

Full Length Research Paper

An evaluation of factors that affect performance of primary schools in Kenya: A case study of Gatanga district

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Accepted 30 May, 2013

Recently, the Kenyan government reaffirmed its commitment to enabling majority of its citizen's access to education through establishment of free primary education program and subsidizing secondary education. However, despite all these efforts, the education sector continues to face myriads of problems, major one being skewed performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and Kenya certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) across the many regions of the country. Gatanga district in Central province is one of the many districts witnessing poor performance in KCPE over the last eight years. As such, this study was designed to find out the underlying issues leading to poor performance in KCPE in the district with special focus on all primary schools in the administrative unit. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population was primary schools in Kenya and the study population is public primary schools in Gatanga district. A census approach was used to select all the 56 public primary schools. A questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. Data was qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The major findings were that Gatanga public primary schools were overwhelmed by the high number of students coming with the introduction of free primary education. Discipline of pupils was found to have minimal influence on KCPE performance while stakeholders' support was deemed necessary to supplement school administrations' activities. The study concludes that introduction of free primary education in Kenya has greatly affected teachers' teaching workload, hence poor performance schools. The study recommended employment of more teachers by the school boards to supplement the government-employed teachers as well as frequent in-service trainings for all teachers.

Key words: Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), Kenya certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), competitive edge.

INTRODUCTION

Access to primary schools has improved rapidly throughout the developing world since 1990, but learning outcomes have lagged behind (World Bank, 2006). Despite the fact that it is desirable to avoid a trade-off between quantity and quality, poorly managed rapid

expansion approaches can undermine improvement in learning outcomes.

In Kenya, primary education is provided in partnership by the government, communities, parents, private entrepreneurs and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

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Primary school education is designed for eight years and the official age cohort is 6 to 13 years although in some cases average children are enrolled. In 2002, there were about 6.3 million pupils (49% girls) enrolled in 18,000 primary schools of Gatanga district. At this level, the government meets costs associated with teacher remunerations, supervision, inspection and management in public schools (Onsomu et al., 2004). The Government of Kenya has heavily invested in education, given its role in spurring national development. The money spent on education has continued to go up over the years to match the increased school enrolment at all levels. In an effort to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) objectives by the year 2015, the government adopted the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP) in 2005.

Statement of the problem

Education has always been an important asset and is regarded as a key human development index. Various states and governments globally spend a large share of their budget on education sector as part of their strategy to achieve the millennium development goal of education for all (World Bank, 2006). In Kenya, this effort is further amplified by the government's initiative to enhance literacy through the introduction of Free and compulsory Primary education in 2002 (GoK, 2010). This is cost sharing approach where the government offer tuition and other stakeholders are also expected to make some contributions. In the year 2010, the government increased its expenditure on education by 17% (GoK, 2010). However, despite these massive efforts, the introduction of free primary education has led to deterioration of performance in public primary schools in Africa.

According to the report by UNESCO (2005), out of the 35 schools surveyed, an overwhelming majority (62.8%) of schools in sub Saharan Africa are very far from achieving the goals of education for All (EFA). In addition to the funds through the free primary education initiative, the government of Kenya has also been funding education sector through the constituency based devolved funds referred to as constituency development fund (CDF).

According to Odhiambo (2009), the problem of poor performance is deeply rooted in management practices which will have to change if the targets in education sector are to be realized. Neagley and Evans (1970) were of the view that effective supervision of instruction can improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Absenteeism and lateness to school by pupils are reported as most assuredly related to poor performance in school (GoK, 2008). Etsey (2005) established that the effect of lateness and absenteeism and irregular school attendance is that material that is taught will be difficult to understand when studied on one's own.

Continued missing of classes also results in stagnation and falling behind in content and knowledge learning (Odhiambo, 2009). At the institutional level, school committees and Board of Governors for primary and secondary schools should undertake management respectively. Households and communities also play a significant role in the provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure, instructional materials and equipment. The Parents associations, though not provided for in the Education Act, support the financing of the institutions (Onsomu et al., 2004). Odhiambo (2008) further argues that there is urgent need to undertake comprehensive evaluation of teachers in public schools, simply because their professional performance cannot be separated from their pupil's outcomes. He adds that there is need to invest regularly in the development of teachers, as teachers need access to continuous and effective updating and updating systems. This study therefore will investigate the factors affecting the performance of primary school education in central province of Kenya with a specific look at Gatanga District.

