

**CAUSES OF STUDENTS 'POOR PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH AT KENYA
CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EXAMINATION
IN KANYENYAINI LOCATION
MURANG'A DISTRICT
KENYA**

**BY:
PERPETUA ANNE WAMBUI KIMANI
BED/7062/51/DF**

**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIALFULFILMENT FOR THE
REQUIREMENT OF A BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE OF
KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

NOVEMBER 2007

DECLARATION

I, PERPETUA ANNE WAMBUI KIMANI, declare that this is my original work and has not been presented for any other degree programme in this or any other university.

Signature.....

Date.....

APPROVAL

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.

Signature.....

MOHAMMED KIBUUKA

INSTITUTE OF CONTINUING AND DISTANT STUDIES

KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

30th/08/2007

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my Husband Mr. Sammy Kimani and my children; Ian, Sophia and Rehema.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many people have contributed to the success of this research project. Their tireless efforts made by way of useful suggestions, encouragement, financial and moral support and time spent in any way towards the success of this work cannot be ignored.

First and foremost my special appreciation goes to my supervisor Mr. Mohammed Kibuuka for sparing his time to provide guidance on refining the research.

Special regards also goes to all the principals, teachers and the students of schools that participated in answering the questionnaires and sitting for the interviews.

I would also wish to thank Caroline Kanyonyo, Angela Kamau, Purity Kamuri and Atukunda Patience for editing and typesetting the work.

I cannot forget to thank Mr. Irungu and Miss Gathiari who are my colleagues for their overwhelming support and wonderful ideas.

Mr. Maina S.K., my husband has greatly contributed by offering much needed advice, time and logistic support. I truly wish to thank him.

Most importantly, I owe all this to God Almighty and I am grateful for that.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
ABBREVIATIONS	viii
DEFINITION OF TERMS	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Rationale of the study	1
1.2 Theory	3
1.3 Objectives	4
1.3.1 General Objectives.....	4
1.3.2 Specific Objectives	4
1.4 Research Questions	5
1.5 Significance of the study	5
CHAPTER TWO	6
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.0 Introduction	6
2.1 Review	6
2.1.1 Student factors	6
2.1.2 Teachers factors	8
2.1.3 Administrative factors.....	9
CHAPTER THREE	12
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	12
3.1 Design	12

3.2 Environment.....	12
3.3 Subjects.....	12
3.4 Sampling Procedure.....	12
3.6 Instruments.....	13
3.7 Data Collection Procedures.....	14
3.8 Statistical Treatment of Data	14
CHAPTER FOUR.....	16
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS.....	16
4.0 Introduction	16
4.1 Students issues.....	16
4.2 Issues related to teachers and teaching methods.....	23
4.3 Issues relating to the school itself, administration and out of school factors.....	27
4.4 Evaluation	30
4.5 Students encouragement by different people.....	31
4.6 Administration	32
CHAPTER FIVE	33
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	33
5.0 Introduction	33
5.1 Summary of major findings	33
5.2 Conclusion.....	34
5.3 Recommendations by the researcher	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY	35
APPENDICES	A
Appendix A: Transmittal Letter	A
Appendix B: Questionnaires	B
Appendix C: Map of the Research Environment	L
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	M

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Students marks on admission.....	17
Table 2: Ranking of the students by the teachers.....	17
Table 3: Students' entry marks in English.....	18
Table 4: Extent of students liking of their school	19
Table 5: Extent of students like of English as a subject.....	19
Table 6: Performance change with form; students' response.....	20
Table 7: Performance change with form: Teacher's response.....	20
Table 8: Students' own initiative to study.....	21
Table 9: Vernacular use and performance in English.....	22
Table 10: Inability to frame questions in English.....	22
Table 11: Teaching by choice.....	23
Table 12: Salary and satisfaction	23
Table 13: Teachers' workload.....	24
Table 14: Preparation and teaching	25
Table 15: standards of learners in understanding English.....	25
Table 16: teaching methods used by teachers.....	26
Table 17: Syllabus coverage.....	27
Table 18: Attendance	28
Table 19: Favourable school time table.....	29
Table 20: Frequency of Evaluation.....	30
Table 21: Academic visit by parents/guardian.....	31
Table 22: Use of English in communication	31

ABBREVIATIONS

K.C.P.E - Kenya Certificate of Primary Education.

K.C.S.E- Refers to the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education.

K.N.E.C- Refers to the Kenya National Examination Council

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The researcher intends to use some of the terms to mean the following:-

Bridging course: -This is a course taken at the university by students who have failed in a given subject in order to upgrade their performance and enable them to qualify to join a university.

Kanyenya-ini location –It is one of the locations in Kangema division of Murang'a District in the central province of Kenya.

ABSTRACT

This study is based on the causes of poor performance in English at Kenya certificate of secondary examination particularly in Kanyenyaini location of Muranga District, Kenya.

The researcher had observed that there has been a very low intake of students at Kanyenyaini location in public universities and tertiary colleges due to poor performance in English at K.C.S.E.

The study based on the gestalt theory of learning that shows how the environment can affect learning.

The researchers' objective therefore, was to find out whether issues such as school administration, students attitude, teaching methods on performance of students in English at the National Examination.

It is hoped that this study will be of benefit to students, teachers, curriculum planners and the school administration as they map out strategies on how to improve performance of English in secondary schools.

Non – Experimental methods were applied in this research. Five secondary schools in Kanyenyaini location were used as the research environment and the respondents were students, teachers and the principals from the schools. Oral interviews, observations and questionnaires were used to collect data.

The data was synthesized and analyzed in tables and the results, findings were that students contribute 60% to their poor performance, teachers contribute 35% and others contribute 5%.

The recommendations made were that; guidance and counseling should be strengthen, to cultivate a culture of working hard and the school administration should look for ways of motivating teachers to improve their input.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter consist of the rationale of the study, theory, Objectives, research questions and significance of the study.

