



Parents' Extent In And Challenges To Academic Support To Their Children In Kenyan Public Primary Schools In Nandi Central Sub- County

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Abstract

The KCPE results released in Nandi Central Sub-County showed that the bottom 64 out of 186 schools which attained below the average mark 250 out of 500 marks were all public primary schools (MOEST, 2013) hence the study sought to investigate influence of parents' academic support on performance of class eight pupils in public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub- County, Kenya. The study was guided by these research questions: What is the role of parents in enhancing the performance of class eight pupils in public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County Kenya?, What is the perception of head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents concerning parents' support to class eight pupils in public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County Kenya? What challenges hinder the academic support of parents in public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County Kenya? How does parents' academic support influence performance of class eight pupils in public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County, Kenya? And how can the parents of class eight pupils get actively involved in improving the academic performance in public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County, Kenya? This study will be significant to the MOEST, head teachers, teachers, parents and SMC. Epstein, (2002) theoretical model on six- type's parents' involvement was used to guide the study Cross-section descriptive Survey design was used in the study. The target population consisted of all public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County, Kenya which consist of N=186 giving a total target population of N=11,032 and a sample size of n=390. Stratified sampling was used to stratify Sub-County schools in to 10 zones and the schools in to 8 class strata and class eight strata was chosen for the study. Simple random technique was used to sample: 3 schools in every zone, double streams and class eight pupils. The head teachers, class teachers and the parents of selected pupils were included. Qualitative data collection instruments were used to facilitate triangulation with those from quantitative data collection instruments then analyzed using descriptive statistics. 2 schools were used for pilot for the purpose of pre-testing instruments for data collection and to ensure their reliability. The data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and mean and summarized in tables and triangulated with qualitative data thereby drawing conclusion. The findings of the study indicate that parents' support influence class eight academic performance. Recommendations include: the government should establish a policy that stipulates how parents should play a central role in their children's education so as to contribute to a child's academic performance, the government should increase the subsidy per

pupil to enable schools to buy enough teaching learning materials among others. The study made suggestions for further research.

Key Words: Parents, children, partnering, management, academic, basic

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Parents in every race, nationality, religion and culture the world over are the primary caregivers and teachers of their children, preparing them for a happy, fulfilling and productive life through the support they give towards the foundation of their education (Teklemariam and Akala 2011). For this matter, parents are regarded as the anchors of the family and the genesis of communities and societies. According to Kenya's Children's Act (RoK, 2001), children have a right to education; this needs the support of their parents. Hence, it is generally expected that, the best interests of a child are presented at all times, and all actions and decisions made in favour of the child. This is also stipulated in Kenya's Basic Education Act (RoK, 2013), which stresses the importance of schools partnering with parents to ensure quality education and best nurturing environment for their children.

No doubt therefore, parents have the most important role in bringing up their children, whilst the children have a right to education. These rights are enshrined in the legally binding United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO, 2003). Further, The Parents' Charter (1994) which articulates the rights of the parents over their children's education, clearly states that "parents" may volunteer to share skills and interest with pupils and teachers, and attend meetings and other events at the school. Importantly too, the Charter explains expectations held for parents towards their children's schooling, calling for their active involvement as an important aspect in an education; and, how to become more effective partners in their children's education.

An effective form of parents' involvement in their children's education is presented by Epstein's Model (2002), which describes how children learn and develop through three overlapping "spheres of influence." The spheres are: Family, school and the community. These three spheres must form partnership to best meet the needs of the child. Epstein defines six types of involvement based on the relationship between family, school and the community: Parenting (skills), communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. More importantly, all the six types of involvement must be included to have successful partnership. Infact, learners who have support from their parents at home show better performance at school, while those who lack this type of support struggle at school (ibid). According to Kenya's Basic Education Act (RoK, 2013), parents' participation in election of the School Management Committees (SMC) allows them a key note involvement in their children's education (RoK, 2006). Thus, an effective parents' support is particularly relevant for improved education of learners moreso in a developing economy such as Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

