

**BEHAVIOR REINFORCEMENT AND LEARNING CAPABILITIES**  
**OF STUDENTS IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN**  
**KANGUNDO DISTRICT, KENYA.**

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A Thesis

Presented to the School  
of Postgraduate Studies and Research  
Kampala International University

Kampala, Uganda

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of  
Education in Management and Administration

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August, 2011



## DECLARATION A

"This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a Degree or any other academic award in any University or Institution of Learning".

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Name and Signature of Candidate



AUGUST 2011

Date

## **DECLARATION B**

"I confirm that the work reported in this Thesis was carried out by the candidate  
under my supervision".

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Name and Signature of Supervisor

## **DEDICATION**

This research thesis is dedicated to my family: Assumpta; my friend and wife, children and my parents for their encouragement throughout the study period and support.

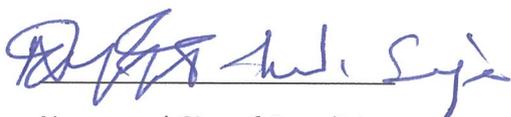
**APPROVAL SHEET**

This thesis entitled "**Behavior Reinforcement and Learning Capabilities of students in selected secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya**" prepared and submitted by **Henry Kiswii Muema Adm. no med/42442/92/DF** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Master degree of Education in Management and Administration** has been examined and approved by the panel on oral examination with a grade of PASSED.

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## ABSTRACT

This study identified behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students in selected secondary schools in Kangundo District of, Kenya. Four research questions and one null hypothesis. Objective one dealt with students' profile as to age, gender, Year of study and previous grade in examination. Second objective dealt with level of behavior reinforcement of students, Objective three dealt with learning capabilities of students and the fourth objective dealt correlation between behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students in secondary schools in Kangundo District. The study used descriptive correlation design. The study targeted population of 1440 students in 26 schools; consisting of 1440 students. Respondents' were 313 sampled from the target population using Slovic's formula. The study reveals that majority of students (65.2%) were aged between 15 and 16 years. However there was disparity in gender balance in the enrolment with (57.4%) of the students being males and (42.6%) females. Student performance was still wanting in secondary schools in the district since the best grades A and A- were missing in the analysis. The mean of the previous examination grades was 6.986 with majority of students (32%) scoring a mean grade of C+ on the level of behavior reinforcement majority of students was low as continuous reinforcement was overused. Majority students (mean, 4.28) felt that good, very good and excellent were the best terms for verbal reward, while a significant number (mean, 3.71) of the student agreed that token rewarding is commonly used after examinations but the value attached to them is what determines student reinforcement in learning. The data analysis revealed that the Pearson linear correlation coefficient P value 0.0037 which was show strong level

of correlation significance. Therefore, it can be argued that there is very strong evidence against the null hypothesis. This implies that the level of learning behavior reinforcement significantly affects the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools. Consequently the null hypothesis is rejected. Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that the level of behavior reinforcement was not adequate in the district. According to the researcher the scenario had manifested the poor examination grades for the students due to low level of Behavior reinforcement. The researcher recommends that Kenyan Ministry of Education should allocate funds in each school to support learning behavior reinforcement activities, sensitize all school principals through capacity building workshops on the need to budget for students learning behavior reinforcement and support schools to instill discipline among students to enhance learning capability. The researcher suggests further research on the topic for other administrative districts to establish whether it will yield the same or different results. The researcher feels that one aspect of reinforcement of behavior reinforcement either positive or negative should have been considered and wide to be done in single study.

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## ACRONYMS

DEO	-District Education Officer
KCSE	-Kenya certificate of Secondary Examination
PDE	-S Provincial Director of Education

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

### Background of the Study

World wide there is enormous focus on the development of human capital that is key in development of all other sectors of the economy, such as; health, communication, finance, agriculture and education itself. Secondary school education plays important role in building learners' character, excellence in education, sports, talent and hence human capital.

Skinner (1953) states that behavior theories of learning have focus on the effects that the consequences of the past behavior on future behavior. Goldstein (1995) identifies two major types of reinforcement for learning behavior; positive and negative. Positive reinforcement results when occurrence of a valued behavioral consequence has the effects of strengthening the probability of the behavior being repeated. Negative reinforcement results when a desirable behavior consequence is withheld with the effect of strengthening the probability of the behavior being repeated.

World wide the classroom experience shows that learners forget the information they acquire or learn. The teacher is a witness that majority of learners in most of the test taken hardly ever get full marks. The explanation for this phenomenon is that between the time the material is learned or even revised and the time the test is taken, some information is lost through forgetting, (Bruner, 1964).

The provision of a reward or reinforcement is believed to strengthen the response and consequently result in changes in behavior. The test, according to this school of thought is whether learning has occurred. Spillane (2002) and Skinner (1953) respectively state that the mind at work cannot be observed, tested, or understood; thus, behaviorists are concerned with actions (behavior) as the site of knowing, teaching or learning. "Extinction" occurs when there is no consequence at all. For example if you knock at the door and no one answers, pretty soon you simply stop knocking (Zemke, 2002). Learning is therefore as a result of association or reinforcement of behavior

According to a recent World Bank report in Kenya (Standard newspaper, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2011), "Expanding Opportunities and Competencies for young people: A new agenda for Secondary Education,"

Secondary schools everywhere must help students to graduate with knowledge, skills, attitude and experiences needed to exercise their choice beyond secondary education. Whereas there is urgent need to have better educated citizens, the country has over 6,000 secondary schools with only a fraction performing well. For instance, statistics on school performance indicated in 2009, show 75 percent of the 337, 404 candidates that sat for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) obtained mean grades of C and below. Even though the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) purported there was no failure in KCSE, these results were nothing short of mass failure in terms of academic gaps that occurred in most subjects (The Standard, 2011).