1.1 Rationale of the study

English is one of the core subjects especially in the secondary school curriculum. Students both in primary and secondary school students have persistently continued to perform poorly in the subject despite its early introduction into the curriculum and in the light of the many lessons that it is allocated in school. The poor performance in English has largely contributed to the overall poor performance in the other subjects and subsequently, a low enrolment and admission into Kenya's public universities and other tertiary colleges from kanyenya-ini location as compared to other locations.

Many students in the last two years failed to attain a C+ and above in English at K.C.S.E level which what is required to gain entry into these institution of higher learning .The ones who attained good grades in other subjects also suffered because of failing in English. It is in the light of this observation that this study is carried out to investigate the factors influencing students' performance in K.C.S.E English examinations, in Kanyenya-ini location.

Martha L. King (1984; 175) says 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.

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 is one of the widely spoken international languages.

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, whereas one may be highly skilled and qualified to undertake certain tasks, his/her inability to express themselves fluently in English may cost them a much desired

Job opportunity

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 kanyenya-ini location, 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. Many of them have had to take up courses in

tertiary colleges or do bridging courses to gain entrance into universities while others have faded into oblivion.

1.2 Theory

This section intends to deal with the theory of the study it is based on the gestalt theory of learning

Gestalt Theory of Learning

This is also known as the insight theory of learning. It refers to the ability to learn things suddenly, promptly and spontaneously. It is a rapid perception of relationship that occur in animals and human beings. Insight learning does not occur slowly; neither does it occur as a flash of lightning. This learning involves organizing perceptual relationship amongst the objects in the environment and understanding relationship amongst things.

Steps Involved in Insight Learning

- (i) Identification of the problem
- (ii) Incubation period (thought stage mentally trying out a number of possibilities).
- (iii) Insight

This theory states that the environment must be properly organized for students to learn. Creativity must be created in students and they are highly motivated to discover things. The Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1969) and further developed in (1977) states that, people learn behaviour through two types of observation procedures:-

(a) Modeling

This is whereby behaviour is modified as a result of observing other people copying blindly what they do and a lot of our school behaviour is learnt this way especially in children and adolescents.

(b) Vicarious Learning

In this case behaviour is modified after looking at the consequences of the same behaviour in another person. For example when a student is rewarded because of good performance, the other students learn from such a student and try to work hard in order to receive such reward come next time.

Students also learn from one another when their colleagues are punished. They try to avoid being punished as their colleagues by avoiding being on the wrong. In both procedures i.e. modeling and vicarious learning, learning involves changing behaviour through imitation e.g. of attitude, interests e.t.c

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objectives

This study investigated the causes of students' poor performance in English at Kenya Certificate Secondary Education in secondary schools at Kanyenya-ini location.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. The study focused on the students' entry behaviour from primary school and its effects on performance.
2. It also looked at the effect of school administration on performance of English.
3. The study also looked at the effect of students' attitude towards English on performance.
4. The study looked at whether teaching methods and other factors affect students' performance in English.

1.4 Research Questions

- a) What is the relationship between the entry behaviour in form one and poor performance?
- b) What are the effects of administration on performance in English?
- c) What effects does students' attitude towards English have on performance?
- d) How do teaching methods and other factors affect students' performance in English?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study will provide more insight to teachers and the school management on the causes of poor performance in English and enable them to improve on the teaching methods and resources in English. The curriculum developers can also use findings of the study to identify areas of strength and weakness, in the curriculum with a view of making it more effective and compatible with the needs of the society.

The students will also benefit in that they will acquire language skills that will enable them to compete favorably and meet all their learning needs.

The study will form a base on which others can develop their own studies. It also highlights the importance of qualified teachers.

The government can also come up with better strategies of improving the training of teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at various studies which provides a general background to the present study in the review of the related literature on causes of students 'poor performance in English.

2.1 Review

For any meaningful development to take place in any nation there has to be education. Therefore, every nation is obliged to educate its youth to equip them with knowledge for socio-economic, cultural and political development. The Kenyan government has made a milestone in creating the ministry of Education and initiating the free and compulsory primary education whereby a hefty disbursement is made annually from the national budget to cater for the demands of education.

There are a number of obstacles that hinder effective learning especially in English albeit these efforts put in place by the government of Kenya .A number of people have spoken and written on the causes of poor performance in English.

Performance in English has been reported by a number of researchers to be influenced by the following factors: -students, administrative, parents and teachers.

2.1.1 Student factors

Gichuhi (1996, 10) 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. There is a common misconception among students in rural schools that English is only the domain of those students in urban schools, that the student from a rural setup cannot develop articulation in English no matter how hard they try. As the primary school pupils sit for their K.C.P.E they display an aptitude for English until they reach secondary school and find that they no longer fair as well as they used to. This is attributed to the method used to. This is attributed to the method used in teaching at primary level whereby they can be drilled on how to answer multiple-choice questions in examinations. This is not the case with secondary school where the learners have to come up with what to put down as regards to given questions.

Chiuri (1995, 11) reported that, poor performance is attributed to primary school factors. He articulated the problems such as drilling pupils to pass the Kenya certificate of primary Education (K.C.P.E) and the use of vernaculars as medium of communication (instruction) in primary schools as major causes of poor performance in English.

On the same note, Kagochi [2001, 2s] observes 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) says that students' traits such as pre-primary education, primary education and social characteristics cause poor performance in general.

2.1.2 Teachers factors

Owour (1995,4) 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 Kanyenya-ini location.

The Ideal English Teacher

The ideal English teacher is one who's 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 .

Some people will work harder in a group than alone ,if they expect that their colleagues either do not have enough ability or will slack off (passer and smith,2001).This shows the influence of a group on hard work. This shows that influence of a group on hard work. It has been observed that many teachers make learning teacher-centered and fail to use students to assist each other in group work. There is need to vary the teaching method and adopt those approaches that are more student centered .

When dealing with attitude change many teachers rely on rules and regulations of the school to maintain order. Unfortunately the need for control and discipline can take precedence over the learning process. Teachers may focus on obedience to school rules as an end in itself (Schaeffer).

