

**CAUSES OF POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH  
IN KENYA CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION (KCSE)  
IN SAMIA DISTRICT KENYA**

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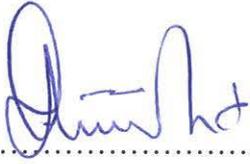
**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A DEGREE OF  
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION IN ARTS OF KAMPALA  
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**DECEMBER 2012**

## DECLARATION

I, Onyango Jacob,, do hereby declare that this work is a result of my own effort and has never been submitted for any award in any other university or institution of higher learning.

Signature: .....

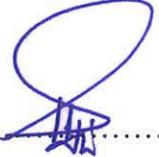


**Onyango F.Jacob**

Date: 1.12.2012. ....

## APPROVAL

This work has been done under my supervision as a university supervisor, and submitted with my approval.

Signed .....  .....

**Ssekajugo Derrick**

Date: ..... 4/Dec/02 .....

## **DEDICATION**

This entire work is dedicated to my dear wife Farida N. Okumu, my brother David O. Okuku and to my son Onyango G. Emmanuel for the great support and courage accorded to me in the course of my studies.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Special consideration goes to my supervisor, Mr. Ssekajugo Derrick for the continued support during the entire research and for all the guidance offered to me. On the same note, I would like to extend my appreciation to dear wife Farida and to my son Emmmanuel. Last but not least to the typist of this work Hanifa for having accepted to work under pressure to make this work finished within the shortest possible time.

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## ABSTRACT

*study was intended to investigate the causes of poor performance of students in English language in  
ia District, within Kenya. An authentic revisitation of the works of all those prior authors and/or,  
archers on the same topic under study was made which assisted the researcher have a clear picture of what  
entire study was to entail. A descriptive design was adopted for this study since much of the entire work to  
il giving an elaboration. Questionnaires were used as the main tools for data collection after which, the  
collected had to be edited, processed and presented in tables to give a clear picture of what the research  
ngs were meant to convey. The findings from the field revealed that: Students are not given assignments for  
ish subject, lesson plans are not carried out by the teachers and very important to mention teachers also  
i that they are not satisfied with the salary they get. It was also pointed out that most of the teachers did not  
English as their first choice as a career, and they do not use English to communicate with the students,  
so many of the students are non teachable and are very unruly which makes it hard for the teachers to  
i them. Recommendations were made which called for the need to have fully equipped libraries in schools  
eachers of English language should making sure that the reading lessons in the time table are conducted*

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

The poor academic performance in English - one of the core subjects especially in the secondary school curriculum has largely contributed to the overall poor performance in the other subjects and subsequently.

In the Kenyan system of education there is great emphasis on the teaching of English language. This has been necessitated by the fact that globally, English is also one of the widely spoken international languages. Martha L. King (1984) argues that just as success in learning is linked to skill or the language, failure in language whatever the reason - is bound up in the way children share and create meaning through language.

English is also the official language in Kenya. In any office in the country the medium used in communicating is English and in some few instances, Kiswahili. Except from the teaching of other languages like French, German and Kiswahili, all the other subjects offered in the school curriculum by the ministry of Education are taught in English .It is therefore imperative that learners first understand English language properly and acquire a fluency in the use of the language so that they can use it not only to do their examinations but to also, communicate effectively in their community and to understand other subjects.

The ability to communicate eloquently in English has been used many times during interviews as a gauge to determine how competent and well versed one is in a given field of experience.

Due to the significance of the English as a medium of communication, language skills are introduced right from the elementary level. The ministry of education underscores the importance of English by making it one of the core subjects that is compulsory for all secondary school students. It's therefore alarming that students are failing in this important subject because it is significantly affecting their performance in other subjects, subsequently limiting them in securing good jobs locally and internationally.

The researcher being one of the language teachers in the location, has observed that in Samia district, many secondary school leavers are missing places at the university even when they have performed well in other subjects due to their poor performance in English. This drove the researcher to come up with a study that specifically aimed at establishing the causes of poor performance of students in English Language at KCSE level.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This particular study was to establish the reasons as to why students are performing poorly in English as a subject.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the causes of poor performance of students in English language.

### **Scope of the Study.**

The study was conducted in Samia District within Kenya. This was done between the months of August and November, 2012 .