In Kenya, secondary schools hold prize giving day every year where learners' learning is reinforced through; (1) verbal praises and thanks giving, (2) token given to learners and teachers, (3) activity, like outing for students, and or staff. There is disparity always in examination performance of secondary schools in the same category. Thus there is need for research in behavior reinforcement for students in secondary schools so as to reinforcement to find out how behavior can be used understand why there are disparities and remove them to improve academic performance among secondary schools of every category that

are, National schools, Provincial schools and District public secondary schools in Kenya.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Even though the mean grade scored by the Kangundo District in 2009 and 2010 in Kenya Certificate of secondary Examination (KCSE) was 3.730 and 4.236 respectively, it was nevertheless school students are not a good enough achievement. Secondary school students are required to pass in KCSE at mean grade of 7.00 and above to get admission in universities and other training institutions. The students are also required to graduate with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and needed to exercise their choice beyond education. Many secondary schools have introduced remedial classes and holiday tuitions for weak students, however little attention has been given to behavior reinforcement and if it significantly affects learning capabilities of students in secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya. This study was to fill that gap.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The research was guided by the following;

1. To validate the Gagne' theory of which the study was underpinned.
2. To test the hypothesis: No significance relationship between the level of behavior reinforcement and level of learning capabilities of students in selected secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya
3. To come up with new knowledge based on the study to improve the level of behavior reinforcement and the level of learning capabilities students in secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya.

## **Research Objectives**

### **General Objective**

The main objective was to investigate the relationship between behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students selected secondary schools in Kangundo district, Kenya.

### **The specific objectives**

1. To determine the profile of the respondents in terms of:

Age, Gender previous academic rating and year of study.

2. To determine the level of behavior reinforcement used on students in secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya.

3. To determine the level of learning capabilities of students in selected secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya.

4. To determine if the level of behavior reinforcement has significant effect on learning capabilities of students in secondary schools

### **Research Questions**

1. What was the profile of the students in terms of:

Age?

Gender?

Previous academic rating?

Year of study?

2. What were the levels of behavior reinforcement used to secondary school students?

3. What was the level of learning capabilities of secondary school students?

4. Does the level of behavior reinforcement significantly affect the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools?

### **Hypothesis**

Ho: The level of behavior reinforcement does not significantly affect the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools.

### **Scope**

#### **Geographical scope**

The study was carried in Kangundo District in Eastern Province, Kenya 2011. It covered public rural and urban secondary schools which are mixed or single sex. A total of 24 schools were visited.

### **Content scope**

Looked into students' level of behavior reinforcement (positive and negative reinforcement, punishment, extinction) significantly affects their level of learning capabilities in selected secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya.

### **Theoretical scope**

Skinner (1938) Operant conditioning, if the rat continued to press the bar without the accompaniment of food as a reinforcer, the bar pressing behavior disappeared because the connection or association between it and the food was lost. Students forget what they have learned if it is not reinforced under similar principle.

### **Significance of the Study**

The finding of the study will would benefit the following groups of people;

### **Teachers**

The study will provide more information on how to reinforce behavior of students in secondary schools in order to raise the level of their learning capabilities. This will improve students' performance in their schools.

### **Principals**

The study would help the public secondary schools' administrators to understand how level of behavior reinforcement affects the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools and put more efforts in capacity building the teachers in their areas of weaknesses.

### **Educational planners and policy makers**

The study would help the educational planners and policy makers in Kenya to identify areas of weaknesses in Levels of behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students and plan policies that can improve them. They would also do more research on areas of weaknesses and find way forward.

### **The students**

The secondary school students would appreciate that level of behavior reinforcement significantly affects their level of learning capabilities and therefore take seriously teacher guidance and corrections in learning.

### **The Researcher**

The researcher would add to his experience in the research work and would have little problem in using it to solve any arising problem in future. The study would help to boost the related literature in the libraries of Kampala International University as a point of reference to future researchers.

### **Operational Definitions of Key Terms**

**Behavior reinforcement:** is the process of shaping behavior. Positive Behavior reinforcement is a process by which behavior is strengthened by proving rewards. Negative behavior reinforcement is process of strengthening behavior by withholding rewards.

**Learning capabilities.** Learning capabilities of students are learning outcomes (Gagne', 1965). Examples are the skills acquired from classroom learning.

**Learning:** Is an enduring change in behavior potentiality, which occurs as a result of behavior reinforcement.

**Students:** Are learners who receive instructions given by teachers in mainstream classes of secondary schools.

**Secondary Schools:** Refers to post primary school where students are enrolled and receive regular instructions in daily, weekly or termly routine or schedule which is in line with Ministry of education curricula policies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Concepts, Ideas, Opinions from Authors/ Experts**

##### **Behavior reinforcement**

Maicibi(2007) reinforcers are material and psychological payoffs to students for performing tasks in their schools. The main purpose of giving reward and punishment is to increase or decrease the behavior of the learners .Reward refers to presenting something pleasant after the occurrence of desirable behavior. Thus behavior reinforcement involves strengthening of behavior. I result in enhancing the performance of students .Punishment represent an unpleasant stimulus after occurrence of undesirable behavior. The basic reason behind the yielded circumstances is that many education practitioners are not aware of the different types of reward and various kinds of punishment techniques along with their effective use.

Eggen (1997) suggested that in order to bring about change in behavior and learning capabilities of the students, the use of modern knowledge about behavior reinforcement techniques is necessary so that

deterioration in quality of education and behavior may be stalled. Teachers are not fully aware of the appropriate reward and punishment for the desired change in character, behavior and skills of the students.