2.1.3 Administrative factors

Nyambane observes that, headteachers have a role to play in the poor performance. He attributes this to uncooperative headteachers in supplying essential basic material for teaching. He reports that some of the teachers treat the school as their personal property thus hindering development and smooth learning.

On the issues of administration and how it influences performance, interviews carried out by Blumberg and Greenfield (1956,40) reported that the administration should provide administrative relationships in which each party can count on the other to meet the expectations they have for each other to meet the expectations they have for each other and the process of building this relationship starts with the ability and willingness of the head-teacher to listen to what the teachers are saying. Ndero(2002-27)recommended that a systematic approach could be the school problems that seem to work without threatening the delicate balance that exists among administrators, teachers and students in every school.

Facilities are crucial in learning of languages. Facilities like libraries are important components in learning English. They provide the base for reading and this where the reading material is kept. A school without a library lacks a vital organ .The 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 :128)

As earlier results have shown, 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 (Gechaga 1986; 49)

Kunguru (1986) observes that lack of experience on the part of the teachers may result from untrained teacher or newly posted graduates who are experimenting on methodology such teachers have no idea on how examination are set and techniques of answering questions Kilatya (1985)

States that in some cases some schools do not have qualified teachers and if they are there, such teachers are overloaded and sometimes assigned subjects they were not trained for.

Methodology

In teaching, there are various methods that a teacher can use. It's therefore upon the teacher to vary the methods to achieve the desired results. According to Gathiari 2005, in order to develop writing skills, students should be encouraged to write compositions, short stories, skills and short drama, poems and dialogues. The development should be progressive and tasks should vary with level of class, from simpler in form one to complex in form four. The topics chosen should also be relevant enough to have a personal appeal to the students, The scope of writing topics have no borders; It can be any topic, but should be exciting and creative. The teacher can encourage students to write stories and display them on a display board in the school.

Listening is a skill that the teachers must develop in the student, psychologists argue that students retain 20% of what they hear and 50% of what they hear and see. Listening therefore becomes an integral process in learning. Ayot et al (p 134) have put it, it is a skill that a teacher needs to employ a variety of methods to develop interest in their students .

English plays a crucial and pivotal role in society today .In Kenya it is the official language fact enshrined in the Kenyan constitution.

(Every bill including the memorandum accompanying a bill), every act of parliament whenever enacted and all other actual or proposed legislation under authority of an act of parliament and all other actual or proposed legislation under authority of an act of parliament, and all financial resolutions and documents thereto, and every actual or proposed amendments of any type of the foregoing shall be written in English (The constitution of Kenya, 1983:32)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design

The researcher undertook basic research. It used the non-experimental methods.

3.2 Environment

A case study was carried out on five schools in Kanyenya-ini location in Kangema division Murang'a District. They are neighbors, a walking distance of about 3 kilometers from Kibutha girls secondary school, which is the researchers center, this made it convenient. The location has five secondary schools are: Kanyenya-ini secondary school, which is a girls' boarding school, Kibutha mixed Day secondary school, a mixed day school, Gitugu secondary school and Dr. Kiano Boys secondary school which admits both boarders and day scholars

3.3 Subjects

The unit of analysis was students and teachers. It was taken through purposive sampling because the researcher happened to be from the location and at the same time teaching in one of the schools.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The schools have a student population of about one thousand six hundred and nine. The number of teachers in the schools is eight four out of which sixteen are teachers of English. The samples taken for each case are given in the table below.

school	Total	Sample
Kibutha girls secondary school	730	64
Dr.Kiano boys secondary school	280	16
Kanyenya-ini secondary school	230	16
Kibutha day mixed sec.school	180	16
Gitugu secondary school	189	16
Total	1609	128

The big population of Kibutha Girls secondary school made the researcher to consider it as four smaller schools hence its big sample size compared to others .

Lottery method was used to select the one hundred and twenty eight students. To select the sample size from each school, the class numbers of students in each school per form was obtained from the class lists.

The numbers were written on pieces of papers of the same size and equivalent to the number of students per form, then folded, then placed in a container and shaken. The class teacher was then requested to pick any four; the students whose class numbers were picked were taken to be the sample by the researcher. This procedure obtained four samples per form of a small school totaling to one hundred and twenty eight samples of the students.

No experimental method was required to sample the teachers since all the English language teachers qualify for the sample.

No random sampling was required for the principal (Head of institution) because there is only one in any secondary school. All five of them were taken for convenience.

3.6 Instruments

The following instruments were used for the study:

- (I) Questionnaires

(II) Observation

(III) Record sheet

Three types of questionnaires were used. These were:

- Students' questionnaire.
- Teachers' questionnaire.
- The principal's questionnaire.

In the observation technique, the researcher got information about the physical facilities e.g. library and language used by students when they are free. She interacted with students, teachers and the principal without revealing that she was carrying out a research.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Before a visit to each school the researcher sent written letters to the principals of the five schools. The letters contained or outlined areas in which the researcher was to collect information from. On the day of the appointment, the students, teachers and principal's questionnaires were administered in the school. The researcher requested to be provided with past records of students' entry behaviour towards English as per K.C.P.E results and their corresponding performance in K.C.S.E in form four especially in English. The researcher also used observation checklist to note how the library was equipped.

3.8 Statistical Treatment of Data

The data collected was both qualitative and quantitative. The information drawn from the questionnaires was worked out. The collected data was tabulated clearly to indicate the trends, where possible the data was converted to percentages for easier depiction of the trends in performance. The data was then synthesized to make comprehensive inferences and then the appropriate recommendations.

Students responded on their attitude towards the subject and how often they use the language.

The data was analyzed to bring out the effect of teaching resources on students performance in English, effects of discipline, school management, peer influence and students entry behaviour from primary school on performance in English at K.C.S.E level.