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the attitudes of students towards learning of English language.
2. Determine the effectiveness of the teachers in the teaching of English language.
3. Establish whether teaching materials are available or not and the way forward.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the attitude of students towards learning of English language?
2. How is the effectiveness of the teachers in the teaching of English language?
3. Do students get adequate and relevant reading materials?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study was thought to be of benefit in the following ways:

Provide more insight to the causes of poor academic performance in English and recommend the necessary solutions.

Enable the curriculum developers to improve the findings of the study to identify areas of strength and weakness, in the curriculum of English with a view of making it more effective and compatible with the needs of the society .

Provide a kick start on which other researchers can develop their own studies or do conduct more studies on the same problem.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

This chapter was all about a revisitation other scholars' work and or writings on the same study.

#### **Attitude of students towards English language learning**

Gichuhi (1996) argues that attitudes and subjects are not learned separately but simultaneously through complex interaction. The student with a positive attitude in class is likely to perform much better than those with a negative attitude. On clearing their courses, such students are also expected to be proud of the subject (language) and use it more often in their daily activities. It has been observed that many students who have a negative attitude towards English will avoid using it when not obliged to, subsequently, they will not perform well.

Kagochi [2001] observed that some primary objectives are not met. These include imparting literacy skills, developing self-expression and laying the foundation for further education. When these objectives are not met then chances are very slim that the learners will achieve the goals at secondary school level for they lack the basic information that is a prerequisite.

Eshiwani (1993) argues that students' traits in primary education, secondary education and social characteristics cause poor performance in general.

## **Teachers' Effectiveness in Teaching English**

Owour (1995) observes that; poor performance is as a result of teachers not being dedicated to their duties. Some of them are traders while others are drunkards. When they devote most of their time in their businesses or drinking they have little time for their students. They result to giving students homework or assignments that they never mark and hence discourage the students. The researcher intends to find out whether the above applies in his area of study.

## **The Ideal English Teacher**

The ideal English teacher is one whose liberal education has freed him to lead a harmonious, well- behaved life .He has been liberated from those accidental restrictions – the circumstances of birth and environment –that narrow personal vision .The liberally educated teacher of English is one whose feelings imaginations and intellect have been fused into that stable poise which enables him to grapple with essential and ultimate questions of experience. He sees clearly than most ,how ends and means are related ,how outer symbols shadow forth the inner truths of existence and how choices reflect the values ,conscious or unconscious ,an individual concept. Such a teacher clarifies in his own mind and the minds of his students the values to be gained from studying language and literature .This requires a complex equilibrium of many qualities and skills ,but for characteristics outlooks may be identified.(Passer and Smith,2001 ).

### **English learning materials Availability.**

Facilities are crucial in learning of languages .Facilities like libraries are important components in learning English .They provide the base for reading and this is where the reading material is kept .A school without a library lacks a vital organ .The library case has been argued :-

indeed if a school aims at really educating the pupils entrusted to it and not merely “teaching” them ,the library is a facility which can make an essential contribution to such a purpose .There is no substitute for it. It is a priority without which a school must inevitably be poorer ,no matter how many other facilities it provides (Ayot et al 1984)

Gechaga (1986) argues that there is a correlation with good performance and facilities. A school with good facilities seems to produce better results than the one with inadequate facilities

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative a design. This was viewed as being necessary because the whole research was geared towards describing a situation.

#### **Research Environment**

The study was carried within Samia District in Kenya

#### **Selection of Respondents**

The researcher used random sampling from a population of teachers and students.

#### **Research Instruments**

The instruments used for this particular study included questionnaires and interview guides.

#### **Data Analysis**

The collected data was analyzed and presented in percentages and frequency distribution tables.

#### **Qualitative Analysis**

The researcher further described, explained and interpreted the data around each of the major questions so as to achieve the objectives.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The study primarily engaged those respondents in the area who had been viewed necessary for data collection. Accordingly, extreme confidentiality had to be promised and this was to be effected only, by promising secrecy to the selected respondent's information provided.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### **Introduction**

This research was carried out to investigate the causes of poor performance of students in English in Secondary schools at KCSE level.

It is in this chapter that the researcher tried to present, analyze, and interpret data obtained from the two selected groups of individuals namely:- The teachers, and the students.

#### **Research question one: Determine the attitudes of students towards learning of English language**

The study of English in the selected schools has undergone a tremendous neglect by the students in the school and to show this, a table was produced to give a detailed picture of what was on ground.