### **Learning Capabilities**

Cavangh, R. R. et al (2009) states that in classroom learning environment, students skills were defined were defined as learning capabilities and classroom challenges were defined as expectations of learning for understanding. Engagement in classroom learning occurs where there is a balance between a student's learning capabilities and expectations of learning for understanding. When a student's learning capabilities and expectation of learning are both high it is expected that more learning is achieved. Correspondingly, when learning capabilities and expectation are lower, then less learning is anticipated.

School regulation and rules insist that all students have to meet some prescribed level of grades and marks to allow transition to the next level of learning. This was to be done through examination and test, which have been designed to evaluate favorably across a given cadre of student. But the challenged like the handicapped, poised behavior anomalies and may not reach the prescribed marks. They end up dropping

out of school or on their fair side become chronic absentees and repeaters.

To curb this bridge of cronies, behavior reinforcement techniques such as positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment and extinction must be appropriately used. This enables them to rise in societal and private needs and have a complete overhaul in life. Mather, N. and Sam Goldstein(2001) respectively, emphasized on behavior reinforcement as an applied concept in classroom setting to help student acquire appropriate capabilities when receiving instruction.

Merriam and Caffarella( 1999). Simply put, people learn desired behavior due to the stimuli from their external environment that recognize and reinforce the behavior in a positive manner. Undesired behavior can be controlled or eliminated by an absence of attention to or recognition of such. Students are reinforced by the 100 points received on the test paper or by the removal of the E on the grade card. This may contribute to learning; however, persistent score of E may be hindering learning.

Timing of the behavioral consequences that follow given behavior is called reinforcement schedules. Basically there are two broad types of reinforcement schedules; continuous and intermittent. If behavior is

reinforced each time it occurs, this is called continuous reinforcement. Research suggests that continuous reinforcement is the fastest way of establishing new behavior or eliminating and undesired behavior. There are at least four types of intermittent reinforcement; fixed interval reinforcement, fixed ratio reinforcement; variable interval reinforcement and variable ratio reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). Intermittent reinforcement is best for maintaining already learned behavior. The best known application of reinforcement theory to organizational setting is called behavioral modification or behavioral contingency management which is found in factories schools and other organizational setting.

### **Theoretical perspectives**

The concept of behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students in secondary schools can be explained through Skinner's theory of conditioning. Skinner (1938) operant conditioning, a rat was placed in a closed box that with a bar that released food magazine whenever pressed. Initially through trial and error, the rat learned to press in order to get food. Later the rat displayed that capability by going straight to press the bar whenever hungry. If the rat continued to press the bar without the

accompaniment of food as a reinforce, the bar pressing behavior disappeared, extinction, occurred because the association between the knowledge and reinforcement was lost. This information is applied in classroom situation for the purpose of helping the teacher to understand behavior reinforcement and how it relates to learning capabilities of students. Just like Skinners rats would forget the stimulus-response association they had learned in absence of reinforcement. Students forget the skills they taught under similar principle. To promote remembering the teacher need to ensure that learned material is rehearsed under condition of reinforcement. Skinner (1977) argues that internal needs and drives of an individual can be ignored because people learn to exhibit certain behavior in future based on what happened to them as a result of their past . Example, if a child receives a cookie when he asks for one, if the frequency of the cookie requesting-behavior increases, the cookie can be seen as reinforcing cookie-requesting behavior.

### **Related Studies**

Robson, Newby and Ganzell (1981) used a token reinforcement system for successful completion of four tasks, two involving learning to read and

using vocabulary words and sentences and two involving teaching those tasks to other students. Tokens were exchanged for access to Pinball machine or electronic game. Using a reversal design, the token intervention program resulted in a nine-fold increase in the mean number of tasks completed over the baseline level and significant improvement in performance in the schools district' standardized weekly reading level examinations. A reduction in disruptive behavior was also reported. This behavior reinforcement system was managed by a single teacher working on 18 students in same class. The power of classroom learning is augmented by behavior reinforcement when opportunities for meaningful collaboration exist. Brown (1998) stated that humans are social beings, and, as posited by the constructivist theory of learning, they develop new understanding and knowledge through their social interaction with a community of others. Further Tinzmann et al. (1990), argues that collaboration learning affords the students enormous advantages not available for more traditional instructions because a group can accomplish meaningful learning and solve problems better than any individual can alone.

When creating behavior reinforcement in classroom learning, designers should create environments where learners and teachers can

collaborate synchronously in discussion rooms. Two types of collaboration produce effective results: Peer to peer and peer to teacher. Peer to peer collaboration allows learners to discuss critical issues with other learners, and sometimes, even teach it to them.

Peer to teacher collaboration makes it possible for teacher to coach one to one, field questions and tailor responses to the need of each individual learner. Expert teachers will also push additional guidance to learners in form of notes, assignments and suggested practice items. The social learning theory of Bandura (1969) emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors attitudes and emotional reaction of others. Bandura(1977) states that learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effect of their own action to inform them what to do. Fortunately most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. Social learning theory explains human behaviors in turn as continues reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Social learning theory is the theoretical foundation for the technique of behavior modeling which is widely used in training program in schools. The most common (and pervasive) examples of social learning situations are television Commercials where bright students are awarded

Scholarships, jobs and financial gifts. Students are not good at listening at us but very good at imitating us.

Assessment is one of the most critical learning reinforcer for two reasons: Firstly it enables learners to test out" of content they already know, fine tuning their own learning experience, and secondly it ensures effectiveness of all other learning modalities and events.

