

**CAUSES OF POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG STUDENTS
WITHIN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF
GACHARAGE DIVISION, KIGUMO DISTRICT,
KENYA**

**BY
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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF OPEN AND
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INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY**

APRIL, 2010

DECLARATION

I **NJORGE HANAH WANJIKU**, declare that this project is my original work and has never been presented to any other university for any academic award.

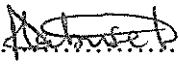
Signature 

NJORGE HANAH WANJIKU

Date 12/04/2010

APPROVAL

I certify that the work submitted by this candidate was under my supervision. His work is ready for submission, to be evaluated for the award of a Bachelor of Education of Kampala International university.

Supervisor's name... 

Mrs. Deborah Taligoola

Date... 12/4/10

DEDICATION

This work is affectionately dedicated to my Husband Samuel Mwangi and loving children Immaculate and Maxwell.

AKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I thank the almighty God for making me through this tiredous and demanding work. I thank my supervisor for guiding me during my research.

God bless you all.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the introduction of Free Secondary Education Secondary, schools in Kenya have been performing poorly in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations. Both the schools and individual Students have not yet accrued to the full benefits of FSE. This study investigated the causes of poor academic performance among Students in selected schools within Kigumo district, Kenya.

The study employed casual- comparative design that seeks to discover possible causes and effects of behavior pattern or personal characteristics.

However a rise can be realized since the teachers are well qualified and the teaching-learning materials are there though inadequate. Students need to be encouraged to work harder on their own supplement what they are taught by teachers. In addition the teaching/learning resources need to be made adequate and the school needs general improvement to be conducive to better learning.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

A number of studies have been carried out by various researchers to identify the causes of poor performance of learners in various subjects in national examinations.

Like other public examinations, K.C.S.E. is a form of summative evaluation which measures the outcome of the learning process rather than the process itself. What is deemed a fail falling below a set standard is a reflection of a disadvantaged education process Indongole (1987). Learning environments differ widely and depending on their quality, impact positively or negatively on the final examination performance. Indongole further observes that factors that affect candidates' performance in an examination can be cognitive, socio-psychological or environmental in origin, while Carron (1996) argue that it is difficult to generalize the factors and there is certainly not a single factor or few factors in isolation which explain the differences in performance between one learner and another.

Studies conducted reveal that while some factors exert their influence during the process of teaching/learning, others emanate from the home environment while others do arise as the candidate is taking the examination. This particular study was therefore meant to determine the outstanding causes of poor academic performance of Students in national examination at Secondary level within Kigumo district Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the problem

According to MOEST/UNESCO (2001), the quality of Education; some policy suggesting based on a survey of schools. Nairobi: UNESCO For a number of years, Secondary Schools in Gacharage division and Kenya as a whole have been performing poorly in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations despite the introduction of Free Secondary Education. Both the schools and individual Students have not yet accrued to the full benefits of FSE. Social economic factors have been cited mostly as the main contributor and factor leading to under performance, now that the constraint is overcome, it becomes vital to try and establish other factors contributing to under performance. This therefore led the researcher to investigate the reason behind this.

1.3 Scope of the study

The research study was conducted from August 2009 to April 2010 in Kigumo district, Kenya- where by five schools were included in the targeted sample. The schools are located in Kigumo district.

1.4 General objective

The general objective of the study was to establish the causes of poor performance among Students in selected Secondary schools within Kigumo district. .

1.4.1 Specific objectives

This study sought to:

1. Determine the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - Socio-demographic data
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Level of qualifications

2. Determine the impact of availability of teaching/learning resources and how they influence academic performance of learners.
3. Determine the effects of teacher's pupil ratio on academic performance of learners.
4. Determine the relationship between the type of school attended and Students' performance.

1.4.2 Research questions

1. Do teaching/learning resources affect academic performance of Students in the area of study?
2. What is the relationship between the number of teachers available in schools and the academic performance of learners?
3. Does the choice of schools attended influence academic performance of learners?

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings of this study may be significant in a number of ways.

First, it may provoke the need to carry out similar research in other areas of the country.

The findings may provide a springboard for further research into the area of examination performance in Secondary schools

Further still, the findings may provide leads to facilitate interventions towards improving performance in examinations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section reviewed relevant literature on causes of poor performance in selected Secondary schools.