Objective and research questions

The overall objective of this study was to establish factors that affect performance of public primary school education in central Kenya with a case study of Gatanga district

We investigate the following research questions:

1. How does management of learning activities affect performance of public primary schools in Gatanga District?
2. How do discipline issues affect performance of public primary schools in Gatanga District?
3. How does lack of support from stakeholders affect performance of public primary schools in Gatanga District?
4. How does lack of capacity development of teachers affect performance of public primary schools in Gatanga District?

Scope of the study

The study covered Gatanga District in central province of Kenya. The scope only covered public primary schools. The following factors were highlighted; supervision of schools, administration of school, stakeholders support, skills and capacity of schools administrators.

Justification and implication of the study

The government has injected a lot of money for free primary education. Gatanga constituency development

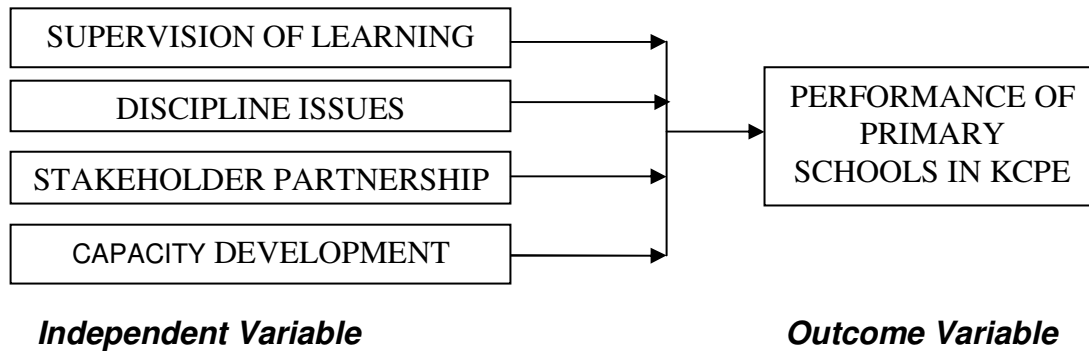


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of relationship between independent and outcome variables.

fund has also allocated substantial amount of money to improve education. Despite efforts put up to promote education in primary schools, Gatanga district continue to perform dismally. In fact the District has consistently been ranked last in the past eight years within the larger Thika District. This study will help stakeholders in the district to identify areas of intervention to help increase the performance of primary schools in Gatanga. This will play a great role in helping the community address socio-economic problems such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity, excessive consumption of alcohol among others which can be attributed to performance in schools. The study will also contribute to human resource development, which is significant to the overall country's economic development. Further the study will be used for literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual framework

The framework of this study is based on the relationships of the independent variables (supervision of learning, disciplinary issues, stakeholder partnership and capacity development) and the dependent variable which is the performance of public primary schools in Kenya (GoK, 2008). These constructs and relationships are presented in Figure 1.

Supervision of learning and performance

According to IPAR (2008) the bureaucracy in the management of education has been found to be ineffective. Field education officers are often not adequately empowered to perform their duties. Officers from the line ministry's headquarters spend funds meant for use in the field to implement education programs on administration. They are paid to go to the field and do what Field Officers

should be doing. This practice renders Field Officers ineffective and puts those at the headquarters, inefficient as they are, out of their offices most of the time. The work of officers at the Ministry's Quality Assurance and Standards (GAS) Department is often hampered by many actors that include inadequate legal provision, which limits the enforcement of inspection reports, inadequacies in requisite skills, lack of definite staff development policy and inadequate budgetary allocations and tools. The capacity of management authorities such as Boards of Governors and Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) is under the spotlight. If these bodies included people who can monitor and evaluate what goes on in schools, it would be possible to contain indiscipline. It is often reported that some of the members of these important bodies have no knowledge or skills to enable them to understand the dynamics of curriculum implementation, let alone school management. Political patronage, the culture of absenteeism among school administrators, and failure to recognize the role of parental and societal advice, has a combined effect of immensely contributing to damaging school growth (IPAR, 2008). Neagley and Evans (1970) were of the view that effective supervision of instruction can improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Etsey et al. (2004) in a study of 60 schools from peri-urban (29 schools) and rural (31 schools) areas in Ghana found that academic performance was better in private schools than public schools because of more effective supervision of work.