Benjamin Blooms (1956) provides a framework for designing and building assessments. He is most often identified by his six levels of cognitive learning: knowledge, comprehensions application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design.**

The study adopted descriptive correlation and ex post facto designs. Descriptive because it described the respondents profile characteristics. Correlation because it correlated the behavior reinforcement with learning capabilities of students in selected secondary schools. Ex post facto because it relied on already existing information at District Education office. Observation is a key source of information in studying behavior reinforcement.

#### **Research Population.**

##### **Target Population**

The study was done in Kangundo District of Eastern province, Kenya. The research concentrated on public mixed secondary schools and single sex schools. The target population consisted of 1440 students who were

still in the 26 secondary schools. The students were targeted for they are central in teaching-learning process.

**Sample size.**

Using Sloven’s formula, the sample size was 313 student respondents

$$\text{Sampling fraction} = \frac{313}{1440}$$

**Table 1: The target population and Sample size**

Schools	Target population	Sample Size	Schools	Target Population	Sample Size
A	40	9	M	68	15
B	66	14	N	48	10
C	60	13	O	50	11
D	70	15	P	78	17
E	68	15	Q	60	13
F	70	15	R	74	16
G	50	11	S	60	13
H	40	9	T	48	10
I	90	20	U	50	11
J	54	12	V	48	10
K	82	18	W	54	12
L	62	13	X	50	11
Totals	12	752	164	12	688
Grand Totals	Schools=26		Target Population=1440		Sample size=313

*Source of formula used to determine sample size, Amin, E.M. (2005)*

The sample figures in the table above have been calculated from the target population using sloven's formula ;

$$S = \frac{P}{1 + P(0.05)^2}$$

Where P=target population and S= Sample size.

### **Sampling procedure.**

The sample consisted of 313 students who were still in school. Stratified sampling technique was used to determine the 24 public Secondary schools to be used in the study (4 boarding girl secondary school, 4boarding boy secondary school, 8 day mixed secondary schools and 8 day & boarding mixed secondary schools). Stratified sampling was also to ensure that, the sub-groups (rural and urban) are proportionately represented as 6 schools were chosen from each of the 4 divisions of Kangundo District. It was also to account for the difference in the sub-groups characteristics. Once the schools were selected, the individual respondents were selected by random sampling. The use of simple random sampling was to ensure that each member of the target population (students) had an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample.

However, form three and two students were purposively sampled because the researcher considered form fours to be very busy preparing for there KCSE examinations while form ones were still new in the schooling system. This was the best suited technique in collecting focused information. It enabled the researcher to select only the typical and useful cases thus saving time and money. The sample size was 313 respondents out of 1440 which is 21.74 % of the target population.

### **Research instruments.**

Qualitative data was collected through standardized questionnaire, interviewing schedule and observation of respondents (Appendix IV) . Discussions and observation enabled the researcher to acquire information that could not be acquired using other instruments. Therefore, the selection of these tools was guided by the nature of the data to be collected.

## **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire given to students consisted of 3 parts. In part A, the respondents were required to indicate their profile in terms of; age, gender, year of study and previous term's examinations mean grade. Part B and C consisted of statements which the respondents were required to choose the preferred response in a likert scale with the following alternatives: 1.strongly disagree, 2.disagree, 3.somehow disagree, 4.agree, 5.strongly agree. The respondents were required to respond by ticking an alternative showing the extent of agreement with the given statement on behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities

## **Reliability of the Instruments.**

The instrument was a standardized questionnaire hence reliability tested and assured from;

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## **Data gathering procedure.**

The researcher obtained written permission from the school of postgraduate studies and research. Then the researcher obtained a

written authority to collect data from the District Education Office. Finally the researcher visited the sampled secondary schools and obtained consent from the principals on the date to interview them and distribute the questionnaires to other respondents. During the agreed date the researcher visited the schools and issued questionnaires to students and teachers with the help of assistants, and then held interview session with the principal. The questionnaires were collected later as agreed with the participants. He then thanked them for accepting to participate.

### **Data Analysis.**

Data from questionnaires was coded, edited and entered in a Statistics Program for Social Sciences (SPSS), which analyzed it through descriptive frequency tables. The program analyzed and interpreted the data through frequency percentages, means and Pearson's Linear Correlation Coefficient in light of the objectives of the study.

The first objective was the profile of respondents that was tabulated by frequency tables and analyzed using frequency and percentages.

The second objective was effectiveness of level of Behavior reinforcement that was presented in descriptive tables and analyzed using the means.

The third objective was the levels of Learning capabilities of students, which were presented in descriptive tables and analyzed using the means.

The fourth objective was to correlate the independent variable (Behavior reinforcement) and the dependent variable (Learning capabilities of students) which was presented in cross tabulations and analyzed using Pearson Linear Correlation Coefficient (PLCC)

To interpret the obtained data, the following numerical values and description were used;

Means Range	Response mode	Interpretation
4.6-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Good
3.70-4.50	Agree	Good
2.8-3.60	Somehow Disagree	Fair
1.9-2.70	Disagree	Poor
1.00-1.80	Strongly Agree	Very Poor

### **Ethical Considerations.**

In conducting this study, the researcher did not undermine the human dignity of the respondents at the expenses of acquiring data. He ensured that respondents gave informed consent by being provided with adequate information on the purpose of the intended study and allowing them to decide on their own whether to participate or not. The respondents were guaranteed of privacy and confidentiality of their information and allowed the right to remain anonymous.