An important manifestation of partnership in education is better pupil performance especially in their academic examinations. This principle has enticed parents through government's authorization to be involved in the learning milieu of their children (RoK, 1988). However, every year the KCPE results are announced, the problem of unimpressive academic performance in public primary compared to private schools emerges. A National level survey carried out by Omwenga, (2014) revealed that in the 47 counties, 220 out of a total of 235 schools listed among top five in every county were private schools which represent 95% of the top five slots in all counties. On the other hand, 221 out of 235 schools which is 96% of bottom

five schools in each county were public primary schools. They all scored below half the total mark of 500 which is the highest mark a candidate can score in KCPE. This trend in KCPE performance has elicited a lot of concern among the stakeholders (ibid). True to say, many factors contribute to students' academic excellence in schools. One of these factors is parents' academic support. However, some parents are ignorant and negligent regarding their supportive roles to their children's academics work. This is more so in communities that think, educating a child is the exclusive job of experts in the education sector (Mohan, 2002). As a result, parents' support has not been adequate and or forthcoming.

A report by the County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (RoK, 2013) in Nandi Central Sub-County, indicates that a drop in performance in public primary schools compared to other Sub-Counties in Kenya could be attributed to lack of parents' role in the education of their children. Infact, the bottom 64 out of 186 schools which attained below the average mark of 250 out of 500 marks were all public primary schools (ibid). The question is, to what extent do parents in public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub County support their children? Moreover, are there any challenges that militate against parent's support of their children's academic performance? These matters are critical as the clock ticks fast towards Kenya's set development goals.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to establish parents' extent in and challenges to support given to their children in public primary schools in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following two research questions:

- I. To what extent do parents in public primary schools in Nandi Central sub-county support their class eight pupils academic work?
- II. What challenges hinder the support of parents to class eight pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya?

Research Design

A research design is a plan that takes overall conception of the study including: description of all concepts, variables, and categories, the relationship prepositions and the methods of data collection and analysis (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003; Yin, 2003). This study utilized Cross-section descriptive survey design which involved taking a characteristic sample size that is representative of the target population. This design was appropriate because the respondents were able to report the state of the art of variables in question. Moreover, this design as indicated by Kothari, (2004), provided for utilization of questionnaires to quantify the phenomena in the study at the same time allowing for acquisition, utilization and presentation of qualitative data.

Target Population

The target population for this study was all the public primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County, Kenya. They were 186 schools sub divided into 10 educational zones. Thus, the target population consisted of 186 head teachers, 186 class teachers, 5237 class 8 pupils and 5237 class 8 parents (one parent per child) forming a total of 11,032 people, see table 1

TABLE 1: Target Population of the study

Zones	Schools	Htrs	Ctrs	Pls	Pts	Total
10	186	186	186	5237	5237	11032

Source: MOEST (2004)

Key: Htrs = Headteachers, Ctrs = Class teachers, Pls = Pupils, Pts = Parents

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents for this study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The sample was pegged at 10% for every category and 100% for quality assurance and standards officer. The total number of respondents were: 01 quality assurance and standards officer, 19 head teachers, 19 class teachers, 524 parents and 524 pupils, see table 2.

TABLE 2: Sample for the Study

QASO	Schools	Htrs	Ctrs	Pls	Pts	Total
01	19	19	19	524	524	1106

Source: MOEST (2004)

Key: Htrs = Headteachers. Ctrs = Class teachers. Pls = Pupils. Pts = Parents

Study Instruments

Given this study's large sample, one instrument was used to collect data from the respondents: QASO, head teachers, class teachers, parents and pupils.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

Whereas validity was ascertained by research scholars at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology and Catholic University of Eastern Africa, the test re-test technique was employed to establish reliability of the instruments. A correlation of 0.7 was established and instruments used for data collection (Orodho, 2006; and Mugenda and Mugenda, 2009).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The questionnaires contained three sub sections namely: Section A consisted of demographic information on gender, academic and professional qualifications as well as teaching experience. Section B consisted of closed ended questions with a list of responses from which the participant was to select appropriate answer to indicate the extent to which parents supported their class eight pupils in their academic work. This section addressed the first research question, to what extent do parents in public primary schools in Nandi central sub-county support their class eight pupils' academic work? Section C was similar to section B but addressed the research question two: What challenges hinder the support of parents to class eight pupils in Nandi central sub-county, Kenya?