Disciplinary issues and performance

According to IPAR (2008), Education and training should integrate social responsibility, including nurturing our cultural heritage, spiritual values combating drug and substance abuse, sensitivity to the spread of human calamities like HIV and Aids, developing positive attitudes to work, promoting gender equity, as well as care for the vulnerable regions and group. Absenteeism and lateness

to school by pupils as most assuredly related to poor performance in school. Etsey (2005) established that the effect of lateness and absenteeism and irregular school attendance is that material that is taught will be difficult to understand when studied on one's own. Continued missing of classes also results in loss of content and knowledge. Pupils will lose in terms of what was taught. The result is that assignments and exercises will not be properly and correctly done. The consequence will be low academic performance.

According to a recent study in western Kenya by the International Child Support Fund, on average 20% of public primary school teachers are always absent compared to six per cent of their counterparts in private schools. They rationalize their absence from school with claims that they were away trying to supplement their income - the salary from teaching cannot sustain their livelihood. Before the Ministry of Education slapped a ban on tuition in school few teachers missed classes because the hard cash was an incentive. Teachers' absence from class hurt student, especially those in public schools who continue to perform poorly in national examination thus they cannot compete favourably with their counterparts in private schools (<http://www.eastandard.net>).

Stakeholders support in education

In Kenya, nearly 73% of the government's social sector spending — and 40% of the national recurrent expenditure — goes to education. Additionally, households spend between 5 and 7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education. Despite the heavy spending on education and training, the measurement, monitoring and evaluation of how goals are achieved and sustained is ineffective Kenya's education system is fraught with persistent challenges that affect access, equity, relevance and quality (IPAR, 2008). Primary and secondary education management aspects fall under the Education Act that provides guidelines on the establishment and development of schools, their management and administration, curriculum development and teacher education. The Teachers' Service Commission Act covers the legal framework on teacher registration, recruitment, deployment, remuneration and discipline. The Kenya National Examinations Council Act provides for the conduct of public examinations and certification in all schools and institutions outside university education (Onsomu et al., 2004).

Capacity development of teaching staff

Many studies find that teacher training is important. Some of these studies find the pre-service education and training matter, while others seem to indicate that in-service training could be more effective. The evidence is

somewhat complicated and mixed, no doubt varying by the quality of research design and data, but the overall suggestion is that better trained teachers are more effective in terms of cognitive achievement. However, it does not really appear necessary to have university educated teachers in primary schools in low-income countries. Nor is it necessary to have a very long duration teacher training college (more than 2 years) course after secondary. For the early grades of primary, it is often sufficient and more cost-effective to give a one-year pre-service coupled with well designed in-service follow-up and support (Verspoor, 2003). Three key issues for teacher effectiveness are identified in the World Bank 1990 policy paper based upon an extensive literature review: knowledge of subject matter; pedagogical skills; and teacher motivation, of which salary is only one part. Harbison and Hanushek (1992) and Kingdon (1996) found that tests measuring teachers' knowledge of mathematics are significant determinants of the achievement of students.

Education theory and philosophy suggest that teachers who are skilled in active-child-centered methods of teaching produce better learning results, especially when it comes to the capacity of students to apply knowledge as opposed to just memorizing facts and names of concepts. Abadzi (2002) and Pandey (2000) cite the use of "joyful learning" methods as an example of the child-centered approach and there is some limited evidence to believe that it is working. Finally, apart from salary, low teacher morale is due to poor working conditions and lack of administrative and community support (Heneveld and Craig, 1995), much of which could be rectified without significant financial expenditures. Odhiambo (2008) argues there is urgent need to undertake comprehensive evaluation of teachers in public schools, simply because their professional performance cannot be separated from their pupil's outcomes.

