

The Impact of Parent and Community Support on Primary Schools' Pupils Academic Achievement in Siaya and Kisumu Counties, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The performance of primary school pupils in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations in Siaya and Kisumu Counties has been unsatisfactory over the years. Most of the candidates obtain at least average and below average scores in the annual examination. This has been a cause for worry among parents, teachers and the community. The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of the influence of parents and community factors on primary school pupils' academic achievement in Siaya and Kisumu counties. The objective of the study was to: establish teachers' perceptions on whether the parent and community support determine primary schools pupils' academic achievement. The study was guided by the Transaction Theory of Teaching/Learning and General Systems Theory. The study was conducted in the counties of Siaya and Kisumu. The study employed the mixed methods approach and was conducted using descriptive explanatory survey design. The instruments used to collect data included questionnaires and interview guide. The sample was selected using stratified random sampling. Data was collected from 136 schools where 136 head teachers and 493 teachers were respondents. The researcher interviewed 36 teachers. The unit of analysis was primary school teachers. Descriptive statistics, such as measures of central tendency, counts and percentages were used to analyze the data. The study found that parenting style, social gatherings such as discos and pupils' absenteeism influenced academic achievement. It was found that since the school is a system, it has sub-systems such as parent community. These sub-systems interacted and were dependent on each other. As such, problems in one variable affected the other. For example, the post-election violence of 2008 which took place in some parts of the study area affected pupils' KCPE achievement.

Keywords: Parents, community support, academic achievement, KCPE, Political violence, elections.

INTRODUCTION

The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination was introduced in Kenya in 1985. In the almost three decades which this examination has been done in Kenya, poor academic achievement in schools has been observed all over the country. The cycle of poor achievement in KCPE has recurred every year when the results are released by Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The poor performance by pupils has led to frustrations among teachers, parents and community, because KCPE is a placement examination for secondary schools in Kenya (Adrienne, Lucas & Mbiti, 2012).

Uys (2011) has investigated the factors that influence the achievement of Grade Nine learners and found that school-related factors are to blame for poor performance. According to Uys schools

located in urban centres register poor performance because pupils are faced with many challenges such as lack of motivation to learn which affects their achievement.

Reche, Bundi, Riungu and Mbugua (2012) argue that poor performance by primary school pupils in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education can be attributed to inadequate number of teachers, inadequate learning resources, high teacher turnover rates, inadequate preparation, lack of teacher motivation, large workload and absenteeism by teachers and pupils.

Several researchers in Africa have linked poor performance in primary schools in public examinations to home influence (Makewa, Role & Otewa, 2012; Muola, 2010; Ongeti, 2008; Oluka & Okurut, 2008; Nannyonyo, 2007). These researchers argue that teacher-related factors are a determinant of performance in primary schools.

Eliot and Dweck (2005) have examined how the school environment can affect achievement of pupils. Their aim was to explain the ways in which the school environment influences pupils' achievement in primary schools. They established that the environment of the school had a profound impact on learning. Rivers (2008) posits that socialisation of learners with their families can also affect their achievement. Learners who come from authoritative homes tend to engage in learning on their own and they do experience intrinsic motivation; pupils who come from permissive homes often lack self-reliance and are therefore academically handicapped. Those who come from authoritarian families are always not independent and depend on their teachers for help and may not do much on their own. According to information from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST, 2014) pupils from Nyanza region have consistently performed poorly in Kenya Certificate of Primary Examinations (KCPE) results shows that in 2010-2012, 70% to 80% of candidates who sat for KCPE scored below 249 marks out of a maximum score of 500 marks. There is need to find out how parents and community could urgently resolve the problem to enable pupils to acquire quality primary education in Kenya (Omolo, 2010).

A number of studies have been undertaken in an attempt to explain the factors affecting academic achievement of primary school pupils in Kenya (Katana, 2007; Makewa *et al.*, 2012; Aroni, & Ibrahim, 2008). Majority of these studies have focused on exploring the influence of teachers on primary school pupils' academic achievement. Conspicuously absent is a study on the influence of parent community on pupils' academic achievement especially in Siaya and Kisumu counties. Hence there was urgent need to carry out this study.

According to the Transaction Theory of Teaching and Learning, the (output) is the measure of what the pupil has learnt, and it should be done outside regular classroom processes. According to the theory, factors which influence output include: teacher characteristics, learners' and teachers' behaviour, and community and state policies (Huitt, 1994).