This was used to draw conclusions, which indicated the factors leading to students' poor performance in English in K.C.S.E at Kanyenya-ini location.

School	Teachers	Sample
Kibutha Girls sec. School	7	7
Kibutha Day sec. School	1	1
Gitugi secondary school	2	2
Dr. kiano secondary school	3	3
Kanyenya-ini secondary	3	3
TOTAL	16	16

Formula

$$f/n \times 100$$

where,

f=frequency

n=total number of respondents

100=constant

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter the findings and discussions of the research are provided. It is divided into three parts. These are;

Issues that are related to students; examples; students attitude towards their school and English, how their performance change as they ascend to higher forms, views about importance of education and more so in English.

Issues to do with teachers and their teaching methodology, for example whether teaching was a career by choice, attitude towards their students, their satisfaction etc.

Issues to do with the school itself, administration and out of school factors related to parents and guardians.

The data for each part is given in form of tables. The data is interpreted according to its type.

4.1 Students issues

From the research it has been proven that students play the major role in the performance of English as a subject. This has to do with the students entry behaviour right at form one. There are other factors such as students self discipline all through as regards to academics. This can be seen as shown in the following table below;

Table one gives the distribution of marks of the sample of students admitted in Kenyanyaini Secondary school.

Table 1: Students marks on admission.

Marks out of 599	Frequency	Percentage
350 and above	10	8.1
349 – 300	23	18.5
299 – 250	68	54.8
249 – 200	20	16.1
Below 200	3	2.4
Total	124	100

Source: Field data

It is clear from table 1 above that majority of the students have been between 300 – 250marks out of 500. This makes 54.8% of the samples students. Those admitted with marks below 250 are only making 18.5% of all students admitted. Above 250marks there are 81.5% of all students sampled.

When teachers were required to rank their students, they gave the following responses;

Table 2: Ranking of the students by the teachers

Rank	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	0	0
Good	2	12.5
Average	13	81.2
Poor	1	6.3
Very poor	0	0
Total	16	100

Source: Field Data

From the above data most teachers are of the opinion that most of the students admitted are average. This is enough proof that, with adequate preparation, such students can perform fairly well in K. C. S. E. and as indicated before, this is not the case.

With regards to the entry behaviour in English the students gave the following responses to the marks they had in K.C.S.E English.

Table 3: Students' entry marks in English

Marks out of 100	Frequency	Percentage
70 and above	20	15.6
60 – 69	36	28.1
50 – 59	40	31.3
40 – 49	28	21.9
39 - below	4	3.1
Total	128	100

Source: Field data

Similarly the performance of English at the entry point in form one is equally good. The sampled student' qualify by 75%, those with over 50%. Out of this, 15.6% had 70 marks and above meaning that they have the potential in them to learn and understand English. This is not reflected by the end of form four course.

One can perform well or poorly depending on whether he/she likes the school they are in. When students were requested to give comments about the statement; like my school", they gave responses given in the table four.

Key: Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Undecided (UD)
 Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 4: Extent of students liking of their school

Response	SA	A	UD	D	SD	TOTAL
Frequency	108	18%	1	1	0	128
Percentage	84.4%	14%	0.8%	0.8%	0%	100%

Source: Field Data

The information in table four above shows that 98.4% of the students like their school. Only 1.6% indicated that they do not like their school. On the same note the students gave the following responses on the statement 'like English as a subject'.

Table 5: Extent of students like of English as a subject

Response	SA	A	UD	D	SD	TOTAL
Frequency	90	28	8	2	0	128
Percentage	70.3%	21.9%	6.3%	1.8%	0%	100%

Source: Field Data

From the above data 92.2% like English as a subject. This shows that they do not have a negative attitude towards the subject. As such they are expected to perform well in the summative examination. This means that their attitude towards English is not the cause for poor performance.

When students in sampled classes of all levels from the school were asked to respond to the statement "I used to perform better in form "than I do now". The results were as shown in the table 6.

Table 6: Performance change with form; students' response

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	66	51.6%
Agree	21	16.4%
Undecided	1	0.1%
Disagree	10	7.8%
Strongly Disagree	30	23.4%
TOTAL	128	100%

Source: Field Data

From the above, it is clear that 68% of the sampled students did better in form one than other forms. Only about 31.3% of sampled students disagreed. When the teachers responded to the statement "my students perform better as they progress to higher level classes, "they gave the results below.

Table 7: Performance change with form: Teacher's response

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0%
Agree	0	0%
Undecided	2	12.5%
Disagree	8	50%
Strongly Disagree	6	37.5%
TOTAL	16	100%

Source: Field Data

The above data shows that 87.5% of the sampled teachers said that their students do not perform better as they ascend to higher classes in their schools. This points to some factors in our school or out of them that lead to poor performance of English as a subject.

Students' own initiative in learning English

The researcher in the school she teaches decided to investigate on the learners' self initiative to learning English. She went round the school for two days at around 5:00pm when students were doing their private studies. Those who were studying English were as in the table below per different forms.

Table 8: Students' own initiative to study

Class	Form I	Form II	Form III	Form IV	Total
No. of students	34	51	35	20	130
Percentage	26.5%	31.5%	26.9%	15.4%	100%

Source: Field Data

The population of the school is 730 students. This means that only 130 students out of 730 are self-motivated as far as English is concerned. This is equivalent to 17.8% of the total population. Out of this only 42.3% are in the higher forms (forms 3 and 4). The trend that can be observed is that students lose interest in their private study of English as they progress to higher classes.

Research showed that the form Ones were in class study because they had more to cover hence the smaller percentage compared to form twos.

When students were asked to respond to the statement "I perform better in primary school because teachers used vernacular to explain", they responded as follows:

Table 9: Vernacular use and performance in English

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	12	11.1%
Agree	20	18.5%
Undecided	8	7.4%
Disagree	46	42.6%
Strongly Disagree	22	20.4%
TOTAL	108	100%

Source: Field data

The data shows that 29.6% of students did well in primary school in English because their teachers used vernacular to explain. On going to secondary schools they may find it hard to adjust to English as the official language of communication.