The data were collected for six weeks and analyzed for results using mixed methods: quantitative and qualitative procedures. Triangulation of results from both approaches was utilized and the findings reported.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study found out that among the 19 (100%) head teachers, 16 (84.2%) were male while only 3 (15.8%) were female. Among the class teachers, 11 (57.9%) were male while 6 (31.6%) were female. Fewer parents, 217 (41.4%) were male, while the majority 307 (58.6%) were

female. Pupil respondents consisted of 227 (43.3%) male and 297 (56.7%) female. The QASO was male.

Furthermore, among the head teachers, only 01 (5.3%) had a masters qualification; 02 (10.5%) were university graduates, 10 (52.6%) had diploma qualification and 6 (31.6%) held primary teachers certificate grade 1 (P1). Among the class teachers, 05 (26.3%) had university degree certification, 7 (36.8%) had diploma in education and 7 (36.8%) had P1 certification. Parents also had varied qualifications, 17 (3.2%) had masters degree, 63 (12%) had university first degree, 327 (72.3%) had acquired form four school while the rest, 35 (6.7%) had primary school level of education. All participating school pupils were class eight candidates.

This study also found that majority of the head teachers, 11 (57.9%) had taught for 6-10 years; 6 (31.6%) had a working experience of over 10 years while only 1 (5.3%) had taught for 1-5 years. Similarly, most class teachers, 13 (68.4%) had a teaching experience of over 10 years; 3 (15.8%) had taught for 6-10 years and 3 (15.8%) had taught for 1-5 years, see table 3 for summarized statistics for participants' gender, academic qualification and work experience.

Table 3: Participants' Gender, Academic Qualification and Work experience.

Cat ego ry	Gen der	Acade mic qualific ation	Work Experi ence (Years)															
	F	M	Maste rs	Under grad	Diplo ma	P1 Ce rt	1- 5	6- 10	Ab ove 10									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Htrs	03	15.8	16	84.2	01	5.3	02	10.5	10	52.6	6	31.6	1	5.3	1	57.9	6	31.6
Ctrs	08	42.1	11	57.9	-	-	05	26.3	7	36.8	7	36.8	3	15.8	3	15.8	13	68.4
QASO	-	-	-	-	01	100												
Pts	307	58.6	217	41.4	17	32.4	63	12	32	6.1	95	201 = Form 4 educ ation level = 38.4 %	116 = Class 8 and Belo w educ ation level = 22.1 %					
Pls	297	56.7	227	43.3	524 = Class 8 Candi dates													

Source: Field Data (2014)

Key: Htrs = Head teachers, Ctrs = Class teachers, Pls = Pupils, Pts = Parents, QASO = Quality Assurance and Standards Officer

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that, on one hand, most public primary school head teachers, 16 (84.2%); class teachers, 11 (57.9%) are male. On the other hand, most class

eight pupils, 297 (56.7%) and parents, 307 (58.6%) are female. This means that, the male gender supersedes females in public primary school leadership in Nandi central sub – county, Kenya. Among the parents, mothers, 307 (58.6%) take over the leadership role in so far as academic support to their class eight children is concerned. This scenario may be suggestive of the understanding that in most African families, fathers are more out ward bound while mothers remain homemakers and caregivers in their respective estates. Moreover, given that Kenya’s population has more females than males, and that more single parents are mothers, it is therefore not surprising that the finding herein reflect the same picture in public primary schools in Nandi central sub-county.

Most head teachers, 10 (52.6%) possess diploma qualification while the majority of class teachers, 14 (73.6%) are equally spread between diploma and P1 academic certification. Majority of the parents in public primary schools in this sub – county, 201 (38.4%) have reached form four level of schooling. A large number, 116 (22.1%) have not acquired an education beyond class 8. It is therefore, noted that whereas most head teachers and teachers in this sub county are well trained, a large proportion of parents 116 (22.1%) belong to the category of persons that may be regarded illiterate and/or semi-literate.

Importantly too, most head teachers, 11 (57%) in Nandi Central Sub- County, Kenya, have taught for between 6 and 10 years only. This finding may suggest that most of these head teachers are fairly young in their profession; they still have a long span of time to serve their employer. Most class teachers, 13 (68.4%), have served for over 10 years. Unlike most of their head teachers, they are therefore more advanced biologically. In this sub-county, most head teachers are younger compared to their classroom teachers who appear to be of older crop of personnel.