### **Limitations of the study.**

A major limitation is that the study was done in Kangundo District and as such the findings rightly apply to the same District. Application of the finding to other Districts of the may require further research be done some adjustments. Secondly the researcher used Questionnaires which do not provide for probing, prompting and clarification of information from the respondent. However, questionnaires give wide coverage and

convenience in terms of assurance anonymity of respondents. Questionnaires have weaknesses, but this was the most suitable technique because it would provide historical information that would trace the origin of the problem under study and help to curb it once and for all.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA.**

#### **Introduction.**

This chapter focuses on data analysis based on the demographic information of the respondents' presentations, interpretation and discussion of findings. The presentations were done based on the research questions.

**Table 2**

**Profiles of students in terms of; age, gender, year of study and their previous examination grades.**

<b>Students age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
13-14	24	7.7
15-16	182	58.15
17-18	72	22.00
19-20	34	10.86
21-22	1	0.003
Total	313	100.0
<b>Grade from previous examination</b>		
B+	18	5.75
B	30	9.58
B-	37	11.82
C+	92	23.39
C	34	10.86
C-	15	4.79
D+	16	5.11
D	31	9.90
D-	50	15.97
totals	313	100.0
<b>Students gender</b>		
Male	180	57.4
Female	133	42.6
Totals	313	100.0
<b>Students year of study</b>		
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	146	46.5
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	167	53.5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **Profile information of respondents**

Profile information of the respondents was based on their age, gender, year of study and previous examination's grade. Data on the age of students revealed that majority 182(58.28%) were between 15 and 16 years, 72(22%) were between 17 and 18 years while only 34(10.86%) were between 21-22 years. The results were as shown in table 2.

Data on the students year of study shows that 167(53.5%) were in third year while 146(46.5%) were in second year. The students in these two classes were purposively selected for their availability and confidence to answer the questionnaire items. They were also considered to be knowledgeable enough with their school system. On the gender students data revealed that 180 (57.4%) were male while 133(42.6%) were females. Data revealed lack of gender balance, thus more males get more reinforce in learning.

### **Students grades**

Findings on students previous examination grade as presented in table 2 revealed that half the number of students 177 (46.54%) had scored

between C+ and B+ while only 83 (26.4%) had scored between D- and D+. the mean of their previous examination grade was 6.986 (see table3).This shows that students performance was still wanting since the best grade A- and A were missing in the analysis. Thus there was need of behavior reinforcement by teachers to improve learning capabilities of students in order to release better results.

### **Level of behavior reinforcement used on secondary school students**

The study aimed at investigating learning behavior reinforcement for students in selected secondary schools. The findings of students responses on behavior reinforcement are found in table 3.

**Table 3**

**Level of behavior reinforcement for students in secondary school**

<b>Statements:</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
I am satisfied with the rewarding, punishment and praises teachers give to the students in this school.	3.60	Fair	7
The punishments in our school are too harsh to make me concentrate in learning in this school and pass examinations.	2.87	Fair	9
The prizes and rewards given to me when I pass examinations well make me want to continue studying more.	4.48	Very Good	1
Rewarding me by the term "good" is more common in class learning than terms excellent, correct or its correct.	3.18	Fair	8
Rewarding me verbally (praises) is more effective and common in reinforcing learning behavior.	2.47	Poor	10
Group discussion is most effective method of reinforcing learned behavior for me in secondary school.	3.85	Good	6
Assignments / homework are the most effective way of reinforcing learned behavior for me secondary school.	3.99	Good	3
Asking evaluation questions and answers after every lesson is most effective way of reinforcing learning behavior for me in secondary school.	3.96	Good	4
Debates are more efficient way of practicing and reinforcing learning behavior for me only in languages.	3.90	Good	5
Continuouus and evenly distributed rewards make me more participate therefore reinforcing my learning behavior.	4.66	Very Good	2
<b>Average means</b>	<b>3.70</b>		

### **Interpretation from students' responses to behavior reinforcement table 3.**

The study revealed that majority (mean, 2.87) of the students strongly disagreed that rewarding students verbally is more effective and common in reinforcing learning behavior which implies that even though verbal rewards are effective in reinforcing learning behavior, they may not be commonly used by teachers in teaching-learning process. A significant number of students (mean, 4.85) strongly agreed that group discussion is the most effective method of reinforcing learned behavior for secondary students. An almost half the number of students (mean, 4.99) strongly agreed that evaluation questions and giving answers after every lesson is most effective way of reinforcing learning behavior. This shows that giving solutions to evaluation questions reinforces learning behavior in students.

A majority (mean, 4.96) of the students strongly agreed that debates are more efficient way of practicing and reinforcing learning behavior only in languages. A large majority (mean, 3.90.) Of the students agreed that continuous and evenly distributed rewards make more student participate thus reinforcing their learning behavior. On almost half the number of students were satisfied with the rewarding, punishment

and motivation teachers gave them in school while majority (mean, 4.48) of the students strongly agreed that prices and rewards given to those who pass examinations well motivates them to continue studying harder. This shows that school managers and teachers should always reinforce behaviors that improve learning capabilities of learners. This will enhance competition among the students leading to better examination results.

#### **The level of learning capabilities of secondary school students.**

Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the given statements on learning capabilities. They were also asked whether prayers improve learning capabilities of learners and whether their schools invited KCSE examiners to talk to candidates before they start final examinations. Table 4, Presents the findings of teachers and students responses on learning capabilities of students.

