

A Study of Factors Affecting Students Performance in Kenya: Certificate of Secondary Education in Public Secondary Schools in Amboseli Division, Loitokitok District, Kenya

John N. Purdul¹, Esther Chege², Ruth Thinguri³

School of Education, Mount Kenya University, Thika,
KENYA.

¹purduljohn@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The core objective in any education system is to mould the young minds to become responsible citizens by providing the basic education which is a prerequisite for economic development in any county. As a school endeavors to achieve these core objectives, various challenges abound which results to a tide of decline in the education performance and standards. A head teacher must learn and be able to deal with some of the educational challenges that cause schools standards and performance to dwindle. Due to the Free Secondary Education, the government of Kenya has provided approximately Kshs 10,250/= per student, yet the academic standards in most secondary have continued to dwindle or deteriorate. The allocated disbursement of the Free Secondary Education funds has seen fewer students being sent home to collect fees, meaning the teachers-student contact has improved but still most secondary schools continue to perform disappointingly. According to the Loitokitok District Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) results evaluation presented during the Loitokitok education forum in 2012, it was noted that poor performance in secondary schools is attributed to the following; Lack of engagement of students in academic work, In effective team work between teachers and students, Poor payment of fees, Inadequate monitoring of students academic progress, Non/late syllabus coverage, Mismanagement of available resources by some school heads, Irregular attendance of pupils/student, Teachers absenteeism, and Students indiscipline, Limited school infrastructure of laboratories, enrolments teachers houses and Poor syllabus coverage. There are many factors that affect the performance of learners in schools. Some of these factors can be within the learners, the teachers or the school itself. More often than not, these factors are not critically digested and assessed by teachers, the school administration and the community at large. There is need to determine the performance indicators for the students, teachers, school administration and all those who are at the helm of overseeing the day to day life of our learners. This report carried out a critical analysis of the factors affecting the academic performance of students. The findings of this report will enable all the teachers to come together and like a team move towards bettering the performance of the school in future. In addition the findings will act as a valuable reference for school managers who want to run schools effectively and efficiently so as to make their schools perform better.

Key words: Factors, education performance, Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

INTRODUCTION

Okumbe (2007) describes education as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. Schooling is the only form in which education is provided. Therefore, a school is an organization composed of a group of

people referred to as *publics* who can either be within or outside it. All these publics put together form the school environment. A good school has clear curriculum objectives, teaching is individualized so as to permit pupils to progress at their own rate and departments and individual teachers are encouraged to cooperate as fully as possible with one another.

All schools in a given society or nation can be measured as a group of industries whose functions have a collective end product on the output of the edification structure. The functional role of a school as an industry is a complex and unique one in the sense that its raw materials are the students, who are animate and have to be transformed into appropriate products whose quality cannot be judged from their external appearance. The product of a school is judged by the way its students perform in the society. The principal is responsible for the supervision of curriculum in the school. These he can do by motivating teachers and pupils, ensuring low repetition and dropout rates, encouraging challenging teaching, checking on teacher – pupil contact time, reinforcing well planned lessons, enhancing communication between teachers and students by developing an effective communication system and lastly by ensuring that students using their time on relevant tasks.

A head teacher must be able to do all the above and also learn and be able to deal with some of the educational challenges that cause schools standards and performance to dwindle. The process of education is thus not a simple matter of presenting and getting knowledge, rather it is a process that involves the entire of the individuality and which can be affected by physical, social and economic factors of environment as by teachers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The core objective in any education system is to mold the young minds to become responsible citizens by providing the basic education which is a prerequisite for economic development in any county. As a school endeavors to achieve these core objectives, various challenges abounds which results to a tide of decline in the education performance and standards. A head teacher must learn and be able to deal with some of the educational challenges that cause schools standards and performance to dwindle. The process of education is thus not a simple matter of presenting and getting knowledge, rather it is a process that involves the entire of the individuality and which can be affected by physical, social and economic factors of environment as by teachers. The study therefore looked at the factors that affect the students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Public Secondary Schools in Amboseli Division, Loitokitok District – Kenya

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

General Objective

The study was guided by the following main objectives;

To investigate the dwindling educational performance and find out factors that contributes to the poor academic performance of secondary schools in Loitokitok District.

Specific Objectives

The research was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To find out the weaknesses in the education system contributing towards poor academic performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok District.
2. To analyze the strengths in the education system leading to good academic performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok District.