Determinants of performance in primary schools

Many studies have examined how total resources devoted to education or resources per student affect education outcomes. Other studies have sought to define the dimensions of quality education. For example, the World Bank's Primary Education Policy Paper (1990), based in large part upon a comprehensive review of research up to that time, and identified five principal contributors to primary education effectiveness: (1) curriculum, (2) learning materials, (3) instructional time, (4) classroom teaching, and (5) students' learning capacity. According to IPAR (2008), access, equity, curriculum relevance and quality challenges have characterized Kenya's education system over the years.

Despite efforts by various stakeholders, including the government, to minimize the negative effects of these factors, the internal and external efficiency of the

education are questionable. A number of 'Commissions' and 'Ministerial Task Forces' have been detailed to review education sector policies. Examples include, those chaired by Simon Ominde, Peter Gachathi, C.B. Mackay, James Kamunge, and Davy Koech. There have also been innumerable Task Forces, among other efforts. The findings from these initiatives have not been used as expected and recommendations either ignored completely or implemented only in part. Eshiwani (1983) found that some of the factors determining performance in primary schools in Kenya included; efficient leadership in the school administration, educational facilities, educational needs of students, preparation and homework of students, characteristics of teachers in terms of behavior and professionalism, social influence, class sizes, streaming effect, amount of time allocated to teaching and learning, environmental factors affecting achievement.

Empirical review

According to a Task Force Report (February, 2009) by Thika District Education Board on "*Causes of Poor KCPE Academic Performance in Thika District and Municipality*," some of the causes of poor performance were: lack of teachers commitment in class; lack of parental care and advice; lack of teacher supervision by head-teachers; lack of regular pupils' supervision by teachers; negative attitude by teachers and other stakeholders; lack of teamwork amongst teachers; high rates of school drop-outs; absenteeism and lack of commitment by pupils; insufficient learning materials; poor management of schools; low teacher-pupil ratio; lack of the spirit of competition amongst pupils and schools; external and political influence of appointment and transfer of head-teachers; inadequate syllabus coverage; overcrowded classrooms due to Free Primary Education. In a study, "*Elusive Search for Quality Education: The Case of Quality Assurance and Teacher Accountability in Kenya*", Odhiambo faults the Government for incompetence and unfocused approach to education. He notes that the underlying cause of poor quality education in Kenyan schools is not the performance of teachers per se, but deeply rooted management practices and Government policies which will have to change if this dream is to be realized.

Studies done in the 1980s indicate that teachers' education and certification have a positive association with children's score on achievement tests (Heyneman and Loxley, 1983). Behrman and Birdsall (1983) used teacher qualifications as an indicator of school quality and showed that it affected the rate of return in the labor market in Brazil. Other studies have looked at teacher qualifications in terms of levels of education, such as university degree versus lesser education levels.

Hanushek (1994) in his review of studies reported that

35 of the 63 studies give a significant positive affect for teacher's education, 26 no significant effect, and 2 significantly negative. According to a research done by Thika District Education Board through a task force, *on causes of poor KCPE academic performance in Thika District and Municipality (2009)*, causes of poor performance were grouped in to; School administration and management factors, teacher factor, pupil factors, parental factors and environmental factors. This task force report recorded that the consistent message from the views of each stakeholder, that is, pupils, teachers, head teachers and parents were different on the causes of poor and declining performance in KCPE in Thika district, the overall effect was a case of passing on the blame from one group to the other.

Study Gaps

In Kenya, several studies on education have been done (Eshiwani, 1983; IPAR, 2008; Odhiambo, 2008; Onsomu et al., 2004; Thika District Education Board, 2009). Most of these studies have just mentioned the factors affecting performance of education without analyzing them in detail. In context, these studies have also not been specific to Gatanga District. The presence of all or some of the factors identified above may have resulted in the poor academic performance of pupils in Gatanga District. However, evidence of the availability of these factors as well as other factors need to be obtained. The purpose of this study therefore is to have an in-depth analysis of the factors that are responsible for the poor academic performance of pupils in Gatanga District, that is, poor management of learning activities, undisciplined pupils, lack of stakeholder support, and inadequate skills among teaching staff.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study used descriptive research design to establish administrative factors affecting performance of primary schools in central province of Kenya. According to Cooper & Schindler (2001) descriptive study is concerned with finding out who, what, where and how of the variables, which was the concern of this research. Kothari (2004), descriptive research is concerned with specific predictions, with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individual, group or situation. In this study, poor performance was the situation under investigation. The design was preferred since it is carefully designed to ensure complete description of the situation, making sure that there is minimum bias in the collection of data and to reduce errors in interpreting the data collected.