**Table1: Attitude of the students towards the learning of English language.**

VARIABLE (S)	FREQUENCES			
	SA	A	SD	D
I enjoy school	65	15	12	36
I do best in English	5	15	68	40
My performance declined	15	5	30	78
I'm becoming lazy	15	5	20	88
I don't interact with the teacher.	70	25	18	15
I don't ask questions in English Because I don't know how to frame them.	100	10	8	10
I use English when communicating	0	5	53	70
I performed well in English in Primary School because teachers used vernacular to	25	8	60	35
I don't work hard in English because others say it is hard.	18	25	75	10
I'm always in class	80	20	10	18

No matter how I try, I cannot do well in English.	45	45	25	13
The teacher of English interacts freely with students.	10	28	75	15

**Source: Primary Data, 2012**

From the table above, in the view of the performance of the students it is realized that most of the students do like being in school as per the responses got after asking them about their school it was found that so many students do like the school and would really love to be in school. But then further on, from the analysis we also found that the performance in English was not very good and this was due to the following:-

From the analysis of the sampled students only 10 agreed with the suggestion that teachers do interact with the students and it is due to this that the attitude of the students is towards learning the language.

Due to the fact that these students try as hard as they can to work hard, they do not pass the language, well this also has led to having a poor attitude towards English language, on analysis, most of them claimed that no matter how hard they try, they do not pass the subject.

However, a greater deal of the respondents strongly agreed that they do not ask questions in English because they cannot frame these questions and thus the attitude towards the language is demoralized.

**4. Research question two:** How is the effectiveness of the teachers in the teaching of English language?

The research was further focused on the effectiveness of the teachers towards teaching the language and the table below shows the results that were obtained.

**Table 2 The Effectiveness of the Teachers of English.**

VARIABLES	RESPONSES				
	SA	A	SD	D	
Are English assignments given to the students	5	3	2	6	
Are Lesson plans carried out before going to class	2	0	8	6	
Are you satisfied with the salary that you receive	5	3	2	6	
Students are often taught with 95% Attendance	6	2	3	5	

Is the English syllabus completed before KCSE	6	0	5	5	
Was English your first choice as a career	10	0	2	4	
I like using English when Communicating	0	1	10	5	
Are the students you teach teachable	10	2	3	1	
The time table is favorable for teaching English	10	5	0	1	
The speaking of English language very much emphasized on the campus	2	3	4		

**S Source: Primary Data, 2012**

From table 2 above, it was realized that the teachers do not give English assignments to the students. It was also realized that lesson plans in English are not prepared by the teachers thus; so many teachers reach the classes unprepared.

On asking whether the teachers are satisfied with the salaries they get, most of them claimed that they get very little compared to what they do.

Most of the respondents had English language as their first choice as a career, yet the English syllabus is often not completed by the time of KCSE which makes the students unprepared and thus poorly performing in this subject.

From the table the biggest number of respondents claimed that during communication English language is not used so much as most of the time the local languages are used for easier communication with the students and that the students that are admitted in these schools are some times found to be very unruly and not easily teachable by the teachers.

**Research question three: Analysis on the availability of teaching materials.**

*The availability of teaching materials was also realized to be another problem that is affecting the performance of learners in English and the researcher made a detailed analysis on the poor performance and the researcher came up with the following results*

**Table 3: Analysis on the availability of teaching materials**

VARIABLES		RESPONSES			
Statement		SA	A	SD	D
1	News are papers often provided to the students	0	3	10	3
2	Students often use the library	2	3	6	5
3	Story books are provided to the students	3	3	0	10
4	The text books and novels are costly	10	4	2	0
5	Reading materials are not easily Accessible	10	4	0	2
6.	The school provides adequate Teaching books	3	2	6	5
7.	Most of the books available are not on the KCSE English syllabus	10	4	2	0
8.	The teaching materials do not reach the school in time	8	7	1	0

9.	Many materials are provided by the teachers privately	10	4	0	2	
10	Several students do not read the novels in the library	6	5	2	3	

**Source: Primary Data, 2012**

From the table above, it is realized that news papers are rarely provided to the students and also the access to these news papers is very poor and this also applies to the reading novels since the students rarely visit the library to refer to the books in the library.

Text books are also very costly as per the respondents from the table many of them strongly agree that the text books are very expensive and this makes it hard for the school to buy them.

In conclusion, the teaching materials are not made available to the students and this alone makes the performance in English very poor according to the remarks in the above table.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, attempt was made to present a detailed discussion that eventually progressed towards a comprehensive conclusion. It is forming a platform for the recommendations.