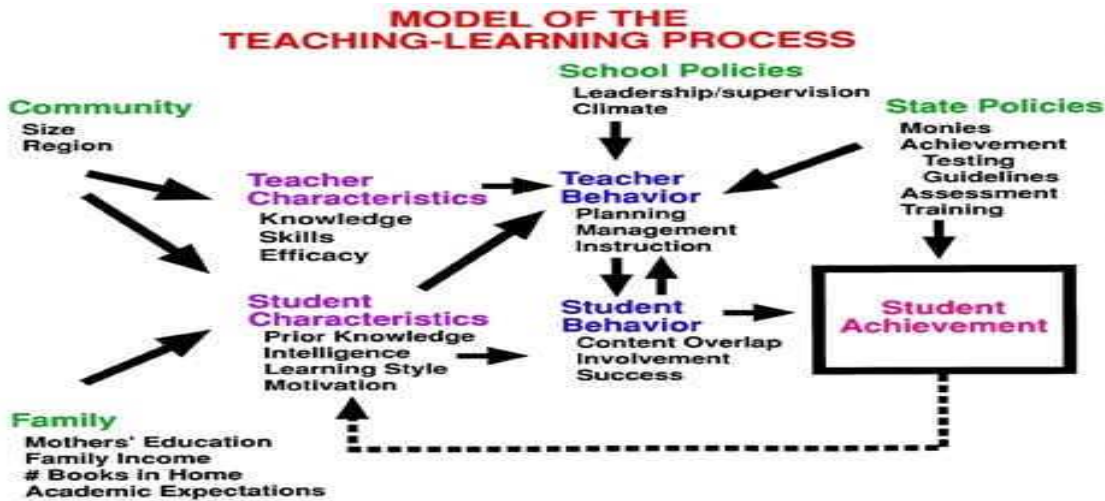


Figure 1.1: The Transactional Theory of Teaching and Learning

Source: Huitt, 1994

The study was also guided by General System Theory by Ludwig Van Bertalanffy (1971). Bertalanffy (ibid.) formulated the theory so as to account for similarities of the functioning of phenomenon in organizations such as educational entities (e.g. schools and other natural phenomena). Bertalanffy (1971) asserts that there are two types of systems; open and closed. In an open system there is a continual input and output of both energy and matter, according to Chandan (1997). The principles of this theory are as indicated below:

Each system has a sub-system.

Each system is part of the super-system.

The inputs, the processes and the outputs within a given organization form stages in the systems cycle of activities/events.

There is dependence by the organization on its environment.

There is feedback within the organization.

There is interaction between sub-systems in the system.

Social system has likely a tendency to slide towards chaos during the time of stress,

The General System Theory was used to study interrelationships and interactions between variables in Nyanza Region. According to Chandan (1997), some societies fail to understand that organisations like schools are complex systems with components that are integrated and interrelated.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Kenya, Siaya and Kisumu Counties. Kenya is found in East Africa. It has an area of about 583,000km² with a population of about 40 million. The location of Kenya is as follows: longitudes 34°E and 42° E; latitude, 4°N and 4°S. The area of study is found in Western Kenya on the northern, southern and eastern shores of Lake Victoria. The location of the study area in terms of longitudes and latitudes is as follows: longitudes 34°E and 35°E and latitudes 0° N and 1°S (GOK, 2013).

The philosophical underpinning to this study was that of pragmatism. Pragmatism prefers action to philosophizing. It endorses practical theory and what works the best in real world situation. It endorses pluralism. Pragmatism puts a high premium on human inquiry and equates it with scientific enquiry. It regards highly the reality of influence on inner world of human experience. In seeking to know how the parent and community determine learner's academic achievement, pragmatism advocates for use of a variety of methods in the enquiry so as to bring out a superior result as compared to where mono methods are used (Johnson & Onwuegbuze, 2004). In this study, pragmatism was applicable in the following ways: it allowed the use of more than one method in data collection. That is the questionnaires and interviews schedules were used to collect data.

The level of mixed methods approach employed was therefore qualitative and quantitative (Creswell, 2003). According to Johnson and Onwuegbuze (2004), the mixed methods approach is the third strategy in education research. It is defined as a class of research where the researcher combines qualitative and quantitative methods. It draws strengths from qualitative and quantitative method and minimizes weaknesses of both in the study. It also bridges the gap between quantitative and qualitative studies. Research has become complex, inter-disciplinary, and dynamic and there is need to compliment the methods (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The strategy was meant to allow the researcher to mix and match the design components that offer the best option to answer the research questions. It is a creative and expansive form of research and legitimizes the use of multiple methods of data collection. In this study, the method was to allow for use of words, charts and narratives to add meaning to the words. The numbers were also used to add precision to words and charts. The instruments used to collect data such as the questionnaire and interview guide was designed in way that it included sections which were open-ended questions and closed-ended questions (Cohen et al., 2007).