3. To determine the most popular subjects amongst students in public secondary schools in Loitokitok District.
4. To establish effective ways of improving the educational performance in the public secondary schools in Loitokitok District.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the weaknesses that contribute towards poor performance of education in public secondary schools in Loitokitok District?
2. What are the strengths contributing towards good academic performance of the public secondary schools in Loitokitok District?
3. Which subjects are the most popular subjects among students in public secondary schools in Loitokitok District?
4. How can effective performance be improved in public secondary schools in Loitokitok District?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate how teachers, school administration, exam placement, and the school environment factors have been contributing towards the dwindling educational performance of the secondary schools in Loitokitok District.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research study was a useful tool for reference by all the stakeholders in the secondary school as it helped them to know the root cause of the dwindling performance of their schools and the various ways in which the poor performances in their schools can be improved. The research findings was a useful tool for the school administration; Board of Management (BOM) and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) as it gave a foresight on how issues raised on enhancing academic performance can be better tackled when all the stakeholders are involved.

In addition, the research study also shed light on the learners needs and identified how these problems could be addressed. The research study further addressed those factors that need to be considered so as for quality of education to be improved in the public secondary school. The report was aimed at encouraging more teachers to seek further studies or refresher courses so as to be abreast with the changing trends of education in our schools today. It also showed cause as to why there was need for learners to be guided on career choices when selecting subjects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School Environment

The school environment is made up of the *internal environment* which comprises the school administrator, teachers, students and support staff and the *external environment* which includes the parents and all other stakeholders. What happens in the external environment affects the internal environment and vice –versa. The external environment sometimes controls what goes in a school organization. Parents have power to decide which school to send their children. Teachers ought to provide learning and teaching resources while the school is expected to transmit useful and acceptable skills, knowledge and values to learners. In addition, a school does not exist in a vacuum. The internal and external environments have

an impact on the survival and effectiveness of any school. According to (Okumbe 2007), a school is a functional unit of the education system. It is a processing device through which the education system meets the aspirations of the society. A school is, in economic terms, can be likened to a production plant which changes a given quality of inputs into required outputs.

It is significant for the principal and teachers in general to measure teaching and learning accomplishment by means of the above performance indicators. In addition, the principal as the school manager is responsible for ensuring the syllabus is covered on time, ensuring teachers are teaching what is suitable for the desires of both boys and girls, and establishing and maintain the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

In addition, principals may also develop and motivate the staff so as to increase quality performance in their schools by ensuring that the deputy is fully able to deputize for the head teacher when necessary, giving teachers a chance to attend appropriate INSET and other activities, organizing educational tours and visits, delegating important responsibilities such as a chairing a subject panel, recognizing achievements and celebrating successfully and rejoicing with stakeholders as well as paying attention to the general welfare and individual problems-maintaining a committed and motivational staff.

Similarly, principals may additionally develop and motivate the staff in the schools by supplying all the basic resources required to teach, allocating and managing them effectively, inviting role models to talk to teachers, students and support staff, regularly consulting with stakeholders including teachers union representatives, paying support staff in time and through regularly reviewing salaries and increases where necessary.

As a school administrator, the principal should ensure that the school and its objectives are in harmony and one way of doing this is through the delegation process which is aimed at increasing goal achievement. In this case therefore, the principal of the school should delegate firstly, to provide for the efficient working of the school and secondly, to free himself from issues which do not demand his attention. To be effective, the delegation process must be precise and well defined. As a result, the principal must understand the responsibility delegated to each teacher. The teachers too must understand the responsibilities entrusted to them. The principal may go to the classroom to teach or ensure the teaching and learning environment is conducive to learners. Hence, the principal must assign work, responsibility and authority so that teachers, other workers and students can make maximum use of their abilities and improve the school performance.

Pedagogy Factors

Examination as a placement factor

The duration of secondary school in Kenya is four years. Pupils are admitted to secondary schools based on their Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E) examination results. The school year is divided into three terms. Usually a series of class tests (C.A.T.S) are administered during the term and at the end of each term. The results of the exams, depending on the school policy, and the results of the class test are either combined with the examination results or reported separately to the parents in the form of “report sheets /cards.”

Promotion to the second term is automatic. In the second year, very much the same evaluation activity is repeated. However, the end of the year examination results alone may be used for purposes of pupil placement. At the end of the year examinations results may be used for purposes of pupil placement. At the end of the year and before the beginning of the third year, a pupil has to decide what subject combination he/she is going to study for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) examinations

The placement decision made at this point has important career consequences. Note that, once the placement decision has been made, it is hardly ever revised. In the fourth year, the pattern of evaluation changes in the second term as external examination is rehearsal for the final examinations “mock” approaches. The mock examination is rehearsal for the final examination. The main purpose of this examination is to predict the pupil performance in the final examination and also to gauge each individual school performance. In order to hold this rehearsal, it almost always means that by this time, the teacher should have completed the syllabus. In addition to the direct use of the evaluation results to guide the teaching and learning activities, the results can be used for indirect purposes. For example by reporting the results to the parents, they are kept them informed of their child’s progress. Very importantly the information can be used to assess the effectiveness of the course content and teaching methods used.