They have no good foundation and this means that their future performance is affected. They cannot ask questions in class because they do not know how to frame them.

Responding to the statement "I do not ask questions in English because I do not know how to frame them", students gave the following responses in table 10.

Table 10: Inability to frame questions in English

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	1	0.9%
Agree	20	18.2%
Undecided	10	9.1%
Disagree	30	27.3%
Strongly Disagree	47	44.5%
TOTAL	108	100%

Source: Field data

4.2 Issues related to teachers and teaching methods

Issues to do with teachers are equally important in the performance of English as analyzed here below. "Teaching was my first choice as a career", teachers then responded.

Table 11: Teaching by choice

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	32.2%
Agree	8	50%
Undecided	1	6.3%
Disagree	2	12.5%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
TOTAL	16	100%

Source: Field data

From the above data, there is enough evidence that those teachers like their professions since only 18.8% had not selected teaching as a career. This means that they teach from deep within their hearts.

As regards to the satisfaction with the salary that they get, they gave the following responses to the statement "I am satisfied with the salary."

Table 12: Salary and satisfaction

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	2	12.5%
Agree	2	12.5%
Undecided	6	37.5%
Disagree	6	37.5%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
TOTAL	16	100%

Source: Field data

From the above, the teachers seem not be very comfortable with the salary they earn as 70% of the sample population indicate.

This explains why some of them have ventured into businesses as a way of topping up their income. This takes some of the quality time that could be used in helping students to improve.

The teaching workload can also affect the teaching of English. The table below indicates the total workload per teacher per week.

Table 13: Teachers' workload

Workload	Number of teachers	Percentage
20 – 22	2	12.5%
23 – 25	2	12.5%
26 – 28	7	43.8%
29 – 30	5	31.2%
TOTAL	16	100%

Source: Field data

On average the load lies between 26 – 30 lessons. Taking the mid-point, this means 28 lessons per week. On average 6 lessons per day. This leaves the teacher with only 3 lessons to prepare for the six lessons. This is not enough time to do meaningful preparation. This is proven true from the response to the statement "I carry lesson plans when going to class"

Table 14: Preparation and teaching

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Always	2	12.5
Frequently	2	12.5
Rarely	4	25
Never	8	50
Total	16	100

From the above table 75% rarely carry lesson plans, meaning they rarely prepare for it though having been professionally trained to prepare one. Making of tests and learner's books becomes a problem.

Without the lesson plan the teacher may not have any specific objective he intends to achieve. He may however cover the content either very fast or very slowly, meaningful learning may not take place.

When teachers were asked "do you acknowledge that the students you have are teachable? The response was as follows;

Table 15: standards of learners in understanding English

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	15	93.7
No	0	0
I don't know	1	6.3
Total	16	100

Source: Field data

This shows that the teacher believes that their students are capable of learning hence they should give them time to explore more on what they know for themselves. (Through group discussions and individual practice). This was not the case at the ground level where teachers and learners are interacting .

In summary, for the teaching methods teachers have the following responses;

Table 16: teaching methods used by teachers

Methods	Responses					
	V.F	F	O	R	N	Total
Lecturer	8	4	2	2	0	16
Class discussions	2	4	4	6	0	16
Group discussion	2	2	9	3	0	16
Demonstration	1	1	8	6	0	16
Question – Answer	10	6	0	0	0	16
Individual practice	2	2	8	4	0	16

Source: Field data

Key: Very frequently (VF), Frequently (F), Occasionally (O), Rarely (R), Never (N)

This data indicates that, lectures, and question – answer methods are the most commonly used. These are largely teacher-centered and in most cases the learner is just a passive recipient. The learner is barred from discovering for himself/herself and retaining what has been taught. It encourages a lot of spoon-feeding.

Adequate preparation of the candidates require completion of the syllabus before K.C.S.E. teachers were requested to give their responses to the statement, "English syllabus is completed before K.C.S.E English papers". The following results were obtained;

Table 17: Syllabus coverage

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	1	6.3
Agree	2	12.5
Undecided	0	0
Disagree	11	68.7
Strongly disagree	2	12.5
Total	16	100

Source: Field Data

From the information above, it is clear that teachers never complete the syllabus to their satisfaction. Even the 18.8% who claim to have completed the syllabus before the K.C.S.E. English paper confess that they do it in bits and pieces. This means that they do not go through all the content as recommended by the K.I.E. The 81.2% which admit that they do not complete the syllabus, are a clear indication of the state in which are students are when they enter the examination room to do English. They are not aware of whether questions will come from areas that they have not covered.

4.3 Issues relating to the school itself, administration and out of school factors

From the student to perform well he/she must be present in school at the appropriate time. This means that the students must be literally in class when the teacher is teaching.

When required to state the frequency of teaching full classes or classes with over 95% attendance the response was as follows;

Table 18: Attendance

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always	0	0
Frequently	1	6.3
Rarely	2	12.5
Never	13	81.2
Total	16	100

Source: Field data

The administration is blamed because students are sometimes given punishment during class time. The principal indicated that sometimes parents fail to clear school fees on time and students are sent away. When students miss classes, it becomes very hard for them to catch up later. The concepts covered during their absence are very hard to understand without the teachers' guidance.

On the other hand, teachers feel discouraged when bright students are sent away and this way affect their teaching unconsciously.

School routine and school timetable can either be favorable or not for academic work. When teachers were requested to give their opinion about whether "the school timetable is favorable for learning English", they gave the answers in the table below;

Table 19: Favourable school time table

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	1	6.3%
Agree	2	12.5%
Undecided	3	18.8%
Disagree	10	12.4%
Strong Disagree	0	0
Total	16	100

Source: Field Data

From the table above 71.2% of the teachers agree the school timetable is not conducive for learning English. There is a general feeling that the subject should be taught when the minds are still fresh especially in the morning or after a break. There is a tendency of placing the lessons in the afternoon or just before lunch and it is presumed that the subject is easily understood. This has been discredited by the performance at K.C.S.E.