*Discussion* In this section, vigilant evaluation and scrutiny of the findings were represented by the results. The section was organized according to the three research questions, which were formulated to guide the survey.

Owing to the reality all the arithmetic was presented and interpreted in chapter four emphasis here was placed on what such arithmetic implies in relation to the objective of the study and the already existing literature.

**Research question one: Analysis of the attitude of the students towards learning of English language in the selected schools.**

This question was approached and the information got was analyzed and tabulated, it was aimed at finding out the attitudes that the students have towards learning of English language.

The study pointed out that the students have a poor attitude towards learning the language and it points out different grounds as to why the attitude is very negative.

It is also observed in this study that the learners like the school, but then they do not do well in English, so many students simply do not communicate freely in English and they also claim that they do work hard in English but continue to fail the language, Most of the times the English syllabus is not completed by the time of the KSCE according to the study.

In addition to that, the study also revealed that the students do not ask questions in English simply because they fear the teachers and also they do not know how to phrase these questions properly in English.

**Research Question two: Analysis on the effectiveness and capabilities of the teachers in English.**

The research findings revealed that students are not given assignments for English subject, lesson plans are not carried out by the teachers and very important to mention teachers also claim that they are not satisfied with the salary they get.

The research study also pointed out that most of the teachers did not have English as their first choice as a career, and they do not use English to communicate with the students, also so many of the students are non teachable and are very unruly which makes it hard for the teachers to teach them.

In addition the speaking of English language is not so much emphasized on the school campus as most of the students use local languages for easier communication with one another.

**Research question three: Analysis on the availability of teaching materials.**

The study revealed that there not so many of the teaching materials in the school as most of the text books are very expensive and also the students do rarely visit the libraries. The students also do not read news papers and novels.

**Conclusions**

The research study has indicated that from the summary above, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that first the use of mother tongue and sheng (in general not communicating in English Language all the time) has really affected the teaching and performance of English Language negatively.

Secondly, Lack of equipped libraries and the tendency of students not reading novels and story books have also affected the teaching of English Language and performance negatively.

Thirdly, the students' poor foundation of English Language from primary school level and lack of adequate exercises in both written and spoken English have had negative effects on teaching and performance of English language in this locality.

Fourth, the poor attitude of students towards English language is also a big problem that is affecting the performance of English in these schools.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher recommended that students should be assessed more as English subject is taught daily. If this is done, the learners will learn their mistakes and areas of weakness and thus improve. The researcher found out that most teachers assessed their students weekly and then others assessed monthly while students also indicated that some teachers don't even mark the students work, they only append their signatures.

Secondly , there's need to have fully equipped libraries in the schools and teachers of English language should make sure that the reading lesson in the time table is conducted in the library . The researcher found out that 17% of the students visit the library few times while 66% never visit the library at all.

The use of English Language should be emphasized by all teachers in school irrespective of the subject they teach; this exempts the local language teacher only. On the side of teachers, it is important that they use as many methods of teaching as possible such as lecture method, group discussion, roles playing and dramatization. If possible, use all of them in order to avoid the teacher dominating the lesson.

Ministry of Education should make sure that the student- teacher ratio is well balanced so that the English teacher is able to mark the students work daily. The researcher found out that enrollment for a class of 35- 46 students is on the higher side for an English

teacher who may be having four English classes. The Head teacher should make sure that teachers plan their work as required by the ministry and make lesson plans before teaching the lesson. The relationship between teachers and students should be cordial so that students can freely express themselves, ask and answer questions as required.

The Ministry of Education should make sure that teachers attend in- service courses regularly in order to update themselves with the ever changing trends of the subject.

The researcher found out that 33% of the teachers attended in -service courses while 33% did not. The new learning and teaching method are taught in these in service courses.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### HEADTEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Background information school  
Sex      male (      )                      Female (      )
2. i) How many teachers of English language do you have in your school?  
(1-2) (2-3) (3-4) (4-5) (5-6) (6-7) (7-8)  
ii) Is the number of teachers of English language in your school adequate?  
Yes (      )                      No (      )  
iii) If no, how do you supplement the teaching force in your school?
3. State whether you have the following facilities by ticking where applicable  
a) Library    yes (      )                      No (      )  
b) Is the library equipped with relevant English language course books?  
Yes (      )                      No (      )  
c) If no, how do you cope with the shortages?
4. i) What is the average number of students per class in your school?  
(20-30) (30-40) (40-50) (50-60)  
ii) What is the size of your classroom?  
Spacious enough (      )      Small (      )                      Medium (      )

i) Do your teachers of English language submit their preparations (schemes of work, records of work, lesson notes/plans) on time?