The study used cross-sectional survey where current perceptions, beliefs about academic achievement were collected from primary schools teachers' in Nyanza Region. The design of the study was descriptive survey which allowed large amounts of data to be collected over a short period of time. It provided for numeric descriptions of some part of the population. It enabled the researcher to describe and explain relationships as they are. It was chosen by the researcher because it is suitable where a researcher seeks to discover what really causes other learners to perform very well and others not to perform well. It also assisted the researcher to explore meanings, perceptions, associations, describe, explain the phenomena and observe relationships between independent and dependent variables. It assisted the researcher to collect data rapidly and understand the views of the population from part of it (Calmorin & Calmorin, 2007). Through the research design, the researcher sought to know from primary school teachers and head teachers in Siaya and Kisumu Counties how the community/parents determine academic pupils' achievement.

Target Population

The target population was primary schools in Nyanza Region. Population is defined as the total collection of elements about which we wish to make some inferences (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Unit of analysis was primary schools teachers. Teachers were selected as respondents because they are the implementers of the curriculum and are able to provide required information regarding the objectives of the study. The head teachers were included as respondents because as Chief Executive Officers of the primary schools were also in a position to provide information about

parent and community because they interact with the parents and the community mostly.

Sampling Technique

The researcher employed probability sampling procedure. The sampling technique selected for the study was stratified random sampling. The sampling technique allowed for conducting of better interview, extensive investigation and processing of the data. Stratified random sampling technique was selected over the other probability sampling techniques because it increases samples statistical efficiency, it ensures that sub groups are proportionally represented; it accounts for some sub group characteristics (Cooper & Schindler, 2008; Krysik& Finn, 2007).

The primary schools in the region were grouped into counties and districts using the existing counties and administrative districts in the region. This was done to ensure equitable representation of the population in the sample. It further ensured that there was proportionate representation in the sample with a view of accounting for differences between the districts (Oso&Onen, 2008).

In the second stage random sampling technique was used to draw samples from each district. Table 1 shows how the sample was distributed among the different districts. The following process was used to draw the random sample:

The list of schools in each district was acquired to serve as a sampling frame

The names of schools as per the number assigned for the district were randomly picked through use of a computer

Table 1: Sampling Frame of the Study

County	District	Schools		Teachers	
		No	Sample	Head Teachers	Teachers
Kisumu	Kisumu West	145	15	15	54
	Kisumu East	56	6	6	22
	Kisumu Mun	162	16	16	58
	Nyando	75	8	8	29
	Nyakach	154	15	15	54
	Muhoroni	112	11	11	40
Siaya	Siaya	133	13	13	47
	Ukwala	76	8	8	29
	Ugunja	83	8	8	29
	Gem	110	11	11	40
	Bondo	131	13	13	47
	Rarieda	119	12	12	44
Total		1356	136	136	493

Source: Provincial Director of Education Nyanza

The sample for the study as shown on table 1 above was 10% of the population of primary schools in Nyanza Region (Kerlinger, 1983; Gay & Airasian, 2003). They suggest that for a descriptive survey, 10% to 30% is adequate. In each of the sampled schools, all head teachers participated in the study

Development of Instruments

The study used questionnaires and interview schedules as the tools for data collection. The instruments were self-made. The instruments were selected because the researcher required detailed information which necessitated the use of multiple instruments to collect data in order to answer research questions.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire was the main instrument used in the study. The questionnaires were selected because the respondents were able to read and the sample was large (Oso&Onen, 2008). There were two types of questionnaires used.

Interview schedules

According to Calmorin and Calmorin (2007), interviews are used to collect information from respondents in order to arrive at a conclusion. The interview was designed in a way that it had closed and open ended type of questions in which probing was used to obtain more and deeper information. The researcher guided the interviewee through the interview process.

Validity and Reliability of instruments

Validity

Face Validity

According to Best and Khan (2006), face validity is the subjective judgment that the test appears to cover the relevant content. It also refers to the subjective judgment of assessors about what an instrument appears to be measuring, that is, on the face value. In this study, the instruments were presented to colleagues who made judgment on its validity. Their comments were used to make improvements on the instrument.