2.1 Teaching / Learning resources

Carron and Chan (1991) carried out similar studies in China, Mexico and Guinea and their finding, concurred with those of MLA in that children from poor rural zones were found to be unable to take full advantage of the education offered to them. Amount other problems they had little or no food most of the time. Lockheed and Verspoor(1991) reporting on similar finding of a survey carried out by World Bank in India state that students who were well nourished got scores in tests that the undernourished. This implies that the quality of diet and how regularly or irregularly a student feeds has effect on the mental development and ability of a student. This translates to poor or good performance in tests.

The home environment should be secure and supportive for learner's school work. It should provide essential furniture, study room services like water and lighting, an atmosphere of encouragement and guidance. Parents' involvement in the school affairs of their children is a major factor influencing learners' performance in examinations. Parents should not only provide study facilities but also ensure that children are disciplined and their performance in tests, assignments and homework is followed up,

UNESCO(2000). Katherine Namadu for UNESCO (1991) cites the overall illiteracy of the Sub-Saharan population as major hindrance to quality education for many children. She cites examples from Mozambique where peasants were not only unable to provide material resources for study at home but also did not intervene even when their children were mistreated in schools because they did not feel competent enough to take action. UNESCO(2000) supports the view that education level of the parents has great influences in the education of their children.

UNESCO observes that parents with higher levels of education are predisposed to support the learning development of their children and have greater confidence in their capacity to support their children at psychological level. In most cases their children in household chores and working in the fields to supplement the family income such children were disadvantaged and achieved low in school. The same case applies in many Secondary schools within Kigumo district whereby, the schools are situated in a low income area; parents involve their children in working in estates during the coffee-picking season to supplement the family income. Children also lack parental encouragement to go to school. Lockheed and Verspoor (1991), state that parental encouragement is one of the main factors that account for improvement of children's test scores.

2.2 Teaching relationships and academic performance

Different schools have their unique characteristics that exert positive or negative influence on the academic achievement of the learners. Some schools are high cost as opposed to low cost ones, a factor which determines the type of facilities they have. Others are mixed while some are single sex schools. Some schools are day while others have boarding facilities. Somerst(1971) carried out a study based on Uganda elementary schools and observed that variations in performance among schools are due to differences in quality of the school. Despite the articulated education objectives and set curriculum he noted that the school attended could affect performance in examination.

In Kenya, examination results of many high cost and well-established schools are always better than those of low cost schools. Most low cost schools are poorly equipped with learning resources and facilities and in most cases they do not attract the best teachers. Studies conducted by the Wamahiu (1992) quoted in Ayoo (2002) support this view in that their findings established that poor learning environments in the former harambee schools in which the curriculum was restricted, laboratories hardly existed and most members of the teaching staff were unqualified, had markedly poor examination results.

2.3 Teacher-Pupil ratio

The quality of the learning environment at school depends to a large extent on the quality of the human resource capacity available. Teachers are the most important human resource and remain the backbone of any educational system UNESCO (2000). One of the key factors in determining examination results is the availability and quality of teachers. Trained teachers represent a significant social investment and their levels of motivation and career commitment is of concern to policy makers UNESCO(2000). Teacher quality depends on their qualification, experience and level of discipline which in turn determines the level of commitment.

The head teacher is the most important teacher in the school. The quality of the head teacher is very crucial in determining examination outcomes in the school. A good quality head teacher would be qualified and experienced in management and administration of school time and other resources. He/she is self-disciplined and committed to his/her work and ensures proper management of school time and other resources. This kind of a leader ensures that a curriculum implementation is geared towards fulfilling the goals of the school; the main one being academic achievement. The head teacher ought to ensure that the school activities are well-co-ordinated among members of the school community.

Helinger (1995) argues that the school Head is the most influential individual in a learning institution and his/her managerial skill set the benchmark, direction, tone and tempo and the learning climate.

Namadu (1991) in her paper for UNESCO/ Educational Research Priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa cited on the leading problems in Africa as a persisting shortage of both qualified and properly trained teachers. This has negative impact on the academic achievement of the children.

Kathuri (1984) quoted by Nyaga (1997) had similar finding on the effect that teacher quality has on the education achievement of children. In his study on the factors that influence performance of Students in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.P.E.) he established that the quality of teachers contributed to the nature of Students' performance in examination. He also cites the efficient use of methods and reflection of teacher quality as important factors in examination performance by Students.

On the quality of teachers, Eshiwani (1983) established that 40% of teachers in the Secondary Schools in Western Province were untrained and this had a negative effect on the final examinations.

Ndiritu (1999) has a similar view that it is important to train teachers either through the formal training or through in-service training and their desire to stay in the same work station influences performance in examinations. Lockheed and Verspoor (1991), observe that the status of teachers in developing countries is low and continues to

decline. This is manifested in low salary, poor working conditions and uncertain career path. They continue to note that the profession is unattractive and many practicing teachers after leave the job, causing teacher shortages.