#### **Students' responses to learning capabilities of students**

Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Somehow Disagree (Sh D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA)

**Table 4**

Level of learning capabilities of students in secondary school

<b>Category</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1.Self Esteem	In this class and in this subject; I am okay.	4.24	Very Good	2
	I am pleased with myself.	4.06	Good	4
Resilience	I am confident about my ability to perform well.	4.07	Good	3
Self Regulation	I can overcome small problem.	2.73	Fair	9
	I don't admit defeat easily.	4.37	Good	1
Self Efficacy	Big challenges bring out the best of me.	3.77	Good	6
	I make efforts in this class.	2.17	Poor	10
	I am clear about my strengths and weaknesses.	4.05	Good	5
	Improvement in my learning come from me.	2.76	Fair	8
	I find new explanation For what I am taught	3.57	Good	7
<b>Average Mean</b>		<b>3.58</b>		

### **Interpretation from Students' responses to Learning Capabilities**

The study revealed that majority of the students (mean, 4.24) agreed they were confident about their ability to perform well. A bigger majority (mean, 4.06) agreed that they were pleased with themselves. The above statements showed the level of self-esteem was good hence their learners at this level can achieve a lot if their learning is properly reinforced by teachers. Almost half of the students (mean, 2.74) agreed they were not able to overcome learning problem by themselves, however, equal (mean, 4.73) strongly agreed they were do not admit defeat easily. The above two statements measuring resilience in learning echoes the saying that practice makes perfect. Therefore teachers presence and reinforcing learning would seriously increase the level of learning capabilities of the students. Lastly more than half (mean, 2.76) agreed that improvement in their learning come from themselves. This points to the importance of giving; assignments, homework, project work, class debates and class discussion in reinforcing what has been learned in order to increase the level of learner capabilities.

On whether prayers improve learning capability of learners almost all of the students (mean, 4.80) indicated that they do while a few (mean,

2.11) had contrary opinions. An almost half 137(48.2%) of the students indicated that their schools invited KCSE examiners to talk to candidates before they start final examinations, majority (mean, 1.87) of whom stated that KCSE examiners are invited to help students remove examination fever and build confidence while less than half (mean, 4.33) stated that KCSE examiners are invited to give the candidates current examinations

### **The correlation of behavior reinforcement to learning capabilities of students**

This section discussed the findings of the study by addressing the fourth study question which was;

Does the level of behavior reinforcement significantly affect the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools?

The null hypothesis for this question was:

H<sub>0</sub>: The level of behavior reinforcement does not significantly affect the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools.

To determine the significance of correlation Behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students in the selected secondary schools a set of two variables we correlated using Pearson linear correlation coefficient(PLCC) for statistical description. The findings were summarized in table 10.

**Table 5:**  
**Pearson linear correlation**

**To determine if the level of behavior reinforcement significantly relates to the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools**

Variables	R-Values	Significance	Interpretation	Decision on H <sub>0</sub>
Behavior reinforcement	0.249	0.000	There is significant relationship	Rejected
Learning capabilities of the students	0.188			

Data shows that R-value of 0.249 and 0.188 and significance of 0.000 which shows high significance relationship between the two variables. Therefore, it can be argued that there is very strong evidence against the null hypothesis. This implies that the level of behavior reinforcement significantly affect the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected.

## **Summary of the findings**

The demographic information of the sample of this study shows that the principals and teachers vary in their genders, age, and duration of teaching and academic qualifications. The students vary in their age, gender, year of study and previous examinations grade.

The study indicated that the level of behavior reinforcement significantly affect the level of learning capabilities of students. It also indicated that verbal praises, tokens, academic trips and certificates are used to reward well performing students. It revealed that the item, "Prizes and rewards given to those who pass examinations motivate them to study more", had the highest mean (M 4.48) showing the students' conviction that behavior reinforcement will enhance their achievements academically. The study also revealed that the item, "Any student rewarded at any point of learning is usually motivated to learn more, "had the highest mean (M 4.37) implying that students' learning capability is largely affected by behavior reinforcement in teaching learning process .

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter starts with a brief overview of the study. It then presents the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

#### **Overview of the study.**

The purpose of this study was to determine the correlation significance between behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students in selected secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. Research question one was sought to determine how the profile of students varied in their age, gender and previous examinations grade, research question two sought to establish the level of behavior reinforcement used to secondary school students, research question three aimed at determining the level of learning capabilities of secondary school students. Research question four sought to determine whether there is significant correlation between

behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students in secondary schools.

The study was conducted using descriptive correlation research. Data was collected from 24 principals, 168 teachers and 313 students. Data was gathered by the use of structured questionnaires and interview schedule.

### **Findings of the study.**

Findings revealed that:-

Majority of the students (65.2%) were aged between 15 and 16 years the right age for those classes. However there was lack of gender balance in the enrolment with (57.4%) of the students being male and (42.6%) female.

Students' performance was still wanting in secondary schools in the district since the best grades A- and A were missing in the analysis. The mean of the previous examination grade was 6.986 , with majority of students (32%) scoring a mean grade of C+.

On the level of behavior reinforcement, majority of the students (mean,3.88) felt that good, very good and excellent were the best terms for verbal reward, while majority(mean,3.71) of the student agreed that token rewarding is commonly used after examinations but the value attached to them is what determines students' reinforcement in learning. A majority of the students (mean, 2.49) strongly disagreed that the best way to reinforce students learning was to reward only some successful attempts and leave others. However, the students strongly felt that rewarding in secondary schools should be based on grades scored not positions in order to motivate students to achieve more quality grades. For the students, a significant number (mean, 3.99) strongly agreed that evaluation is the most effective way of reinforcing learning behavior. The item with the highest mean (4.48) was, "Prizes and rewards given to those who pass examinations motivate them to study more". This implies that students believe that behavior reinforcement will enhance their achievement academically.

Majority of students (mean, 4.38) felt that positive reinforcement is adequate to make students improve their grades and hence their learning capabilities. A majority (mean, 3.67) strongly agreed that frequent academic tours to universities will raise the level of learning capabilities.