School records can be a source of information. When the records were analyzed they revealed that the turnover of English teachers is high. Out of the 16 teachers currently teaching in these schools, six just joined the schools this year, 2006 and while only three have been in the school since January 2003. This has impacted negatively on the performance of English since new teachers take time to adapt to a new environment and to study the learner. The learner on the other hand takes time to understand the teacher. Out of the 128 students sampled 16 of them were from four students who indicated that 12 of them have been taught by as many as four (4) teachers in English. This translate to one teacher per year and this is a percentage of about 12/16 (75%) students who sit for the K.C.S.E. English examinations. Teachers lose track of the students and feel demoralized. They know they will get little or no blames because when a

teacher goes away, an immediate replacement is not found. This means rearranging the time table leading to wastage of time. The timetable was found to be altered up to four times in the year.

On the issue of whether the resolutions passed during staff meetings are implemented, or those passed during departmental meetings 4/16 (25%) felt that they are, 8/16 (50%) said that they are not implemented. Another 4/16 (25%) said they are undecided because they are new to the school, when the research was carried out therefore they were unable to decide.

4.4 Evaluation

The learning cycle is incomplete without evaluation. The teachers were requested to indicate the frequency of evaluating their students. They gave the results in the table below;

Table 20: Frequency of Evaluation

Time interval	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Any other
Frequency	10	4	2	0
Percentage	25.5	25	12.5	0

Source: Field data

The information in this table shows that majority of the teachers evaluate the learners monthly. The evaluation meant in this case to a simple sitting paper or exercise apart from class assignment. Evaluation will be meaningless if not followed. Parents and guardians need to follow their students' performance in every subject.

When teachers were required to respond as to frequency of parents or guardians visit to the school to know the progress of their children's performance in English the following was obtained;

Table 21: Academic visit by parents/guardian

Indicator of Visits	Always	Frequently	Rarely	Never	Total
Frequency	0	1	12	3	16

Source: Field data

Majority of teachers said that parents/guardians rarely visit the school to see the progress of their children. Most students are therefore not motivated to work hard in English, while their teachers see no need of putting more effort other than the minimum in their work because many parents do not seem concerned. The principal also expressed similar sentiments about parents and guardians.

4.5 Students encouragement by different people

When students were asked to respond to the statement "I like using English when communicating with other students". The following responses were obtained.

Table 22: Use of English in communication

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	4
Agree	20	16
Undecided	10	8
Disagree	80	62
Strong Disagree	10	8
Total	125	100

Source: Field data

Out of the 125 responses using the frequency "much" the students get encouragement from the parents/guardians, teachers, the principal, brothers and sisters, relatives and peers in that order.

4.6 Administration

Students and teachers wanted the administration to be stricter on the use of vernacular. This is a looming problem since all other subjects are examined using English language with an exception of Kiswahili and foreign languages. Students proposed that if they were allowed to participate in the making of rules and regulations, they would be able to respect them and obey them. Without following the rules, the performance in English is and will continue to be greatly affected because the student will be under punishment more often.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with summary of major findings of the research and recommendations made by the researcher. These recommendations are divided into two namely; policy recommendation and Recommendations for further research

5.1 Summary of major findings

This study found out;

That Students contribute to their own poor performance in English because 68% of students and 87.5% percent of teachers stated that there are performance changes as students are sent to higher forms due to lack of self drive. Only 17.8% of the total population in the school was found to be studying English voluntarily during their private study time.

Teachers also are a cause of poor performance. 70% of the sample population admitted that they are not satisfied with their salary; this explains why some venture into other income generating projects at the expense of the students. 75% of the teachers have a heavy workload of between 26 – 30 lessons hence cannot prepare adequately. They also do not cover the syllabus in time. 62% of teachers evaluate students on monthly basis which is adequate for English. Teachers mostly use lecture method which is more teacher centered than learner centered.

The administration has also contributed to poor performance in English through failure of implementation of deliberations in staff meetings, sending students away for school fees as the data analyzed shows (81% of respondents confessed that, there has never been an attendance of a 95%.

The parents, guardians and government have also their small share of blame in performance. However, it is the English teacher and the students who are to blame ultimately because they spend the most time together.

5.2 Conclusion

From the research it is clear that there exist a number of factors that affect performance of English in K.C.S.E by the student from the location. Therefore the researcher has concluded that the major causes are both the students and the English teacher who contribute 60% and 35% respectively.

5.3 Recommendations by the researcher

The following are the policy recommendations the researcher has made

Guidance and counseling should be strengthened to ensure that it is there and done more regularly.

More counseling to be done to students to eradicate the belief that English is hard.

Cultivate a culture of working hard in English from early stages in secondary school.

The school administration should look for ways and means of motivating teachers so that they can be willing to look for extra-time to teach and mark assignments at night.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AYOT, H.O, (1984) **language for learning; a methodology book for English** Language, learning in Secondary schools, Macmillan.

CHIURI, J: (1995) -**Report on Education standards in secondary school. Nyandarua, Kenya:** Nyandarua district Education board and sub- Committee.

FELDMAN, R: -"Research Methodology" **understanding psychology** 4th Edition University of Massachusetts, Amherst: McGraw Hill 34p, 40p, 50p

KNEC (1996-1997) **Regulations and syllabuses** Nairobi.

MUKWA, C.W (1998):-**Educational communication technology.** Nairobi: University of Nairobi.

MWANGI,J.I (2005):-**Poor performance in mathematics.** A case study of Kanyenya-in Location, P.G.D.E project of Nairobi University.

NDERO,J.K (2002), **Causes of poor performance in science subjects.** The case Study of Kibutha girls Secondary school in Murang'a District, P.G.D.E project of Nairobi University.

NYAMBANE,O **failure of students in sciences** A survey of some problems chemistry teachers encounter While trying to teach effectively, Nairobi.The Standard 15th April 1990.