Abagi and Odipo(1997) noted the same and in their report on findings of their survey carried out to establish the efficiency of Secondary education in Kenya. They state that stipulated teaching/learning time in schools is not utilized efficiently, leading to need for extra tuition in order to Students to attain better examination results. They cite various non-teaching activities that Students are engaged in including long morning assemblies, daily cleaning which take up some of the teaching time, over and above the loss of time during the first week of the term, at the beginning of every lesson in the morning, after break and after lunch. All these are a reflection of the quality and level of commitment of the teachers in a particular school.

In recent years, the impact of HIV/AIDS has negatively affected the education system particularly as it leads to chronic teacher absenteeism. According to UNESCO (2003) between twenty and thirty teachers die each month in Nyanza Province. This is not a unique phenomenon in that province. UNESCO reports that for every ten deaths in hospitals in the country two are teachers. The daily nation of 10th December 2001:7 reported that up to eighteen teachers were dying every month from AIDS-related complications.

Every year a large number of teachers reach their retirement age and when they leave majority of them are not replaced. According to the Teachers' Service Commission (T.S.C.) Retirement Record 2004, on 1st January 2004, a total of 912 teachers retired. On 1st May another 662 followed. The TSC policy allows the commission to employ only a quarter of the number required in a given region or district. This creates a large gap in the field and has a negative effect in the Students' attainment in education as reflected in poor examination results in many under staffed schools.

2.4 Choice of school attended

UNESCO(2000) notes that the availability of a range of teaching and related equipment, supplies furniture and various forms of printed media for teachers and learners is critical in facilitating the process of teaching and learning world wide. The report goes on to note that access to a range of resources and services enables teachers to enrich the teaching environment Neuman (1980) quoted by Wamai (1991) states that textbooks and allied materials are the most important consistent factor upgrading academic achievement especially in schools with less qualified teachers.

Said (1989) conducted a study in Mombasa on factors that influence performance in K.C.P.E. and established that some of the worst performing schools lacked essential facilities such as proper staffroom chairs and tables for teachers to use as they prepare for lessons. He noted that Students did not enjoy learning due to lack of comfort, and teachers were not able to give attention to individual Students.

This study is based on the classical liberal theory of Equal opportunity and Social Darwinism which asserts that each person is born with a given amount of capacity,

which, to a large extent, is inherited and cannot be substantially changed. Thus, educational systems should be designed so as to remove barriers of any nature (economic,gender,geographic) that prevent bright students from lower economic backgrounds from taking advantages of in born talents which accelerate them to social promotion.

The theorist termed education as “the great Equalizer” which would enhance life chances of those born into humble circumstances. The theory demands for further going through education at Secondary and secondary level to which access would be determined on the basis of individual merit and not on social backgrounds.

The researcher having been involved in the teaching process for a number of years concurs with this theory. By making the Secondary Education free(by the NARC Government), Kenyan children who would have otherwise never seen the door of a classroom have managed to access school and quite a number have proceeded to secondary level of education and some even further.

Social Darwinism emphasizes that every citizen should be given, through education, the social status to which he/she entitles to aptitude Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (1975). This theory observes that the provision of formal equity of access to education, by putting everybody on the “scratch” guarantees that the ensuring run is just one.

According to this theory there is a belief that social institutions such as education should in some sense attempt to treat people equally. American education Horace Mann (1996-1989) could call education the great equalizer due to case studies carried out. There are innumerable examples of people from poor families who have take advantage

of education opportunities and proceeded to obtain better jobs and higher incomes than would have taken advantage of education opportunities and proceeded to obtain better jobs and higher incomes than would have otherwise done.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods that the researcher used in carrying out the research.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. This enhanced the researcher to obtain *a better understanding of the causes of poor academic performance of Students*. The method chosen further allowed a collection of comprehensive, intensive data and provided an in-depth study on why past initiatives have not produced the desired results

3.2 The environment

The study was conducted in Gacharage division, Kigumo district whereby five schools were targeted.

3.3 The subjects

The subjects of the study were teachers and Students within the schools targeted. The respondents were drawn from the Students from standard six up to standard eight and their teachers.

3.4 The research instruments

The study was conducted using questionnaires that concentrated on three major areas namely availability of teaching-learning materials, the relationship between teacher pupil ratio and academic performance and the choice of schools attended in relation to academic performance.