Content Validity

To examine the instrument on whether it had covered the content adequately, the instruments used in this study were subjected to an evaluation by colleagues who carefully and critically examined it and assessed the relevance of the items to the objectives of the study.

Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency of an instrument; whether or not it can be relied on to produce the same results when used by someone else. In this study, the degree of stability was determined by comparing results of repeated measurements of the head teachers and teacher's questionnaires' and interview schedules for teachers. A pilot study was conducted in Rongo District which has similar characteristics to the study area. The information gathered from the piloting was used to improve the instruments. The consistency of the questionnaire in measuring what they intend to measure was established by using the test-retest reliability coefficient, where the two sets of data obtained from the same group of respondents after two weeks during the piloting of the questionnaires was correlated using Pearson Product Moments Correlation method. The correlation coefficient of 0.78 was attained for the teachers' instruments and 0.81 for head teachers' instruments. Since the reliability coefficient for both instruments was above 0.70, which

is strong, the instruments were used to collect data for the study (Krysik& Finn, 2007).

Data Analysis Procedures

The following section presents information on data analysis procedures especially how qualitative and quantitative data analysis was carried out.

The mixed methods approach was used in data analysis, the researcher combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the analysis of data. This improved the accuracy and validity of the research findings. The blending of the qualitative and quantitative approaches sought convergence of results, brought out contradictions, fresh perspective and produced a significance product which highlighted significant contributions of both (Johnson & Onwugubuzie, 2004).

The initial step in qualitative data analysis involved reducing dimensionality of the data. This was done by arranging the data in categories and themes. The research questions provided direction in the process of categorizing the qualitative data. The process of data reduction also involved editing, coding and classifying data collected through the following instruments: interview guide. The categories were mutually exclusive.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to investigate how the parent and community factors influenced pupils' academic achievement. The results were as presented in Table 2 below. Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis of data from Likert scale.

Table 2 :Parent and Community Support

	Mean(head teachers)	Std. Deviation	Mean(teachers)	Std. Deviation
Age of the parents has negative influence on achievement.	3.62	1.155	3.50	1.407
Community negative attitude towards curriculum influence achievement	2.91	1.318	2.80	1.412
Politics negatively affects achievement of pupils.	3.64	1.170	3.37	1.349
Lack of community imposition of high goals and standards on the pupils negatively influences achievement.	3.67	1.155	4.04	1.052

Community parenting style has negative influence on the pupils achievement.	4.22	0.899	4.22	0.894
Social gatherings such as discos have negatively influenced pupils achievement.	4.54	0.903	3.97	1.287
Compliance with learning time as specified by the curriculum	4.05	1.031	4.24	0.933
Overall	3.8	1.056	3.81	1.16

Table 2 shows that social gatherings such as disco were rated highly by head teachers as compared to teachers (mean = 4.54 and standard deviation = 0.903). This shows that head teachers viewed it as a major factor which influenced pupils` performance in primary schools`. The rest of the variables were rated averagely. This could suggest that teachers did not consider them to be very influential as compared to social gatherings held in the community such as discos. Poverty in the community was another variable which was rated averagely by both the head teachers and teachers. This could suggest that they both agreed that it was a contributor to poor academic achievement (mean = 4.44 and mean = 4.34 respectively). The average rating of poverty suggests that lack of adequate financial resources in the community could be limiting the parents` ability to support the personal needs of the learner such as acquisition of uniforms, provision of adequate meals, provision of additional text books and support for primary school infrastructural development. When pupils` personal needs are not met it leads to lack of motivation and truancy.

Poverty could also contribute to many parents withdrawing their children from school occasionally to participate in child labour such as sugarcane harvesting and selling merchandise during market days at Sondu, Ugunja, Ukwala, Yala, Dudi, Got Regea, Kisendo, Got Kokwiri, Manyulia, LwandaKotieno, Miwani and other markets in the region. According to 25(70%) of the teachers who were interviewed, they indicated that during market days many pupils were absent from schools as parents required them to help them sell vegetables, fish, milk so that the parents can put food on the table. Children who don`t take part in this activity may not get food at the end of the day. This encourages absentism and generally lack of commitment to academic work by the pupils. The teachers interviewed also indicated that some pupils in class seven and eight who are HIV/AIDS orphans and are being taken care of by guardians who are advanced in years are forced to absent themselves frequently from schools so that they can look for food for their younger siblings.

