



An Analysis of the Extent to Which the Economic Factors Affect the Academic Performance of Learners in Public Primary Schools in Matete Sub county, Kakamega County Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Studies worldwide have revealed that economic factors do affect academic performance of pupils. In Matete Sub County, the performance of pupils at KCPE has been declining from the year 2012-2015, with a mean of 248. What was unknown the extent to which economic factors affect the academic performance of primary school pupils in public primary schools in Matete sub-county. The objective of the study was to establish extent to which economic factors affect academic performance of pupils in Matete sub-county, Kenya. A conceptual framework was used to show the relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study population comprised of 49 head teachers, 49 senior teachers, 75 standard eight class teachers, 1759 class eight pupils, and 1 Sub County Quality Assurance Officer. The study sampled 44 head teachers, 44 senior teachers and one sub-county Quality Assurance Officer who were selected through saturated sampling technique. Sixty-three class eight teachers were selected through simple random sampling technique. It also comprised 525 Standard 8 pupils, who were selected through stratified sampling technique. Instruments for data collection were questionnaire, interview schedules, focus group discussions and document analysis guide. Face validity of the instruments was ascertained by experts in educational administration. Pilot study was carried out among 15 pupils, 5 head teachers, and 5 senior teachers. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha of 0.7 was found; hence the instruments were reliable. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The qualitative data was transcribed and categorized on an on-going process as themes and sub themes emerge. The study showed that economic factors were rated at 3.81, hence, affect performance. The study provides the educational stakeholders with hints on the extent the economic factors affected the academic performance of pupils, hence should be given attention accordingly.

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Introduction

Education is recognized by the United Nations as one of the basic human rights and considered to be instrumental to achieving social equality and higher economic growth (UNICEF, 1992). The need for better attainment of education was realized far back in 1990, at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand when some 150 organizations agreed to "universalize primary education and massively reduced illiteracy by the end of the decade" (UNESCO, 2009).

In 2000, ten years later, the international community met again in Dakar, Senegal, and took stock of many countries being far from having reached this goal. They affirmed their commitment to achieving education for all by the year 2015, and identified six key measurable education goals. The six goals are: to expand early childhood care and education, provide free and compulsory primary education for all, promote learning and life skills for young people and adults, increase adult literacy by 50%, achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015 and improve the quality of education. According to Jean-Claude Guillemard 2010, the

principal actors in EFA are governments and civil societies at the National level.

The introduction of free primary education in January 2003, following the passing of children Act 2001, has led to vital educational achievements. Enrolment in public schools increased significantly from 5.9 million in 2002 to 6.9 million in 2003, a 17% increase. Despite FPE making it easier for pupils to access education, the performance at K.C.P.E has not improved. Mwendwa (2011), in her study found out that FPE has led to decline in academic performance. Her study however did not look at the extent other government policies affect performance, it only examined FPE. This is the knowledge gap which this study tried to establish. It is therefore clear that the major impact of FPE is on access since the learner's enrolment improved tremendously. But the higher number of learners constrained learning facilities and compromised standards of teaching, hence leading to decline in performance.

Economic factors affect the students' performance in the national exams. Basil (2007), points out that poor parental care with deprivation of social and economic needs of a child

usually yield poor academic performance of a child. He believed that good parenting, supported by strong economic background could enhance strong academic performance of the child. His study however wanted to establish factors influencing students' academic performance in Nigeria. This study tries to establish the extent these economic factors affects pupil's academic performance in Matete sub-county.

Even in countries where primary education is free, as it is in Kenya today, there remain many costs, for example registration and exam fees, the costs of transport to school, uniforms and school meals and in kind payments such as labour provisions by parents (Watkins, 2000). To meet the above requirements, schools frequently send children home; in the process such children miss lessons hence affecting their performance. Inability to pay these costs can lead to drop out and wastage. The findings of Watkins however are confined to the factors leading to drop out and wastage of girls. This study further investigated the extent the economic factors affect the academic performance of pupils as a knowledge gap.

According to Kibera et al (2007), the language spoken at the homes of the parents from high economic class is often the medium of instruction in schools hence children from this class have an advantage over children who speak mother tongue at home. They point out that parents from high social-economic status are able to buy their children books which parents from the low economic status cannot afford. The above study dwelt on how the socio-economic factors influence the performance of pupils. This study however, besides examining the extent the socio-economic factors affect performance, also looked at the extent other factors like government policies and school factors affect the academic performance of learners.

Gakure (1977, cited in Kibera & Kikomoti, 2007), revealed that wealthier and better educated parents sent their children early to private nursery schools and create conducive learning environment at home. This put their children at an advantage in school work compared to children of poor parents. The occupation status of parents determines student achievement. Kibera and Kikomoti's study was on sociology of education in Africa. It studied on how wealthy parents sent their children to schools and create conducive environment at home, hence contributing to the child academic progress. On the other hand, this study tried to investigate the extent the socio-economic factors contribute to the academic performance of pupils.