3.5 Data collection procedures

The researcher had an introductory letter from the Institute of Open and Distance Learning which he presented to the area authority to obtain permission for study. This gave directive to the local administrators at grass root level for acceptance. After acceptance by the authorities, the major task of collecting data begun immediately.

3.6 Statistical treatment of data

Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the profile of Students as to age, gender and qualifications.

Formula $f/n * 100$

Where f=frequency

n=total number

100=constant

The weighted mean was used to determine the level of teaching and their effects on performance of KCSE in terms of availability of teaching/learning materials, the relationship between the availability of teachers and pupil's performance and also the type of school attended

Formula: $x = \sum x/n$ where

3.7 Constraints and ethical considerations

The researcher, being a full time school teacher also found it really difficult to double as a researcher and at the same time dispense knowledge to the learners.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a presentation, discussion of the findings. The results are presented in form of tables, frequency counts and percentages.

The following is the response rate in percentage of the sample planned and the actual responses.

Table 1: Response rate

Respondents	Sample planned	Actual response	Response rate
Teachers	60	56	93%
Students	250	200	80%
Total	310	256	82%

Source: Primary data (2010)

Therefore the response rate:-

$$\frac{\text{Actual number responded} \times 100}{\text{Planned number responded}} = \frac{256 \times 100}{310} = 82\%$$

4.2. Teachers' bio-data

Table 2: Age of the respondents

Age bracket	Frequency	% Age
23-30	16	29
31-38	28	50
39-above	12	21
Total	56	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.2.1 Age of Respondents

The results of the field study on age of the respondent from the selected schools revealed that 79% of the respondents were below 39 years, while 21% of respondents were above 39 years. This is an indication that the sample comprised young professionals who are spearheading education growth in the area of study as shown above.

4.2.2 Respondents' work experience

Table 3: Work experience of the Respondents

Years	No. of respondents	Frequency (%)
1-5	8	14%
5-10	24	43%
10-above	24	43%
Total	56	100%

Source: Primary data (2010)

The results of the field study on work-experience showed that 14% of the respondents ranged between 1-5 years and 43% of the respondents having 5-10 while 43% had 10 and above years of work experience. This signifies that information was collected from teachers with long term experience who are represented by 86% of the sample.

4.3. Students' Bio-data

Out of the 250 target Students, only 200 responded. The researcher deemed this as adequate and sufficient for the purpose of data analysis since it represented 80%.

4.3.1 Distribution by gender

Table 4: Distribution by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	110	55
Female	90	45
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

The research was carried amongst the sexes as seen from the table above. More boys were interviewed than girls. As 55% of the Students respondents were boys while 45% of the pupil's respondents were girls.

4.3.2 Age of respondents

Table 5: Age of the respondents

Age bracket	Frequency	% Age
7-9	60	30
10-12	70	35
13-above	70	35
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

The results of the field study on age of respondents, from the selected schools where 200 Students responded revealed that 35% of the respondents were 13 years and above, while 35% of respondents were between 7-9 years, while 30% were between 10-12 %. This is an indication that the sample comprised of all the target sample of Students as shown above.

4.4 Teachers analysis

4.4.1 Summary of response on whether there exists a relationship between school attended and Students performance

Table 6: Relationship between school attended and Students' performance

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage %
Agreed	40	71
Not agreed	26	28
Total	56	100

Source: primary data (2010)

Most of the respondents who responded said that there was a strong relationship between the schools attended and academic performance, and these were the majority represented by 71% of the respondents. While 28% of the respondents were of view that there did not exist any relationship between school attended and academic performance. They argued that no matter the school attended the brighter of the Students will always excel while the poor one will fail.

4.4.2 Summary of response on the factors that influence academic performance of learners

Table 7: Responses on factors influencing academic performance

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage %
Personal efforts	20	7
Available learning resources	25	44
Teachers experience	7	13
Teachers/Learners Motivation	4	35
Total	56	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

According to table 7, it clearly shown that the available learning resources are the major contributing factor that influence academic performance as it represents 44% of the respondents, 35% were of the view that teachers-learner motivation was also another major factor influencing academic performance. 13% represent respondents who are of the view that teachers experience was also a factor that influence academic performance. 7% of the respondents were of view that personal effort was also a factor contributing to academic performance.

4.4.3 The effects of teacher-Student ratio on academic performance

Table 8: Summary measuring the effects of teacher-student ratio on academic performance

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Very high	40	72
Moderate	10	18
Low	5	8
Very low	1	1
Total	56	100

Source: primary data (2010)

According to the table above, the majority of respondents (72%) who responded observed that there exists a very strong relationship between teacher-pupil ratio and academic performance. (18%) said the effect of teacher-pupil ratio on academic performance were moderate while (8%) and (1%) responded that the effect was low and very low consecutively.