OTIENO. A **sheng, vernacular affect performance in English.** Blackboard Daily Nation Jan 25th 1997

OWUOR, T: **Poor performance** as a result of teachers not dedicated to their Studies, Nairobi. The Sunday standard, 14th April 1995.

PASSER M, W and SMITH, R. E. "Influence of group on hard work
"PSYCHOLOGY, Frontiers and applications .Amherst McGraw Hill, 2001.512p
"Attitude and attitude change "

SCHAFFER, R. T **sociology**" Hidden curriculum", 7th edition 403 p."

YUSUF, M K.C.S.E report 1989, 1992, 1993

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Transmittal Letter

May 24, 2007

The Principal,
Kibutha Girls Secondary School
P. O. Box 155,
Kangema.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY.

I am a graduating student at Kampala International University requesting for permission to conduct research in your school. I am undertaking a research entitled "Causes of poor performance in English at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination".

Thank you

Respectively yours,

.....

PERPETUA ANNE WAMBUI KIMANI

Appendix B: Questionnaires

Principal's Questionnaire.

Dear respondent,

This research is aimed at investigating factors leading to poor performance in English. Being a head of a secondary school in Kanyenyani location, you have been selected for the study.

You are requested to complete the questionnaire as accurately as you can. Your responses will be treated with strict confidence and used only for research. None of the information will be published in a manner which would enable any individual to be identified.

Looking forward to your co-operation. Thank you.

1. For how long have you been the head of the school

2. How has been the performance of the school especially in English?

3. What type of the students does your school admit?

Tick the appropriate response.

Excellent ☐

Very good ☐

Good ☐

Poor ☐

Very poor. ☐

Teacher's Questionnaire

Dear respondent,

The research is aimed at investigating factors leading to poor performance in English. It is hoped that solutions to the problems will be found. You have been selected because your school is found in Kanyenyaini location and you are a teacher of English. It is hoped that you understand the students and English better.

You are requested to complete the questionnaire as accurately as you can. Your responses will be treated with the strictest confidence and used only for research. None of the information will be published in a report in a manner that would enable any individual, school principal, teacher or student to be identified.

Looking forward to your co – operation in this.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

1(i) Teaching subjects are

.....

.....

(ii) Workload

2. Which subject did you major in at a college?

Tick where applicable.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) | Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) | English language | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) | Both | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) | Not trained | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) | Other subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ABOUT ENGLISH

3. a) For how long have you been teaching English?

.....

b) Which part of English do you find your students having difficulty e.g Grammar, Poetry, Drama, Oral literature or writing composition?.....

.....

4. Which of the following teaching strategies do you adopt while teaching English to your students?

KEY. Very Frequently (VF) Frequently (F), Occasionally (O), Rarely (R) or Never (N).

STRATEGIES	VF	F	O	R	N	TOTAL
Lecture						
Class discussions						
Group discussions						
Demonstrations						
Question - answer						
Individual practice.						

b) Which methods do you find effective in teaching English?

.....

ii) Explain your response in b (i) above.

.....

5. Do you acknowledge that the students you have can be "teachable" i.e. can understand English?

YES ☐

NO ☐

I DON'T KNOW. ☐

6. Decide on each statement below. Indicate whether your response is always (A), Frequently (F), Rarely(R) or Never (N).

Statement	A	F	R	N
I give assignments to learners				
I carry a lesson plan when going to class.				
How often do parents/guardian of your students visit the school to discuss their progress in English?				
How often do you teach classes with over 95% attendance?				

7. Besides each of the statement presented below indicate whether you strongly agree(SA), agree(A), undecided(U) Disagree(D) or strongly Disagree(SD).

Tick where applicable

STATEMENT	SA	A	UD	D	SD
My students perform better as they progress to higher levels in English.					
The school time – table is favorable for learning English.					
Teaching was my first choice as a career					
I am satisfied with the salary I get					
English syllabus is completed before K.C.S.E					

4. How do you rank the type of the students the school admits?

Tick where applicable.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	good
<input type="checkbox"/>	Average	<input type="checkbox"/>	poor

5. Use the space below for any other information not covered in the questionnaire that can help improve the performance in English.

.....

.....

Student's Questionnaire

Dear respondent,

This research is aimed at investigating factors leading to poor performance in English in the location (Kanyanyaini). It's hoped that solution to the problems will be found. Being in a school in the location, you have been selected for the study. You are requested to complete the questionnaire as accurately as you can. Your response will be treated with strict confidence and will be used for the research only, None of the information will be published in a report in a manner which would enable any individual, school, head of school, teacher or student to be identified.

Looking forward to your co – operation in this exercise.

Yours faithfully,

.....

Perpetua A.W. Kimani

Section 1: Back ground.

Form..... Year.....

Last primary school attended.

Tick where applicable

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. (i) With in the location. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (ii) Outside the location | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (iii) Mixed boarding | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (iv) Mixed day | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (v) Girls' boarding | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (vi) Boys' boarding | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (vii) Girls' day | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (viii) Boys' day. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. (i) Year of sitting K.C.P.E.....
(ii) Your K.C.P.E total marks.....
(iii) Your K.C.P.E English marks.....
3. Where applicable, indicate the occupation of the person shown below, where not applicable, put N/A
- (i) Father.....
(ii) Mother.....
(iii) Guardian.....

SECTION 2: ABOUT ENGLISH.

1 a) How many teachers have taught you English since form 1?.....

b) If more than one, have you liked the equally?

Tick where applicable.

- i. YES ☐
ii. NO ☐
iii. UNDECIDED ☐

C) If none of the above, state why?

.....

2. Alongside each of the statement presented below, please indicate with use of tick, whether you strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) or Undecided (U).

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD
I like school					
I do best in English					
I used to perform better in form one than I perform now					
I used to work harder in form 1 than I Do now.					
I don't ask questions in English Because of fearing the teacher.					
I don't ask questions in English because I don't know how to frame them.					
I like using English when communicating					
I performed well in English in primary school because teachers used vernacular to explain					
I don't work hard in English because Others say it is hard.					