In his study of the relationship between academic achievement, motivation and home environment among standard eight pupils in Machakos district, Muola (2007), found that parents in high occupational status were able to provide necessary learning facilities and assist the child with homework. Muola study was on the relationship between academic achievement, motivation, and home environment. But this study tried to establish the extent this economic factors affect the academic performance of pupils.

Parental education and family SES level have positive correlations with the student's quality of achievement (Caldas & Bannkston, 1997; Jeunes, 2002; Parelius, & Parelis, 1987; Mitchell & Collom, 2001; Ma & Klinger, 2000). The students with high level of SES perform better than the middle class students and the middle class students perform better than students with low level of SES (Garzon, 2006; Kahlenberg, 2006; Kirkup, 2008).

The achievement of students is negatively correlated with the low SES level of parents because it hinders the individual

in gaining access to sources and resources of learning (Duke, 2000; Eamon, 2005; Lopez, 1995). Low SES level strongly affects the achievement of students, dragging them down to a lower level (Sander, 2001). This effect is most visible at post-secondary level (Trusty, 2000). It is also observed that the economically disadvantaged parents are less able to afford the cost of education of their children at higher levels and consequently they do not work at their fullest potential (Rouse & Barrow, 2006). Although primary education in Kenya is free other costs like registration for exams, buying uniforms, payment for PTA teachers and so on, can affect the performance of pupils from poor families.

Research design and Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Research design refers to all the procedures selected by the researcher to be followed for studying a particular set of questions or hypothesis. It spells out how the causal relationships between variables or phenomena are to be explored. According to Kothari (2003), research design constitutes the blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. The major purpose of descriptive survey is description of the state of affairs as it exists. The study was carried out in Matete Sub County, Kakamega County. Matete Sub County was carved out of Lugari district in June 2009. It borders Lugari and Kakamega North sub-counties to the East, Bungoma East sub-county to the North and West and Kakamega North and south. The study population included 49 head teachers, 49 senior teachers, 75 class eight class teachers, 1759 class eight pupils, and one Sub County Quality Assurance Officer. Matete sub-county has 49 public schools. The grand study population was 1926 people.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The research population and sample selected is indicated in the sample frame below.

Sample Frame

Table 1. Showing the research population and the sample selected.

Category of Respondents	Target Population	Sample size	
		F	%
DQAO	1	1	100
Class 8 Boys	840	260	30.1
Class 8 Girls	919	265	28.8
Standard C/Teacher	875	63	84.0
Senior Teachers	49	44	89.8
Head Teachers	49	44	89.9

Source: Researcher.

Krejcie and Morgan table (1970) was used to arrive at the sample size. Out of a total population of 1759 class 8 pupils, including 260 boys and 265 girls who were selected through stratified sampling technique. Out of a population of 49 schools in Matete Sub County 44 had reached class 8. Of these, 44 head teachers, 44 senior teachers and 63 class 8 teachers, were selected through simple random sampling technique using Krejcie and Morgan table. One Sub County Quality Assurance officer was selected through saturated sampling technique. This is a non-probability sampling procedure in which members of a target population selected is too few to make a sample out of them (Borg and Gall, 1996). The head teachers, senior teachers and Pupils who will be included in the pilot survey will be excluded from the study sample. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interview schedules, focus group discussions

and document analysis guide. Validity of a test is a measure of how consistent a test measures what it is supposed to measure (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). The framing of the questions will to a large extent determine the success of what the researcher is looking for, so the instruments have to be clear, hence there is need to consult experts to verify them before carrying out research. Experts in Educational Administration at Maseno University were consulted on the face validity of the tools to be used for data collection. Reliability is a measure of how consistent the results from a test are, after repeated trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). According to Kerlinger (1993) reliability refers to the consistency that instruments demonstrates when applied repeatedly under similar conditions. The reliability of the instruments was carried out by administering a pilot survey. Pilot survey was carried out among 15 pupils (8 boys, 7 girls) and 5 Head teachers representing between 1-10% of the target population (Kothari, 2004). Similar items were administered on the above respondents twice to gauge the consistency in their response. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha of 0.77 was found. The findings indicated therefore that the instrument was reliable.

Findings and Discussions

This study sought to determine the extent to which economic factors affect academic performance of pupils. Head teachers were asked to rate the extent to which economic factors affects pupils' academic performance. The responses were as shown in Table below.