Population

The target population of this study was central province primary schools. The population of the study included the district of interest which is Gatanga. The list which contains all the names of all the

public primary school in the district was sourced from the office of the District Education Officer, Gatanga. This formed a census inquiry.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study adopted a census approach since all public primary school which stood at 56 were studied. According to Kothari (2004), a census inquiry involves a complete enumeration of all items for study. Kothari notes that in a census inquiry, it can be presumed that when all items are covered, no element of chance is left and highest accuracy is obtained. Census survey was adopted on this study since the universe under investigation was a small one, that is, 56 teachers which formed the respondents - one from each of the 56 public primary schools in Gatanga District.

Data Collection Procedure

The study collected both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through an interviewer administered questionnaires which contains both closed and open ended questions. This was expected to facilitate collection of accurate information and clarifying them appropriately. The questionnaire were developed and circulated to the respondents at their work stations. The questionnaire was preferred because of its ability to collect data from a large group within a short period. On the other hand, secondary data was collected using reviews from both local, regional, national and international documents as well as research literature. The literature and related documents were collected from various sources such as library references, journals and internets and any other relevant databases.

Data analysis and presentation

Based on the nature of the questionnaire, both quantitative and qualitative data was generated. The data collected was cleaned to look for the emerging patterns, coded and systematically organized in accordance with the emerging patterns that facilitated analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data was operationalized by categorizing, tabulating and recombining evidences to address the research questions. Quantitative analysis was presented through tables and graphs and inferences made from them. Descriptive data was presented by use of prose.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Management of learning activities

Administrative support

As the study was a census of all the schools in the district, more than half (57%) of the schools were found to have inadequate administrative support staff, whereas below half (43%) of the respondents were reported to have inadequate support staff. This can be attributed to the introduction of free primary education which saw high increase in students' enrollment with un-proportional increase in number of teaching staff, hence the poor performance. According to IPAR (2008) the bureaucracy in the management of education has been found to be

ineffective. Neagley and Evans (1970) were of the view that effective supervision of instruction can improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Population of pupils in school

On the population of the pupils in primary schools in Gatanga, there was reported a divided capacity of pupils in the schools. Majority (70%) of the schools were said to have between 251-500 pupils, while a few 20% of the schools had between 501 and 750 pupils. A partly (7%) of the schools reported a capacity of between 751 and 1000 pupils, whereas few (3%) of the schools had pupils' population of below 250. This is an indication of high populated school systems which compromises on the effective management of classes thus leading to decline in academic performance.

Plans for further enrollment

This question sought to find investigate the plans for further enrollment of the students. Overwhelming majority (82%) of the respondents said there were plans for further enrollment of students, while about a few (18%) of the respondents said that such plans were not there. This shows that the primary schools were expecting more students to enroll with the continued existence of free primary education.

Workload for the staff

Majority (54%) of the schools reported an average of 30 to 40 lessons per teacher per week. Nearly half (45%) of the schools studied had an average of 21 to 30 lessons per teacher per week, while about 2% of the schools had 11 to 20 lessons per week per teacher. This shows that teaching workload in these schools is greatly affected as majority of teachers are allocated between 30 and 40 lessons a week, which is difficult to manage. According to Adams (2013) teaching occupations overload some teachers making teaching one of the most stressful occupations in the UK, with rates of suicide running at a third above the national average.

Management of workload

The question sought to find out whether the teachers were able to manage their week's workload. More than half (55%) of the respondents interviewed said that the teachers found there week's workload not manageable, while the other 45% said their workload was manageable. According to Hannagan (2002) heavy workloads stress out the brain more than the body and having too much work to do demoralize teachers by making them feel

powerless and sinking. He added that it frazzles them by depriving them of sufficient time to organize and manage their thoughts which may affect the performance of students.