Table2 also indicates that political activities had an influence on school activities (mean = 3.64). This was an average rating which could suggest that the teachers were not fully decided on this.

This could also suggest that teachers mildly viewed political interference in the schools cycle of activities. For example, during election campaigns teachers wasted a lot of time in politicking at the expense of teaching. It also suggests that political upheavals experienced in 2008 in Kenya could have contributed to poor performance (figure 4.3) in the region in 2008 (Kose, 2008).

Table 2 also shows that the teachers and head teachers rated the variable community averagely in the imposition of high learning standards (head teachers mean=3.67 and teachers mean=4.04). This suggests that the teachers viewed the community as not playing its role of setting learning/achievement standards for its children. If this is done, it could help the pupils to be self driven in their studies. The community could achieve this by organising itself so that it organises its own education days, develop community libraries and expose pupils to local models to inspire the pupils. This can help the schools to do very well in examinations. The results from the table further shows that community parenting style has influence on teaching and learning (mean = 4.22). This could suggest that community does not used appropriate parenting styles such as authoritativeness; use of other styles such as permissiveness encourages pupils to be less serious with their learning.

This suggests that parent community behaviours such as allowing social gatherings such as discos/dances and the parenting styles have influence on pupil achievement. They encourage absenteeism and lack of concentration in schools by pupils.

These findings confirm assertions in the General Systems Theory that there is dependence of the organization on its environment. The school system depends on the community to provide it with pupils who are well behaved and disciplined. If this is not done, the school will have very poor raw materials to work with and results will be poor. These findings indicate that the community and parents have profound influence on achievement of schools. This can be observed from the strong agreement among the respondents (table 2). This shows that teachers on their own cannot do much without the support of the parents. It is the responsibility of the parents to acquire for the pupils facilities like books which are not provided by the school.

In the interview conducted by the researcher, 36(100%) majority of the teachers indicated that many parents could not control their children, this contributed to high rate of absenteeism especially during market days. This high rate absenteeism affected pupils' achievement. They strongly felt that the head teacher needs to work with the community to solve this problem.

Performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Examinations

The study also sought information about primary schools' performance in KCPE between 2007 and 2011.