Indiscipline cases have been on the rise in many secondary schools in Kenya, as the students approach the mock examinations. Many schools are burnt and losses running into millions incurred. Most students site unpreparedness for these exams as the main reasons of striking. Indiscipline in the family and in society is a growing problem and its effects are reflected in the schools. Some of the causes can be pegged in the growing resentment among students that conventional schooling no longer leads to assured employment as before. Evaluation is the process of the efficiency and effect of the teaching as assessed. Many schools are in efficient because of a number of reasons. First and foremost, without self-examination, a school quickly becomes in efficient. The head teacher must not depend on the infrequent visits of MOE officials or local education authorities; he must institute his own system for main training standards and assessing performance of the school. According to Farrant (1980), the areas of concern a head teacher should cover are those for which there are set goals. They are likely to include the following;

The Curriculum

It is the work of the principal from time to time to review the work of his school in the light of national aims and institute whatever corrective action he feels is necessary. Teaching is the final step in the which the learning process converts the educational goals and aims into realistic realities as the national curriculum is changed first into program of study, then to scheme of work, and finally into the lessons that are taught in the classrooms.

Educational Standards

There is need for head teachers to review schools performance if they really exist or set up some system of assessment if they do not have one. Assessment is carried out to;

- a. Test how much is known about something supposedly learned.
- b. Expose problems/weakness in learning
- c. Monitor teaching
- d. Maintain standards.
- e. Motivate teachers and students
- f. Classify children /students among others

Cost – Effectiveness

The principal has a responsibility to see that the money spent in his school is well spent and to implement whatever action might beneficiary to save waste, improve efficiency or enable good results to be achieved more economically.

Allocation of Resources

Resources are applied to education include any media or materials that help learning. They therefore include those things that aid learning directly such as books audio visual, soft and hardware of educational technology. They also include those features of the school and the environment that can aid learning directly. Resources include people as well. In a school, human resources include the teachers', school workers and the students. Teachers are probably the most important resource that any school has. Proficient management of school possessions means that the head teacher must coordinate efficiently the work of teachers and non teaching staff, the finances, amenities and equipment owned by the school, the property presented to school by the community and internal and external communication.

Schools like any other organization are depended upon an efficient network of communication between the administration and the people who make up the school community. The effectiveness of communication within the school determines to a large extent how well it functions. In conclusion, effective teaching in schools requires a teacher to have a sound knowledge of what the pupils must know, coupled with the aptitude to transmit the content, methods, progression and pace of his work to meet the needs of each individual pupil. The teacher can use the environment and suitable media to support his teaching. The process of education is thus not a simple matter of presenting and getting knowledge, rather it is a process that involves the entire of the individuality and which can be affected by physical, social and economic factors of environment as by teachers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection is a vital part of any research work. It is through collected data, that researchers are able to give meaning to a study they are carrying. The study employed the quantitative method of research to collect data. The researchers chose the descriptive design to carry out the study because it involved selecting representatives and unbiased sample of subjects from the population the researcher wished to study. In this approach the researchers used the data collected, analyzing it and arrived at a conclusion. The results were then interpreted to give meaning to the study. Frequency tables were used to plot the data. The researchers distributed questionnaires to the selected students and B.O.M members that were sampled.

To get the targeted population, the researchers used the simple random sampling procedure. Those selected were issued with questionnaires. After collecting the filled questionnaires, the researchers analyzed the data and interpreted the information before preparing a report from the analyzed facts.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The researchers gave out 5 questionnaires for teachers, 5 questionnaires for principals and 2 head teachers and 2 for BOM members. All questionnaires were returned. The first objective entailed finding out the weaknesses in the education system that contributes towards the poor academic performance.

According to the table 1, absenteeism of students from school due to being sent home for fees is the top most reason why the schools are performing poorly (19.4%). Insufficient learning materials, shortages of teachers and inadequate infrastructure at 12% are the second reasons contributing to poor academic performance. The study further sought to know what strengths enhance good performance in the public secondary schools.