Involvement in extra duties

This question also sought to find out whether the teaching staff was involved in other activities apart from teaching. Nearly all (98%) of the respondents said that the teachers were involved in other extra activities besides teaching, while about 2% said they were not. This may explain the failure by some teachers to complete their week's workload in time.

Visit of school inspectors

There were varying periods reported for visits by the schools inspectors to primary schools in Gatanga district. Majority (61%) of the respondents reported that the inspectors visited once per term. A few (14%) of the respondents said that inspectors visited once per year, a partly (9%) said once per month, another 9% said twice per term, while few (7%) talked of twice per year. Asked about the adequacy of the inspectors' visit, majority (71%) of the respondents said that the inspectors' visits to primary schools in Gatanga were inadequate, while the other 29% of the respondents said the visits were adequate. Schools inspectors are supposed to oversee the effective management of school in order to bring about quality education outcomes. According to Odhiambo (2009), the problem of poor performance is deeply rooted in management practices which will have to change if the targets in education sector are to be realized. The work of officers at the Ministry's Quality Assurance and Standards (GAS) Department is often hampered by many actors that include inadequate legal provision, which limits the enforcement of inspection reports, inadequacies in requisite skills, lack of definite staff development policy and inadequate budgetary allocations and tools (IPAR, 2008).

Discipline issues

Indiscipline cases

According to the study, majority (70%) of the respondents said that there were reported indiscipline cases in the schools, while the other 30% said there were no indiscipline cases reported in their schools.

The question sought to find out the types of indiscipline cases registered in the school. According to the findings, the magnitude of the cases reported was small as only dishonestly and absenteeism was reported. According to

a Task Force Report by Thika District Education Board (2009) showed that causes of poor performance which are related to indiscipline were: lack of teachers commitment in class; lack of parental care and advice; lack of teacher supervision by head-teachers; lack of regular pupils' supervision by teachers; absenteeism and lack of commitment by pupils; and students behavior in class. According to GoK (2008), absenteeism and lateness to school by pupils are reported as most assuredly related to poor performance in school. Etsey (2005) established that the effect of lateness and absenteeism and irregular school attendance is that material that is taught will be difficult to understand when studied on one's own. Continued missing of classes also results in stagnation and falling behind in content and knowledge learning (Odhiambo, 2009).

Disciplinary committees

This question sought to investigate the existence of disciplinary committees in the schools. Majority (75%) of the respondents said there were such committees, whereas 25% thought otherwise. According to GoK (2008), at the institutional level, school committees and Board of Governors for primary and secondary schools should undertake management respectively.

Working of the disciplinary committees

When asked how the disciplinary committees work, the respondents posted a divided opinion. Nearly half (43%) of the respondents said that the disciplinary committees evaluate the cases and advice the head-teacher for action. A further 36% said that the committees are supposed to offer guidance and counseling on the indiscipline cases. Etsey (2005) established that on average 20% of public primary school teachers are always absent compared to six per cent of their counterparts in private schools. He added that teachers' absence from class hurt student, especially those in public schools who continue to perform poorly in national examination thus they cannot compete favourably with their counterparts in private schools.

Other ways of handling indiscipline cases

This question sought respondents' opinions on other existing ways of handling indiscipline cases in schools. According to the respondents, there were other ways of handling the indiscipline cases. Handling of the discipline issues by either head-teachers or class-teachers was each cited by the same percent of twelve-and-half (12%). This shows a small percentage of indiscipline handling by the mentioned group. In at shell the head teachers and

teachers are supposed to be in front line in ensuring students is disciplined. The low percentage of the teachers' and head teachers' involvement is an indication of high levels of indiscipline in area of study which may be a contributing factor to the poor performance of students.

Involvement of head-teachers in handing indiscipline cases

An overwhelming majority (80%) of the respondents said that head-teachers help handle indiscipline cases of high magnitude in their schools. The other 20% of the respondents said that head-teachers help implement recommendations of disciplinary committee in their schools. Asked whether head-teachers get cooperation from the teaching staff, all respondents (100%) said that the head-teachers did get cooperation.