I'm always in class					
No matter how I try, I cannot do well in English.					
The teacher of English interacts freely With students.					
The English teacher always marks the Assignment given					
The teacher always revises the assignment with students					
The English teacher always punishes those who don't complete their homework					
I like English					

6. To what extent do you say that the following people encourage you to work hard in English. Use very much (VM), Much (M) A little (AL), Very Little (VL), Never (N)

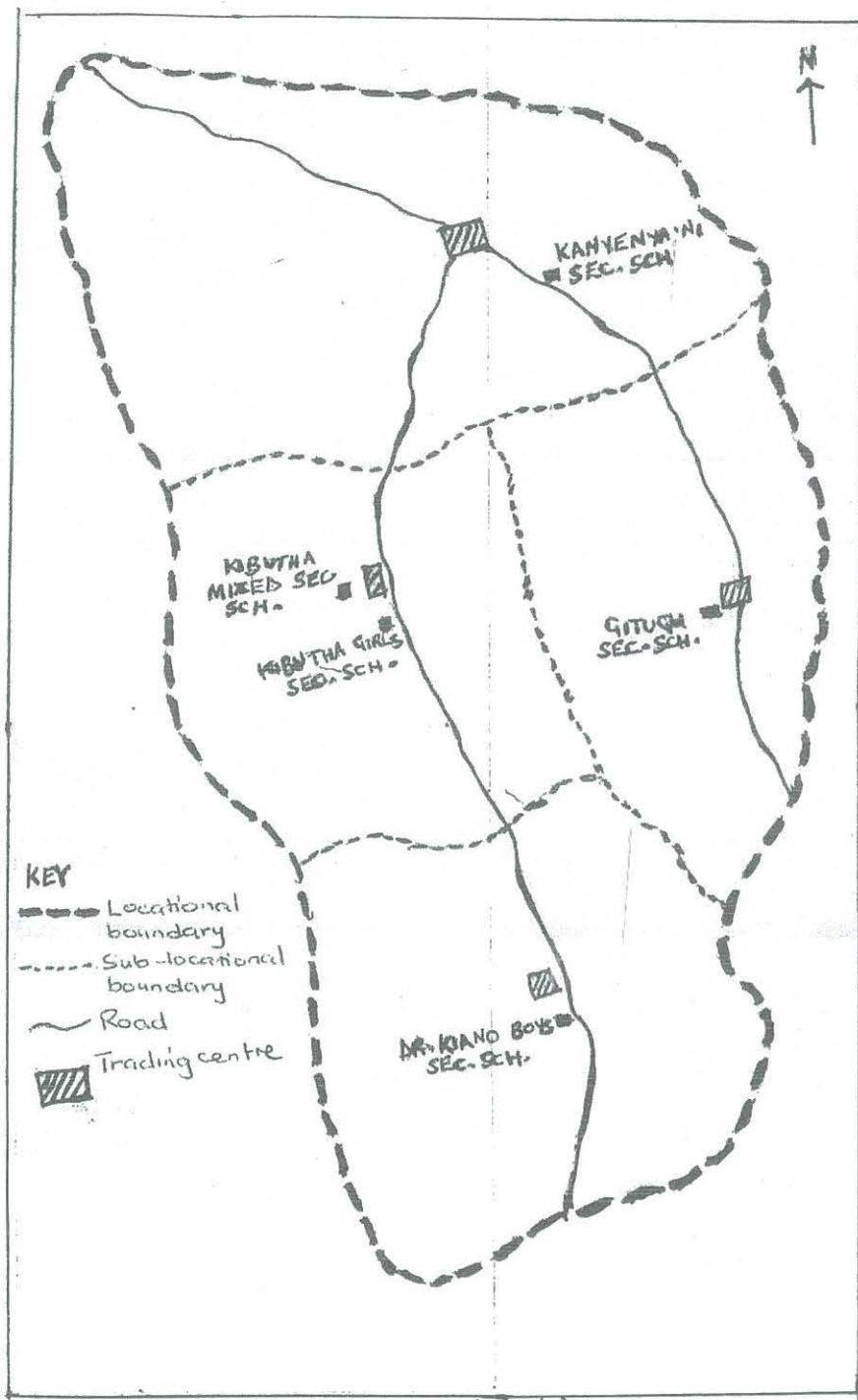
PERSON	VM	M	AL	VL	N
Parents/ Guardian					
Principal					
English Teacher					
Peers/Class – mates and friends					
Brothers/ sisters					
Relatives					

7. (i) What job/ occupation do you expect to take after your school life?
(ii) Do you think English will be useful there?
8. Is there a library in your school?
9. How many times per week do you study English as per your personal timetable?

Use the space below for any information not covered by the questionnaire so far related to the school that will help you improve in performance in English.

Thank you for your co- operation.

Appendix C: Map of the Research Environment



A sketch map of Kanyenyani location

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

NAME : PERPETUA ANNE WAMBUI KIMANI
REG.NO : BED/7062/51/DF
AGE : 43 YEARS
GENDER : FEMALE
CIVIL STATUS : MARRIED
ADDRESS : P. O. BOX 155, KANGEMA, KENYA
DATE OF BIRTH : 27/10/1963

EDUCATION BACKGROUND

COLLEGE : 1985 to 1987 Kagumo Teachers College
Diploma in Education
: 2004 – 2005 C.C.E.A Advanced Certificate in
Guidance & Counseling
SECONDARY SCHOOL : 1982 – 1983 Moi Girls High School – Eldoret.
KACE – A' Level – 3 Principals
: 1978 – 1981 Loreto High School Limuru
KCE O' Level – Division II
PRIMARY SCHOOL : 1971 – 1977 Nginda Primary School
C.P.E 34 Points.
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE : "Causes of Students' poor performance in
English at Kenya Certificate of Secondary
Examination"