Table 1: Factors enhancing poor performance

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Absenteeism of students due to fees	13	9.4
Insufficient learning materials	8	12
Shortage of teachers	8	12
Inadequate infrastructure	8	12
Negative attitudes	5	7.4
Indiscipline	4	6
Lack of corporation and motivation	4	6
Lack of qualified teachers	3	4.4
Absenteeism of teachers	3	4.4
Poor administration	2	3
Hostile school environment	2	3
Uncovered syllabus	2	3
Early pregnancies	2	3
Lack of role models	1	1.4
Laziness teachers & students	1	1.4
Lack of staff houses	1	1.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 2: Factors that enhance good performance

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Construction of laboratory and library	9	19.5
Equip school with teaching /learning resources	8	17.3
Absenteeism to be curbed	6	13
Discipline to be reinforced	5	11
Government to post more teachers	4	8.6
Cooperation between administration and teachers	3	6.5
Employ more PTA teachers	3	6.5
Construct staff quarters	2	4.3
Teachers to be motivated	2	4.3
Poor students to be given bursaries	2	4.3
Syllabus to be covered on time	1	2.1
Purchase school bus	1	2.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>100</i>

In Table 2, 19.5% of the respondents said that the construction of a library and laboratory will improve the education performance. While 17.3 % of the respondents believed that by equipping the school with relevant teaching and learning resources the performance will improve. 2.1% of the respondents believed that purchasing a school bus will enhance good performance.

Table 3: Students subject selection

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Chemistry	5	12.8
Mathematics	5	12.8
Biology	4	10.3
Kiswahili	4	10.3
History	4	10.3
Geography	4	10.3
CRE	4	10.3
English	3	7.6
Agriculture	3	7.6
Physics	2	5
Business studies	1	2.5
<i>Total</i>	39	100

According to the results, most of the students selected *chemistry* and *mathematics* as their subject of choice. Only 5.1% of students selected business studies, making it the least popular subjected in the schools.

Table 4: Strengthening effective teaching

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Promote teachers (motivation)	5	26.3
Increase teachers' salaries	4	21
Provide staff houses	4	21
Sound administration and management	2	10.5
Avail all necessary T/L resources	2	10.5
Provide conducive school environment	1	5.2
Provide enough teachers in the school	1	5.2
<i>Total</i>	19	100

According to the above results, 26.3% of the respondents believed that effective teaching can be strengthened by motivating teachers through promotion. 21% believed that by increasing the salaries of teachers and providing staff houses, effective teaching can be achieved

CONCLUSION

All children's have equal rights and opportunities to be educated. The community, parents, teachers and the school administration should work hand in hand to ensure that not a single child misses school. Children from poor families should be assisted with bursaries from the constituency Development Fund (CDF) so that, they too can benefit from education.

In addition, schools should be provided with adequate learning resources to cater for all learners. It is the duty of the principal, the B.O.M /P.T.A and relevant stakeholders to equip their schools adequately with resources. There is also need for the government to employ and post more teachers to arrest the acute shortage of personnel facing most of the secondary schools. The P.T.A can also employ their own teachers to supplement the few provided by the government.

Emphasize should also be put on motivation of teachers. More teachers should be trained on management and leadership roles, as well as be promoted to boost their morale. Lastly, there is need to establish more secondary schools to cater for the large number of students who could not get form one chances in the few available secondary schools. By doing so, the transition rate from primary to secondary will increase immensely.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In context of the study findings, the researchers recommended the following.

1. Regular seminars and workshop for teachers.
2. Ministry of education to increase the free secondary education allocation per child.
3. Government to liaise with Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to employ and post more Arts teachers.
4. Principals to ensure that students are the one who cover the syllabus and not the teachers.
5. Parents to provide maximum cooperation by paying fees on time.
6. Introduction of tough school rules and regulations.
7. Leaders and parents to keep politics out of the school and refrain from using the school to further their political ambitions.
8. Parents are encouraged to discuss their children's progress with their class teachers and Head of departments.
9. The prefect body in the schools to be strengthened and given more room in decision making.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bali, S. K., & Rono, P. K. et al. (1988). *Psychology of Education Tests and Measurements Part2*: Nairobi University Press.
- [2]. Coleman, J. S., & Karweit, N. L. (1972). *Information Systems and Performance Measures in Schools*: Educational Technology Publications. New Jersey
- [3]. Farrant, J. S. (1980). *Principles and Practice of Education*: Longman UK.Limited.
- [4]. Mintzberg, H. (1973). *The Nature of Managerial Work*: Harper and Row Publishers.
- [5]. Nyongesa, B. J. M. (2007). *Educational Organization and Management*: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation
- [6]. Okumbe, J. A. (2007). *Educational Management: Theory and Practice*. Nairobi University Press.