Level of support from other education stakeholders

Administrative problems

This question sought to find out whether head-teachers experience administrative problems in running the schools. Majority (66%) of the respondents said they did experience problems, while 44% thought otherwise. This may be attributed by lack of competence in school management.

Stakeholder support

This question sought to establish whether lack of support from other stakeholders affects performance. Most (27%) of the respondents cited the zonal education officials as giving support, 25% said provincial administration gave support, while 13% said the parents gave support. World Bank (2006) recommendations that education stakeholders should be in front line in supporting the running of the school. They added that there is a need for sound political and institutional analyses, including, the incentives faced by officials and teachers to improve quality; accountability and supervision systems that cover learning outcomes in disadvantaged community' schools; and cost-effective monitoring and evaluation systems that track learning.

Level of support from PTA

This question sought to investigate the level of support given to the school administration by PTA. A simple majority (39%) of the respondents felt that they fairly often receive support from the PTA, while 32% reported an often support. A further 29% rated the support they

received from PTA as very often. This shows at least, there was some support from the PTA to the school's administration. The capacity of management authorities such as Boards of Governors and Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) is under the spotlight. These bodies include people who monitor and evaluate what goes on in schools and it is often reported that some of the members of these important bodies have no knowledge or skills to enable them to understand the dynamics of curriculum implementation, let alone school management (IPAR, 2008).

Level of support from Ministry of Education

This question sought to investigate the level of support accorded to the school administration by the Ministry of Education. More than half (54%) of the respondents said the support was often, 29% said fairly often, 16% very often, while 2% said there was no support at all. A report by GoK (2010) has shown that the Government of Kenya has heavily invested in education, given its role in spurring national development; the money spent on education has continued to go up over the years to match the increased school enrolment at all levels; and in an effort to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) objectives by the year 2015, the government adopted the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP) in 2005.

Level of support from provincial administration

The respondents were also asked to give their feelings about the level of support accorded by the provincial administration to the schools. About 48% of the respondents said the support was fairly often, 32% said the support was often, 14% very often, while 5% said there was no support at all.

Level of support from politicians

This question sought to investigate the level of support given to the school administration by the politicians. More than half (55%) of the respondents felt that they fairly often receive support from the politicians, 25% rated the support as often, 13% said there was no support at all, while 7% had a very often support from the politicians. This is expected because of the community development fund which largely targets educational projects. In Kenya, this effort is further amplified by the government's initiative to enhance literacy through the introduction of Free and compulsory Primary education in 2002 (GoK, 2010). This is cost sharing approach where the government offer tuition and other stakeholders are also expected to make some contributions. In the year 2010, the government increased its expenditure on education

by 17% which is a significant increase within short time duration (GoK, 2010). In a study, "*Elusive Search for Quality Education: The Case of Quality Assurance and Teacher Accountability in Kenya*", Odhiambo faults the Government for incompetence and unfocused approach to education. He notes that the underlying cause of poor quality education in Kenyan schools is not the performance of teachers per se, but deeply rooted management practices and Government policies which will have to change if this dream is to be realized. Political patronage, the culture of absenteeism among school administrators, and failure to recognize the role of parental and societal advice, has a combined effect of immensely contributing to damaging school growth (IPAR, 2008).

Level of support from parents

The respondents were further asked to give their feelings on the level of support accorded by parents to schools. Nearly half (45%) of the respondents said the support by parents was very often. A further 30% of the respondents said the support was fairly often, 23% often; while 2% said that there was no support at all. On stakeholder support, it was found out that school's administration received least support and collaboration from the relevant stakeholders, that is, parents, political leaders, Ministry of Education and provincial administration.

The extent of skills and capacity development for school administrators

Adequacy of in-service training

Asked whether the in-service trainings for teachers were adequate, an overwhelming majority (80%) of the respondents said the trainings were not adequate, while a partly (16%) felt the trainings were adequate. Further asked to give reasons why they thought the in-service trainings were inadequate, a simple majority (34%) of the respondents said that there was little time for the trainings, 20% said that there was no follow-ups or monitoring, 16% cited the frequent changes in curriculum, while 11% of the respondents talked of lack of finances.