Majority of the respondents were of the view that the schools should maintain the right and adequate number of teachers who in turn serve the students effectively hence recording improved performance.

4.4.4 Factors influencing performance

Table 9: Factors influencing Academic Performance

Category	Mean	Interpretation	Bank
Teaching/learning resources	1.5	Fair	2
Teachers' availability	2.0	Fair	1
School attended	1.0	Poor	3
Total	1.5	Fair	0

Source: Primary data (2010)

Table 9 shows that teaching/learning resources were rated fair. Since the introduction of Free Secondary Education, the government has tried a lot to provide schools with books for Students and also for references

Teachers' availability was rated fair and the school attended was rated poor. The tabulated results showed that the availability of teachers was rated fair followed by the teaching/learning resources and lastly the school.

We could assume that the school attended is poor may be because of its location. The parents are not well-off economically and academically to be able to support their children as required by supplementing what is lacking. The teachers are qualified and avail themselves to help the Students perform although not a hundred percent. Their availability was rated fair. This implies that there are scanty cases of absenteeism and failure to recover time lost.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses gives the deduction in form of conclusion and recommendations reached on by the researcher.

5.1 Summary

One of the main outcomes of the study is that there are challenges in the educational sector. Academic economists and international development agencies claim that an educated population is essential for economic growth and, more generally, for a higher quality of life. World Bank (2000).

Another finding of this study is that free Secondary education was impacting on the quality of education. This finding is contrary to what Mingat et al (2002) found out in Mali that in the study three quarters of the Students said the FSE strategy had been successful and that they had achieved an improvement in their work. Staff confirmed that they had seen improvement in 62% of the Students.

5.2 Conclusions

Secondary education is experiencing a number of challenges such as overstretched facilities, overcrowding in schools - especially those in urban slums, high pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) in densely populated areas, and high pupil to textbook ratios. The

introduction of FSE has put pressure on teachers as some class sizes have increased to over 100 Students.

The role of parents and communities in Secondary education is central and needs to be clarified. Prior to the introduction of FSE, it was the responsibility of parents to contribute to school building and maintenance, but most parents are currently under the impression that it is the government's exclusive responsibility to provide all the necessary resources to support the Secondary education sub-sector.

One of the eight Millennium Development Goals is that all children in developing countries should complete Secondary education. Much progress has been made toward this goal, but completing Secondary school does not ensure that students have attained basic literacy and numeracy skills. Indeed, there is ample evidence that many children in developing countries are not learning these skills despite years of school attendance. (World Bank: 2007)

5.3 Recommendations

The researcher was driven to make the following recommendations as per objectives of the study.

The Teachers' Service Commission should think of better terms of remunerating the teachers. This would be able to cater for their needs in a bid to curb absenteeism among teachers and also to motivate them to help the learners more.

Home environment should be secure and supportive for the learner's school work. Parents need to be more involved in the school affairs of their children in order to improve the learner's performance in examinations. This is to say that parents should supplement what the government is doing as far as teaching/learning resources are concerned.

For better performance in KCSE the learners should be encouraged to work hard and strive to excel in learning, attending lessons regularly do all class activities and assignments, display good behavior and be focused in academic achievement.

5.4 Areas of further research

Further research can be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of Inclusive Education in the area of study and for Kenya as a whole.

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APPENDIX 1:
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am a student from Kampala international University Institute of Open and Distance Learning wishing to collect data on the causes of poor academic performance of Students in Secondary schools within your region. The information that you will provide will be treated with a high degree of confidentiality. You are therefore requested to give your views as honestly as possible. You may not have to reveal your name for confidentiality

Part One; Bio-Data For Respondents

A) SEX

☐

Male

☐

Female

B) AGE

Age bracket	Tick where appropriate
12-16 years	
18-25 years	
26-30 years	
31-35 years	
36-40 years	
41-45 years	
46 years and above	

C) Education level

Please indicate your educational level

Educational/professional level	Tick where appropriate
Secondary education	
Secondary education	
Tertiary/college level	
University level	

Section A

1. Indicate the subjects you are trained to teach

2. For how long have you been a teacher?

Over twenty years ☐

16-20 years ☐

11-15 years ☐

6-10 years ☐

1-5 years ☐

Section B

For each of the questions in this section read the resources carefully and put a tick ☐ against the appropriate response

3.

a) Please indicate whether you prepare the following documents by ticking as many as appropriate.

Schemes of work ☐

Lesson plans ☐

Records of week ☐

Students' progress records ☐