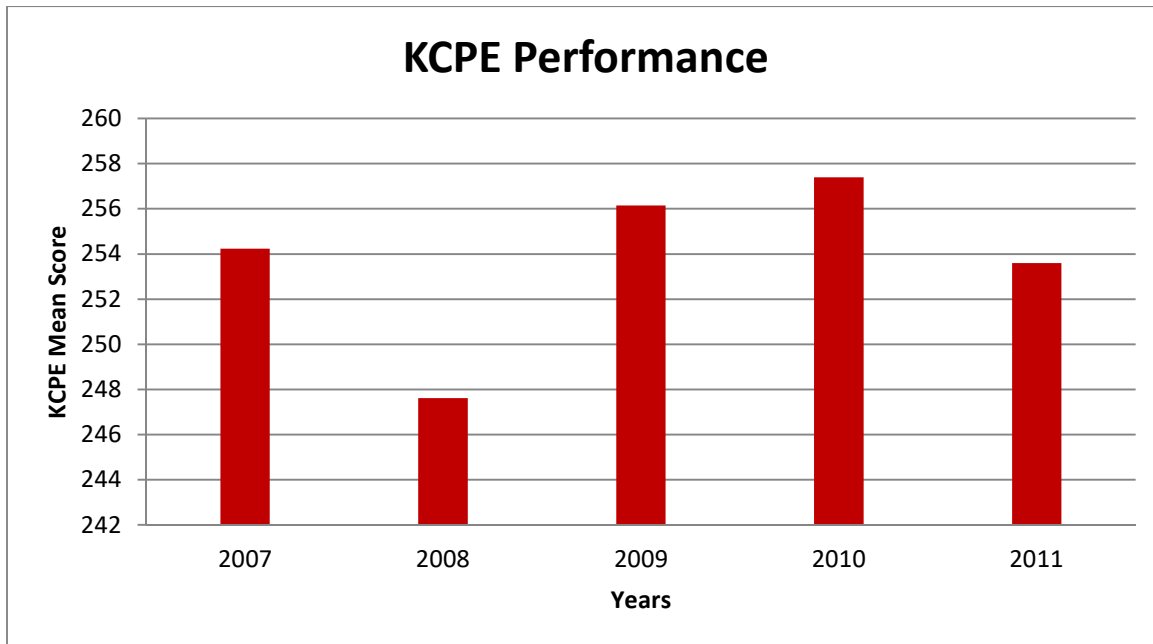


Figure 1: KCPE Performance results 2007 to 2011

Figure 1 shows that mean marks for KCPE were: 254 for 2007; 247 for 2008; 256 for 2009; 257 for 2010, and 253 for 2011. The figure also shows that schools' performance in KCPE was highest in 2010 with a mean of 257.38; the poorest performance was in 2008 with a mean of 247.60. Figure 4.4 indicates that the performance of KCPE in Kisumu and Siaya counties has been fluctuating over the 5 year period. This finding about KCPE results in 2008 is linked to average/high rating of the political activities (table 2) to be influencing pupils' achievement. This suggests that during the post-election violence of 2008 teachers could have been engaged in politicking at the expense of teaching. It could also suggest that the class of 2007 was not adequately prepared due intense political activities which took place that year.

These findings are consistent with observations made by Mose (2008) who indicates that the post-election violence of 2007 to 2008 greatly affected learning in Kenya. It was especially intense in Central Nyanza Region. According to Omolo (2010), Luo-Nyanza used to be academic powerhouse from independence up to mid 90's. Pupils' from primary schools' in Nyanza were always ranked among the top in the country. Since then, the performance has dipped. It is only very few schools which appear among the top primary schools in the country. In order for a school to be top ranked in Kenya, the primary school must attain a mean score of 390 and above.

The findings on Table 2 are consistent with observations made by Wanyonyi (2010) who indicates that socio-cultural activities in the community such as discos, weddings and burials can have a negative effect on education. Similarly, Keriga and Bujra (2009) observe that it is the responsibility of parents to provide pupils with basic needs such as food, uniforms and learning materials. Moreover, Otieno, 2008 and Omolo, 2010) indicates that academic achievement of primary schools can be affected if there are political and religious interferences in the management of

primary schools by the community. They observe that clanism can also be a major problem in the running of schools especially when the community prefers their own to be the head teacher.

Majority 30(83%) of the teachers interviewed asserted that social events such as discos affected pupils learning in the following ways; many pupils who attend social gatherings such as discos are tired by the time they come to school. It also contributes to sex escapades which affect female pupils; moreover, pupils do not have time do assignments.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Arising from the findings, it can be concluded that parents and community have been a determinant of achievement in primary schools in Nyanza region due to: poor control over their children by allowing them to attend social gatherings such as discos when schools are in session, this promotes pupils absenteeism from school as they are tired the next day and cannot concentrate in their lessons. It also contributes to pupils dropping out of school as some become pregnant after engaging in sex during such events. Poor provision of educational materials required in primary school curriculum implementation by parents such as classes at the expense of their children's academic achievement has also contributed to poor academic achievement. It can further be concluded that the relationship between community/parent variables also contributes to poor pupils' achievement. It can further be concluded that the dominant community/parent variables which affected primary pupils' academic achievement were community parenting style and social gatherings.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusions that have been made, the following recommendations can be made: The community should be sensitized about the need to support schools by providing human/physical resources which are inadequate such as: Putting up classrooms, Hiring additional teachers, To provide quality facilities like desks, To provide instructional materials. The social gatherings such as discos conducted when schools are in session, which interfere with pupils' learning and achievement should be controlled. The discos which are mostly held when there is a funeral in the community should be controlled in a way that only people who have completed school are allowed to attend this event, which is normally held at night. During such nights many young people engage in drinking and sex activities which derail their ability to focus on their studies. The community and teachers should work together to ensure that pupils join primary education at appropriate age and sit for KCPE at an appropriate age (14-15yrs) for them to perform well in KCPE. To control pupils' absenteeism, the community to address things which contributes to pupils' absenteeism such as child labour, they should avoid using learners during school days to sell merchandise in markets. The Community should identify alternative economic activities to involve pupils and which will not interfere with pupils' education. Aged parents/care giver/guardians that may not be able to control the children under their care but are in primary schools should be assisted to do so. School related variables which influence pupils' absenteeism such as teacher absenteeism should be addressed. Child friendly schools concept should be aggressively implemented to enhance good teacher/pupil interaction. Head teachers should hire

experts during parent meetings in the schools to educate parents about the following: Parenting style, adoption of parenting styles suitable to the personality of each of their children. The community should address poverty related issues which causes absenteeism such as lack of: food, text books.

Suggested Areas for Further Research

Studies should be carried out to investigate Parents' apathy towards pupils learning in primary schools.

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