Extent to which Class Eight Parents Supported their Children’s Academic Work

The first research question was: “To what extent do parents in public primary schools in Nandi Central sub-county support their class eight pupils academic work?”

This study ascertained that parents supported their class eight children in their academic work. However, the extent to which the support was provided varied a great deal. For instance, head teachers reported parents’ support as follows: 10 (53%) agreed that parents supported their children’s academic work, 8 (42%) strongly agreed and only 1 (5%) disagreed with the statement. According to the class teachers, 14 (73.7%) of them strongly agreed that parents supported their children’s academic work, while 4 (21.1%) agreed and 1 (5%) disagreed that parents support their children academic work. Among the parents, their majority 513 (97.9%) strongly agreed that they supported their children while the remaining 11 (2.1%) agreed.

Class eight pupil participants submitted their understanding as follows: 521 (99.4%) strongly agreed while 3 (0.6%) agreed that their parents supported them in their academic work. The quality assurance and standards officer agreed that parents in this sub county support the academic work of their class 8 pupils, see table 4 for statistical distribution of parents’ extent of academic support to their class 8 pupils in this sub-county.

Almost all the head teachers 18 (95%) either strongly agreed or agreed that parents support their class 8 pupils’ academic work. This understanding was shared by the class teachers. Better still, all parents 524 (100%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they supported their class 8 pupils academic work. The pupils and the QASO reported the same.

Table 4: Extent of Parents' Support of Pupils' academic Work

Category	SA	A	UD	DA
Htrs	8 (42%)	10 (53%)		01 (5%)
Ctrs	14 (73.7%)	4 (21.1%)		
Ptrs	513 (97.9%)	11 (2.1%)		
Pls	521 (99.4%)	3 (0.6%)		
QASO		01 (100%)		

Source: Field Data (2014)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree A – Agree UD – Undecided DA – Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree

Key: Htrs = Head teachers, Ctrs = Class teachers, Pls = Pupils, Pts = Parents, QASO = Quality Assurance and Standards Officer

However, the KCPE results in this sub county continue to show poor performance by candidates. One wonders, what could be the underlying factors for such performance? Could it be that parents do not give adequate or correct academic support to their class eight children? Or, could it be that pupils do not work hard enough, their parents' support notwithstanding? Or, can it be said that the teachers do not provide correct academic guidance? Admittedly, the correct answers to this puzzle lie beyond this study's parameters, significant as they are.

The second research question was, "What challenges hinder the support of parents to class eight pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya?"

This study established that several factors variably hindered parents in Nandi Central Sub County from fully supporting the academic work of their children, see distribution of responses in table 5.

Table 5: Challenges to Parents' academic support to their children

Challenge	SA		A		UD		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Parents' Level of education										
Htrs	01	5.3	03	15.8	-		15	78.9		
Ctrs	03	15.8	07	36.8	-		09	47.4		
Ptrs	-		03	0.5	06	1.2	515	98.3		
Pls			08	1.5	-		480	91.6	36	6.9
Parents' socio-economic status										
Htrs	13	68.4	03	15.8	01	5.3	-		02	10.5
Ctrs	13	68.4	03	15.8	-		03	15.8	-	
Ptrs	402	76.7	101	19.3	01	0.2	20	3.8	-	
Pls	476	90.8	30	5.7	-		16	3.1	02	0.4
Number of siblings										
Htrs	-		02	10.5	-		17	89.5		
Ctrs	04	21.1	02	10.5	-		12	68.4	496	94.7
Ptrs	-		10	1.9	18	3.4	401	76.5		
Pls	-		06	1.1	107	22.4				
Parents' occupation										
Htrs	09	47.4	09	47.4	-		01	5.3		
Ctrs	13	68.4	04	21.1	-		02	10.5		
Ptrs	500	95.4	15	2.9	-		09	1.7		
Pls	517	98.7	01	0.2	-		06	1.2		

Source: Field Data (2014)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree A – Agree UD – Undecided DA – Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree

Key: Htrs = Head teachers, Ctrs = Class teachers, Pls = Pupils, Pts = Parents, QASO = Quality Assurance and Standards Officer

From the four sampled challenges that were thought to be common to all parents in the study area, participants reacted as above. Most head teachers, 15 (78.9%); class teachers, 9 (47.4%); parents 515 (98.3%); and, pupils 480 (91.6%) disagreed that parents' level of education was a challenge to their academic support to class eight pupils. Only 4 (21.1%) head teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. This finding was not at all surprising given that majority of the parents, 327 (72.3%) in Nandi Central Sub County had acquired Basic Education level (Republic of Kenya, 2013). These findings support the earlier finding that parents in this study area, academically support their class eight pupils.