Majority of the students (mean, 2.17) felt that more easy questions did not make students learn more. They strongly felt that any student any student rewarded at any point of learning is usually motivated to learn more. They also strongly agreed that homework, assignments and evaluation questions at the end of the lesson helps students acquire more knowledge. The Students strongly agreed that trained teachers and learning materials in the right ratio to students' population is required for learning capabilities of secondary school students to improve.

The researcher also found out that students preferred continuous reinforcement to use of both fixed intermitted and continuous. Bandura (1977) explains, in schedules of reinforcement, continuous is good for new learning while intermitted is good for maintenance of already learned behavior. Therefore many students tend to forget new learning before examination due to over reliance on few reinforcement types by their teachers. The study found level of behavior reinforcement significantly affects the level of learning capabilities of students in secondary schools.

## **Conclusions.**

On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn; According to profile of the respondent, the students were the right age for productive results of the study to be realized in school setting. The education attainment level of the students was adequate and hence the study population had moderate characteristic for the study.

The second objective was effectiveness of the behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of the students. Majority of the teachers seemingly followed operant theory of Skinner ,B. F.(1938) emphasizing conditioning for behavior reinforcement of the student in the school setting. For instance use of rewarding good behavior to enhance learning in schools, emerged as a direct exercise accompanied by a positive response. Ignoring on occasions when a student repeatedly is found in mistakes, this brings about extinction as the learner is not attended to. Punishment used fairly well to put learners in secluded place for not completing class work on time or making noise in class.

The third objective was level of learning capabilities of student in secondary schools. Meriam Cafarella(2002) maintained that all behavior is maintained, changed and shaped by the consequences of its outcome.

She suggested that consequences of behavior are directly related to event that either come immediately before or after them. The researcher finding relate to this fact when most respondents affirmed that being 'active' rewarding good behavior to enhance learning and reinforcing learning environment were responsive for of a given behavior outcome.

The fourth objective was the correlation of behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of student in secondary schools. Gredler (1997) praised Gagnes' conditions of learning as from observation of students' learning, one sees failure in learning as the gap in knowledge acquired by learners. He suggested learning as a complex instructional events, where different learning outcomes (capabilities); that is, instructional events are different for different type outcome. The remark brings to light the fact that behavior or instruction given should solicit a certain feedback.

The study has alluded to this fact by showing that behavior reinforcement significantly related to learning capabilities of students.

However there were cases where the study illustrated to a fair degree respondents praising the null hypothesis. For example the respondents agreed to the fact that most student were abused openly, teachers could not hide their anger when upset and a good number of

teachers often got concerned when students cursed in class. It then suggests that there is use of corporal punishment and behavior reinforcement techniques being abused. From observation and professional group discussion it featured most explicitly that reward and punishment were not used as deemed necessary.

According Robison, Newby, and Ganzell study, token reinforcement system applied to 18 students'-class. It was able to increase the mean grade of the district reading examination by nine-fold. while the available reward reinforcement in Kagnundo district, increased Kenya certificate of secondary examination by a mere 0.5 mean grade ( DEO Kangundo , NYAGA, speech 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2011 prize giving day for the District.) the magnitude of improvement in performance differs significantly in the two studies this confirms the inadequate use of Behavior Reinforcement of learners in the district in the district to improve the students learning capabilities.

### **Recommendations.**

Based on the findings of this study. The researcher presents the following recommendations for ministry of education, teachers and researchers:

### **Ministry of Education, Kenya.**

The researcher recommends that Kenyan ministry of education should allocate funds in each school to support behavior reinforcement activities, sensitize all school principals through capacity building workshops on the need to budget for students behavior reinforcement and support schools to instill discipline among the students to enhance learning capabilities.

### **Teachers.**

The researcher recommends that, teachers should be consistent as they reward or punish students' behavior. This will ensure that retention of the desired behavior and extinction of undesired behavior. To avoid misunderstanding with the students, the researcher recommends that teachers should hold open forum to get their suggestions. Teachers and students should discuss the possible way to make behavior reinforcement to be more effective.

### **Further research.**

The researcher makes the following suggestions for further research:

1. Since the research was conducted in one administrative district, a similar study should be conducted in other Districts to establish whether it will yield same or different results.
2. There is need to conduct a similar study on behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students in primary schools.

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**APPENDIX I: TRANSMITAL LETTER**  
**KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**  
**MASTERS PROGRAM**

Dear sir/Madam

I am a master's student at Kampala International University and currently pursuing a thesis entitled, **Behavior reinforcement and learning capabilities of students in selected secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya**. In view of this empirical investigation, may I request you to be part of this study by answering the questionnaires? Rest assured that the information that you provide shall be kept with utmost confidentiality and will be used for academic purposes only.

As you answer the questionnaire, be reminded to respond to all items in, don't leave any item unanswered. Further may retrieve the fill out questionnaires after they are done?

Thank you very much in advance.

Yours faithfully,

.....

Muema Henry kiswii

## APPENDIX II: CLEARANCE FROM ETHICS COMMITTEE



**KAMPALA  
INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY**

Ggaba Road - Kansanga  
P.O. Box 20000, Kampala, Uganda  
Tel: +256- 41- 266813 / +256- 41-267634  
Fax: +256- 41- 501974  
E- mail: admin@kiu.ac.ug,  
Website: www.kiu.ac.ug

### OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF EDUCATION SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SPGSR)

April 27, 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: REQUEST FOR HENRY KISWII MUEMA MED/42442/92/DF  
TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANIZATION**

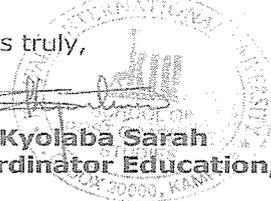
The above mentioned is a bonafide student of Kampala International University pursuing a Masters of Educational Management and Administration. He is currently conducting a field research of which the title is "**Behavior Reinforcement and learning Capabilities of Students in Selected Secondary Schools –Kangundo-District, Kenya.**" As part of his research work, he has to collect relevant information through questionnaires, interviews and other relevant reading materials.