Yes ( )                  No ( )

ii) How can you describe the relationship between your teacher of English language and students?

Cordial ( )                  Bad ( )                  Fair ( )

6. i) Have your English teachers attended an in-service course in English during the past four years?

Yes ( )                  No ( )

ii) If yes, do you think the courses have any impact on the teacher delivery of the content?

iii) Do your teachers complete the syllabus for their respective classes every year?

Yes ( )                  No ( )

iv) If no, Why?

7. i) Which languages are recommended for use within the school compound?

ii) Do you think the language policy is strictly adhered to by both teachers and students?

Yes ( )                  No ( )

iii) If not, why do you think that is the case?

iv) Basing your response on (iii) above do you think this affects the performance of English language in national exams?

8. What do you think are the causes of poor performance in English language?

9. According to you, what measures could be taken to improve the performance of English in national examinations? Explain

**QUESTIONNAIRE 2**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH**

1. Background Information

School

Numbers

Sex      Male (      )      Female (      )

Date

2. i) Is English the official language (s) of communication among your students within the school compound?

Yes (      )                  No (      )

ii) If No, which other languages are commonly used within the school environment?

iii) Basing you response in the three above, how do you think this has affected the performance of English in National Exams?

3. i) For how long have you taught English Language in your teaching career?

Less than two years                  (      )

Between two to five years                  (      )

Between five to ten years (      )

Over ten years                  (      )

iii) How many lessons do you teacher per week?

4. What teaching approach do you employ in teaching English Language.

Lecture method ( )

Group discussion ( )

Question/answer ( )

Dramatizing and role playing ( )

Demonstrations ( )

Others-specify ( )

ii) How often do you administer tests and assignments?

Daily ( )

Weekly ( )

Monthly ( )

Termly ( )

iii) How has your response in 3 (ii) above affect the performance of English Language in National exams?

5. i) Do you have enough of the recommended course books for use in class?

Yes ( ) No ( )

ii) If No, which other texts do you use, please specify.

iii) Basing your response in (ii) above, how has this affected the performance of students in English language in National Examinations?

6. i) What is the number of students in your class?

(20-30) (30-40) (40-50) (50-60)

ii) Does the above number affect the delivery of content in any way?

Yes ( )

No ( )

iii) If yes, how?

7. i) How the integration of English and literature affected your teaching in English?

8. What could be the contribution of other subjects towards improvement of English language performance in National Examinations?

9. How do you find the teaching of English language as a teacher?

Boring ( )

Intensely ( )

Fairly enjoyable ( )

10. How has the integration of English and literature affected the performance of English language?

11. According to you, what can be done to improve the performance of English in National Examination?

**QUESTIONNAIRE 3**  
**STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Background information

i) School

ii) Number

iii) Sex      Male(    )    Female (    )

2. What are the levels of your parent's education?

	Rather	mother
Primary	(    )	(    )
Secondary	(    )	(    )
College	(    )	(    )
University	(    )	(    )
None of the above	(    )	(    )

3. Did you attend nursery school?

Yes    (    )                      No    (    )

4. i) When your English language teacher is teaching, do you understand the lesson

Yes    (    )                      No    (    )

ii) State the reason for the option you have taken in (i)

5. How often does your English language teacher mark your work?

Daily                      (    )

Weekly ( )

Monthly ( )

Termly ( )

6. Does your English teacher attend classes always & promptly?

Yes ( ) No ( )

7. Does your teacher of English language give you homework assignments? If so, how often?

8. i) Which of the following is commonly used within your school environment?

- Kiswahili ( )

- English ( )

-Mother Tongue ( )

ii) Which of the following languages do you use for communication with your parents at home?

English ( )

Kiswahili ( )

Mother tongue ( )

9. How often do you attend to the following activities per week?

Many times

Few times

Not at all

Read newspapers ( ) ( ) ( )

Visit the library ( ) ( ) ( )

Read story books ( ) ( ) ( )

10. How has the integration of English and literature affected your Performance in English?
  
11. According to you, what do you think are the contributing factors to the poor performance of English in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education?
  
12. What do you think can be done to improve the performance of English language in your school.