From the Table 2, the head teachers were asked to rate the extent to which the ability of parents to buy paraffin for use by their children for evening studies affected academic performance. The rating of head teachers was that, 14 (31.8%) head teachers felt it highly affects, 18 (40.9%) it affects, 7 (15.9%) it moderately affects while 5 (11.4%) rated that it slightly affects. This gave a mean of 3.93. This means that the inability of parents to buy paraffin for their children affects their performance in examination. The means of light is not there, hence the pupils cannot revise their work in the evening leading to poor performance.

According to the Head teachers, most parents are not able to buy paraffin for their children for evening preps. This affects the academic performance of the pupils. When the question was put to pupils, most of them said that their parents are not able to buy paraffin hence they cannot revise and study in the evening leading to poor performance. Lack of paraffin for learners to do their studies in the evening indicates the level of poverty in the family. Poverty indicates the level to which an individual does without resources.

Poverty directly affects academic achievement due to lack of resources available for student's success (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Interview schedule reveal that poverty, unemployment and land size contributes to poor performance. One class 8 teacher observed "Most parents have small sizes of land hence cannot provide basic necessities like paraffin. Although the inability to buy paraffin does not apply to all families, because some families are able to provide paraffin and even others have electricity, but it was found that we have families that are not able to provide paraffin to their children, hence retards their academic progress.

Question item two sought to find out the extent to which the use of electricity as a source of power affects their academic performance. The analysis of results revealed that 32 (72.7%) head teachers rated that it highly affects, 8 (18.2%) it affects, 3 (6.8%) it moderately affects while 1 (2.3%) it never affects. This gave a mean of 4.61. This implies that lack of electricity highly affects performance of pupils in examination. A significant number of the Senior teachers and of the standard 8 teachers who were interviewed agreed that most pupils do not use electricity for their preps at home." This may be attributed to the poverty of their parents hence they cannot afford to meet connection fees. This hampers studies in the evening and hence their academic performance", asserted one senior teacher. On the other hand, from the focus group discussions, a good number of class 8 pupils concurred that most of their families are not connected to electricity, hence hinders effective studies in the evening.

Schneider (2002) agrees that obviously students cannot study unless lighting is adequate and that there have been many studies reporting optimal lighting levels. The consensus of these studies is that appropriate lighting improves test scores, reduces off task behavior and plays a significant role in student achievement.

Question item three sought to find out the extent to which parents supplementing pupils with reading materials affect their academic performance. The analysis of results revealed that 20 (45.5%) head teachers rated that it highly affects, 19 (43.2%) that it affects, 3 (6.8%) that it moderately affects while 2 (4.5%) rated that it slightly affects. This gave a mean of 4.30. This means that the inability of parents to buy supplementary books affect academic performance of pupils in examination.

Head teachers and teachers were in agreement that most parents do not buy supplementary books for their pupils hence hindrances to their academic progress. A good number of the pupils agreed that their parents buy for them supplementary books However, about a half of the pupils

Table 2. Head teacher responses on the extent to which the economic factors affect academic performance of the pupils (n = 44)

Statement	Highly Affects(5)		Affects(4)		Moderately Affects(3)		Slightly Affects(2)		Never Affects(1)		Total Score	Mean Rating
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Ability of parents to buy paraffin.	14	31.8	18	40.9	7	15.9	5	11.4	0	0.0	173	3.93
Pupils' use of electricity for their evening preps.	32	72.7	8	18.2	3	6.8	1	2.3	0	0.0	203	4.61
Ability of parents to buy supplementary books for their children	20	45.5	19	43.2	3	6.8	2	4.5	0	0.0	189	4.30
Ability of Parents to provide food to pupils	10	22.7	12	27.3	13	29.5	9	20.5	0	0.0	119	2.70
Ability of Parents to provide basic needs for their children	11	25.0	12	27.3	10	22.7	10	22.7	1	2.3	154	3.50
Overall Mean												3.81

Key: F=Frequency, % = Percentage, Arabic numbers (1-5) = Rating

Interpretation of mean ratings:

1.00- 1.44 =, Never Affect, 1.45- 2.44 =, slightly Affect, 2.45- 3.44 =, moderately Affect, 3.45-4.44 =, Affect.

disagreed, meaning that a good percentage is still disadvantaged in their academic progress due to lack of supplementary reading materials. Children from rich families are advantaged because their parents support them in their academic work by buying for them the supplementary books, but those from poor families entirely relies on what schools provide or borrow from the children from the affluent families.

Question item four sought to find out the extent to which provision of breakfast and supper to their children by parents affects their academic performance. The analysis of data revealed that 10 (22.7%) head teachers rated that it highly affects, 12 (27.3%) that it affects, 13(29.5%) it moderately affects while 9 (20.5%) it slightly affects. This gave a mean of 2.70. This means that it moderately affects the performance of pupils.