However, most of the head teachers 16 (84.2%); class teachers 16 (84.2%); parents 503 (96.7%); and, pupils 506 (96.5%) either strongly agreed or agreed that parents' socio-economic status posed a challenge to their support to class eight pupils. This finding may act as an eye opener to education policy makers and parents in this sub county. Whereas on one hand the respondents submitted that they support their children, that support is not in full measure. This is because their socio economic status to some extent militate against the same.

The number of siblings in a family was not found to be a challenge to parents' academic support to their class eight pupils. Most head teachers 17 (87.5%); class teachers 12 (68.4%); parents 496 (94.7%); and, pupils 401 (76.5%), disagreed with the statement, see table 5.

As well, parents' occupation, like their socio economic status appeared to challenge their academic support to class eight pupils. Among the head teachers 18 (94.8%); class teachers 17 (89.7%); parents 515 (98.3%); and, 518 (98.9%) either strongly agreed or agreed that parents' occupation is a hindrance to their academic support they give to their class eight pupils in Nandi Central Sub County in Kenya.

These findings seem to have internal consistency in the sense that, in spite of parents, effort to support their class eight pupils academically, two major variable pose a challenge. These are, socio economic status and occupation of parents. In this sub county, the level of parents, education and the number of siblings in the family do not negatively affect their support to their class eight pupils.

SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

Most 16 (84.2%) public primary school head teachers and class teachers 11 (57.9%) are male while the rest 3 (15.8%) and 8 (42.1%) respectively are female. This is to say that public primary schools in Nandi central sub-county is male dominated. More mothers 307 (58.6%) take over the leadership role in this sub county; they provide academic support to their class eight pupils. Most head teachers 10 (52.6%) have acquired Diploma qualification in their professional training while majority of class teachers 14 (73.6%) are equally spread between diploma and P1 certification. Most parents 201 (38.4%) are in possession of form four qualification. However, a large number of parents 116 (22.1%) did not go to school beyond class eight. Most head teachers 11 (57%) are fairly young in the profession having taught for only between 6 and 10 years. On the contrary, most class teachers 13 (86.4%) have been teaching for more than 10 years. In other words, the head teachers in this sub county are younger in the profession than the class teachers.

With regard to the extent to which parents support their class eight pupils, it was found that all participants either strongly agreed or agreed that parents supported their children, see table 5. This finding created a puzzle as to why the pupils continued to perform poorly in their KCPE.

Nonetheless, most head teachers 16 (84.2%); class teachers 16 (84.2%); 503 (96%) parents and 506 (96.5%) pupils submitted that parents' socio-economic status posed a challenge to parents' support. Also, most head teachers 18 (94.4%); class teachers 17 (89.5%); parents 515 (96.3%) and 518 (98.9%) pupils either strongly agreed or agreed that one of the barriers to parents' academic support to their class 8 pupils was their occupation.

CONCLUSIONS

From the research findings, the following conclusions are made: First, the leadership of public primary schools in Nandi central sub-county, Kenya is male dominated. Second, in spite of the varied levels of parents in this sub county, all of them are aware of the value of supporting their children's education. As such, they provide academic support to their class eight pupils. This is acknowledged by head teachers, class teachers, the QASO and even the pupils themselves. Parents' socio economic status and occupation were found to militate against their academic support they provided to class eight pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that parents in Nandi central sub county be assisted to be better occupied economically in order to improve their economic statuses to be able to fully support their children at school.

Gender equity should be observed in distribution of leadership offices in the sub county public primary schools.

A similar study should be done to establish variables that assist pupils in private primary schools to excel in KCPE in this sub-county.

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