Importance of in-service trainings

According to the study almost all (93%) of the respondents said the trainings were of help, while 4% said such trainings were of no help to teachers. Education theory and philosophy suggest that teachers who are skilled in active-child-centered methods of teaching produce better learning results, especially when it comes to the capacity of students to apply knowledge as

opposed to just memorizing facts and names of concepts. Abadzi (2002) and Pandey (2000) cite the use of "joyful learning" methods as an example of the child-centered approach which has been found to bring good performance in schools.

Role of Ministry of Education in capacity development

Sixty six percent of the respondents said that the ministry was playing its active role in developing staff's management skills. A further 30 % said the ministry was not playing its active role in developing management skills for its staff. The ministry did this by organizing seminars on management skills for the head-teachers, as cited by 64% of the respondents. There are different ways in which the literature has shown that the government through the ministry of education has enhanced capacity development. For instance, Education Act that provides guidelines on the establishment and development of schools, their management and administration, curriculum development and teacher education; The Teachers' Service Commission Act covers the legal framework on teacher registration, recruitment, deployment, remuneration and discipline; The Kenya National Examinations Council Act provides for the conduct of public examinations and certification in all schools and institutions outside university education (Onsomu et al., 2004).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Learning and performance of public primary schools in Gatanga district

The findings show that a higher percentage of the schools reported to have inadequate administration and teaching staff. This greatly affected their teaching workload as majority of teachers were allocated between 30 and 40 lessons a week, which was difficult to manage. Failure to manage a week's workload means some classes are not taught. The role of education officers was almost absent. This explains the poor performance of the schools in KCPE in Gatanga. This shows that adequacy of learning equipments highly affects performance of primary schools in KCPE in Gatanga.

Discipline and performance of public primary schools in Gatanga district

On discipline issues in primary schools, the study found out that few indiscipline cases were reported. The reported cases were minor as only dishonesty and absenteeism were the only reported cases. This could be attributed to the existing structures of dealing with

discipline issues as it was found out that majority of the schools in the area have disciplinary committees in place. Head-teachers only handle cases of higher magnitude. The findings of this study do not show certainly that discipline influences performance because, despite the few and minor indiscipline cases reported, performance of primary schools in KCPE in Gatanga was poor.

Stakeholders support and performance of public primary schools in Gatanga district

On the question of the level of support from other stakeholders, the study found out that parents did not adequately collaborate with schools administration as expected. The parents were blamed for frequent absenteeism when required to be at various meetings. The stakeholders said to be offering support to the schools in the area included Parents Teachers Associations, Ministry of Education, provincial administration and political leaders. Pupils were also said to be interacting with the public during schools' academic ceremonies, public days' celebrations and during co-curricular activities like sports.

Teachers' capacity development and performance of public primary schools in Gatanga district

The findings of the study shows that, despite the reported importance of in-service training to the working efficiency of the teaching staff, such trainings were almost absent for staff in primary schools in Gatanga District. In cases where trainings were done, they were scarce and short, thus not playing the role of equipping teachers with relevant skills for better delivery of their services. The trainings given were reported to be inadequate since there were no follow ups on the same. The trainings given were also not in line with the ever-changing curriculum of the schools. Other collaborators in capacity development of the teachers besides the government departments included KNUT, JICA and other NGOs.

Conclusions

The introduction of free primary education in Kenya has greatly affected teachers' teaching workload in the schools, hence poor performance public primary schools in Kenya. There were difficulties in managing workload because the increase in admission of pupils in public was not proportional to increase in number of teachers at the same time. Moreover, the ways of dealings with disciplines cases highly affects discipline of pupils in schools, hence performance. The schools that had well laid structures of dealing with indiscipline cases like involvement of head-teachers and school committees, reported minimal and petty cases of indiscipline. In cases

where there was co-operation among different stakeholders in the running of schools, there was an overall satisfaction among the school heads of such schools. Such satisfaction was expected to translate into more commitment by the teachers, hence better performance of both teachers and the pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study proposes that other stakeholders in the education sector, especially the PTAs, employ more teachers to help take care of the ever-increasing demand of free primary education. There is need to streamline disciplines in schools and need to improve relationship between the schools' administrations and stakeholders,

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