Your organization has been identified as a valuable source of information pertaining to his research project. The purpose of this letter is to request you to avail him with the pertinent information he may need.

Any information shared with him from your organization shall be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours truly,

  
**Ms. Kyolaba Sarah  
Coordinator Education, (SPGSR)**

*You have a go ahead from  
the office to visit selected  
schools*

*[Signature]*  
For / District Education Officer  
Kangundo District  
P.O. Box 1273 - 00115, Kangundo  
12<sup>th</sup> JUL 2011

**APPENDIX III: INFORMED CONSENT.**  
**KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**  
**MASTER PROGRAM**

Dear respondent.

Greeting !!

I am a student at International University (KIU).am undertaking a research study **Behavior Reinforcement and learning capabilities of learners in selected secondary schools** as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of master in education. As i pursue to complete this academic require, may I request you r assistance by being part of this study? Your responses will be used for research purpose only and your identity kept confidential. Kindly provide the most appropriate information as indicated in the questionnaires and please do not leave any item unanswered .Any data from you shall be kept with utmost confidentiality. May I retrieve this questionnaire in 1 week after you have receive it? Thank you very much in advance.

Yours faithfully,

**Henry Kiswii Muema**

**MED/42442/92/DF**

INFOERMED CONSENT

I am giving my consent to be part of the research study of **Mr .H .Kiswii** that will focus on **Behavior Reinforcement and Learning Capabilities of Students in selected Schools in Kangundo District, Kenya**. I shall be assured of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality and that I will be given the option to refuse participation and right to withdraw my participation any time. I have been informed that the research is voluntary and that the results will be give to me if I ask for it.

Initials.....

Date .....

**APPENDIX IV: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.**

**STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE.**

Code#.....

Date received...

respondent.....

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Respondents are students of secondary schools. This questionnaire is for the purpose of research only. Please answer all the questions in the questionnaire as honestly as possible and to the best of your knowledge.

Do not write your name in this questionnaire.

**SECTION A.**

**FACE SHEET (STUDENT).**

**Respondents' profile.**

Please fill as appropriate

1. Age .....
2. Gender.....
3. Year of study.....
4. Previous examination's grade.....

## SECTION B

In this section, the study seeks to determine learning behavior reinforcement for students in selected secondary schools. Please tick (✓) a number to show how much you agree with the following statements.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Somehow disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am satisfied with the rewarding, punishment and motivation teachers give to the students in this school.					
2	The punishments in our school are too harsh to make students concentrate in learning in this school and pass examinations.					
3	The prizes and rewards given to those who pass					

	examinations well make them want to continue studying more.					
4	Rewarding students by the term "good" is more common in class learning than terms excellent, correct or its correct.					
5	Rewarding students verbally (praises) is more effective and common in reinforcing learning behavior.					
6	Group discussion is most effective method of reinforcing learned behavior for secondary school students.					
7	Assignments / homework are the most effective way of reinforcing learned behavior for secondary students.					
8	Asking evaluation questions and answers after every lesson is most effective way of reinforcing learning behavior for secondary school students.					
9	Debates are more efficient way of practicing and reinforcing learning behavior only in languages.					

10	Continuous and evenly distributed rewards make more students participate therefore reinforcing their learning behavior.					
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**SECTION C**

In this section, the study seeks to determine the learning capabilities of students in selected secondary schools in Kangundo District, Kenya. Tick the value showing you much you agree with the statement.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. somehow disagree
4. agree
5. strongly agree

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am okay.					
2	I am pleased with myself.					

3	I am confident about my ability to perform.					
4	I can overcome small problems.					
5	I don't admit defeat easily.					
6	Big challenges brings the best of me.					
7	I make efforts					
8	I am clear about my weaknesses and my strengths					
9	Improvement in my learning come from me					
10	I find new explanations for what I am taught					

**THE- END**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

## RESEARCHER'S CURRICULUM VITAE.

### PERSONAL DATA.

NAME : HENRY KISWII MUEMA (MR)

NATIONALITY : KENYAN

PERMANENT ADDRESS : P.O. 61 (90131) TALA

TELEPHONE : +254724 724 899 EMAIL  
[hkiswii@gmail.com](mailto:hkiswii@gmail.com)

PROFESSION : TEACHER OF BIOLOGY/ CHEMISTRY

: TEACHER/ DEPUTY- PRINCIPAL

### EDUCATIONAL BACK GROUND

Period	Institution	Qualification
2009 to date	KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (Uganda) M.E.D student	Educational administration and management
2004 – 2007	KENYATTA university BED	Chemistry/ physical educational (honors)
1989 - 1990	MOI teachers college ELDORET Dip. Sc.	Dip science education Biology, chemistry,

	Examination master	2. Organization and management of examinations in the school.
1991 - 1995	Teacher KALIMANI sec school Games master	1. Teaching bio/chemistry 2. In – charge of organization and training of student in co – curricula

**OTHER SKILLS.**

1. 2003 did one year intensive training in community development services dealing with human rights, poverty eradication and introduction to constitution making
2. Currently an item writer of chemistry for Kangundo District Examination.

