Clear school rules and regulations help to develop obedient students.	48.7	38.7	5.3	4.7	2.5
Guidance and counselling programmes in the school help to inculcate moral values in students.	59.3	32.0	6.1	1.7	0.8
Teachers who are committed to their work attract respect from students.	54.0	34.3	3.6	5.0	3.1
Average	49.2	36.3	7.0	5.3	1.7

**Table 4: Teachers 'Opinions on the Influence of School Factors**

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)
Teacher integrity has an impact on student's moral development.	55.6	44.4	0.0
Teacher who keeps time in lesson attendance influences students to be honest.	55.6	44.4	0.0
A competent school administration enhances students' discipline.	66.7	33.3	0.0
Friendly interaction of school staff and students helps students to become responsible.	44.4	55.6	0.0
Clear school rules and regulations help to develop obedient students.	33.3	55.6	11.1
Guidance counselling programs in the school help to inculcate moral values in students.	77.8	22.2	0.0
Teachers who are committed to their work attract respect from students.	77.8	11.1	11.1
Average	58.7	38.1	3.2

### References

- Crosnoe, R. & Glen H. (2004a) *School Size and the Interpersonal Side of Education: An Examination of Race/Ethnicity and Organizational Context*. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(5): 1259-1274.
- Crosnoe, R. & Glen H. (2004b) *Intergenerational Bonding in School: The Behavioral Contextual Correlates of Student-Teacher Relationships*. *Sociology of Education*, 77(1): 60-81.
- Kohlberg, L. (1981). *Essays on Moral Development, Moral stages and the Idea of Justice*. San Francisco: Harper & Row
- Kiumi, J. K. (2008). *Relationship between Principals' Management Approaches and Level of Students Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Nyandarua and Laikipia Districts, Kenya*. Ph.D.Thesis, Egerton University.
- McManus, M. (1989). *Troublesome Behaviour in the Classroom: A Teachers' Survival Guide*. New York: Routledge Nicholas Publishing Company.
- Micheni, J. (2010). *Teachers and Students Perceptions on Influence of Discipline on Academic Achievement in KCSE in Chuka Division*. Med Thesis Chuka University.
- Ministry of Education, (2008). About the Ministry, Retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2008 from <http://www.education.go.ke/resources.htm14>.
- Mwiti, G. K. (2005). *Moving on Towards Maturity*. A Manual for Youth Counselling, Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House.
- Ofoegbu, F. (2004). *Teacher Motivation: A Factor for Classroom Effectiveness and School Improvement in Nigeria*. Borno: Osegu.
- Republic of Kenya (1991). *Report of the Presidential Committee on Student Unrest and Indiscipline in Kenya Secondary Schools*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Republic of Kenya (2001). *Report of the Task Force on Students' Discipline and Unrest in Secondary Schools*. Nairobi. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.