From the responses of head teachers one can infer that most families are not able to provide both breakfast and supper to their children. Although we have those families that can provide these meals to their children, there are those that cannot. Learners cannot study effectively when they are hungry leading to poor performance. Interview schedules for the senior teachers and class 8 teachers reveal that some children come to school without taking breakfast. This affects their concentration. A senior teacher said that "some pupils sleep on empty stomachs". Although a significant number of the pupils said that they get breakfast and supper at home, a notable number do not. This is a factor which can affect their concentration in class.

Question item five sought to find out the extent to which parental provision of basic requirements affected academic performance. The analysis of data revealed that 11 (25.0%) head teacher rated that it highly affects, 12 (27.3%) felt that it affects, 10 (22.7%) that it moderately affects, (27.3%) it slightly affects while 1 (2.3%) it never affects. This gave a mean of 3.50; it means that it affects pupils' academic performance. This implies failure to provide basic needs affects the performance of pupils.

Head teachers disagree that most parents provide basic needs to their children e.g. soaps and sanitary towels. On the other hand; most of the pupils, agree that their parents provide their basic needs. This response could be the pupil's appreciation of their parent's efforts whatsoever, in meeting their basic needs. It can also be as a result of the fear to expose their parent's economic status. The above findings are in agreement with Eamon (2005) who found out that academic achievement of students is negatively correlated with low social economic status of the parents, because it hinders the individual in gaining access to sources and resources of learning.

From the interview schedules, poverty was identified as a major challenge and a factor that affects academic performance. It was observed that most parents have low income, hence cannot afford to pay for internal examinations promptly. Internal examinations are used to acquaint the pupils with examinations. According to one class 8 teacher "poverty, unemployment and land size is the contributing factor. Most parents have small size of land, hence cannot provide basic necessities like paraffin." Another class 8

teacher said "many pupils do not have reliable sources of food, lighting and study room." Learners are also engaged in economic activities at the expense of learning. According to one senior teacher, "learners engage in petty business activities like trade hence less concentration on academic work."

Overall mean of the extent to which economic factors affect the academic performance of pupils was at 3.81. This means that economic factors affect the academic performance of pupils. Therefore, economic factors have a bearing on the academic performance of pupils, hence should be addressed by both the government and parents. Poverty of parents was identified as a major contributing factor. Poor parents are not able to feed their children. Above all, poor parents are not able to buy supplementary books for their children and provide conducive study environment for their children. Other economic factors that came up from the interview schedules affecting academic performance include; Child labour. Child labour is rampant in maize plantations, stone harvesting and chipping. This is done to meet the basic expense of studying. According to one senior teacher "many learners absent themselves from school especially during planting, weeding and harvesting of maize and sugar cane hence there is no consistency in learning.

From the above reactions, it's true that the economic factors have far reaching implications on the academic performance of pupils.

Economically endowed parents are able to feed their children well, provide them with the basic needs, and above all buy for the supplementary reading materials and examinations. Such parents are able to provide conducive and stimulating learning environment for their children. For instance, they are able to provide electricity and even study room for their children. They set targets for their children and even motivate them. In homes where parents are poor, the situation is the opposite of what we have in rich families. Meeting of the learner's basic needs is a problem, let alone buying the basic learning resources. Some of the children are even told to go and provide labour in the maize and sugar cane plantations, petty trade and business, stone harvesting and chipping to raise the income of their families or meet their day to day needs. All this is done at the expense of learning. Some even absent themselves from school. Some of them absent themselves from school to raise some income for their families. The situation in low income families is deplorable and stressful for the pupils, hence not conducive for successful learning, hence can affect their academic performance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study established that, economic factors affected the academic performance of pupils, being rated at 3.81. Rich parents are able to provide for the learning needs of their children leading to improved performance. Poor parents are not able to support the learners materially, leading to poor performance. Poor parents cannot afford to feed their children, buy paraffin, nor access electricity to their homes nor even buy text books and revision materials for their children. This hinders the academic progress of the pupils. Most families live on less than a dollar per day. Hence these families are below the poverty line. By living with less than a dollar a day,

families are not able to afford decent food and cannot afford to have both breakfast and supper and also being able to supplement the books bought in the school by the government. The economic factors also got an overall mean of 3.81. This implies that it affects academic performance. The various economic aspects that affect academic performance were the use of electricity, the buying of supplementary materials and the ability of the parents to buy paraffin for use by their children. The study recommended that The national and county governments should come up with economic policies that will empower people such as subsidized farming, provision of soft loans, reduced taxes and marketing of farm products for farmers.

Extension services for farmers should be revived so the farmers are educated on the best farming practices. Traders should also be educated on successful business practices and be given soft loans to expand their businesses. These measures should be undertaken to economically empower the parents.

The sub-county administrators should ensure that children are not subjected to child labour. Those subjected should be rescued and taken to school.

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