

**IMPACT OF LEARNING RESOURCES ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING IN
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN IMENTI CENTRAL DISTRICT, KENYA**

Silas Francis Mwirigi
Principal Meru High School,

Dr. George M. Muthaa
Senior Lecturer, Department of Education,
Chuka University, Kenya.

ABSTRACT

The quality of learning that takes place in a school determines academic performance of the pupils and eventually transition rates to secondary schools. In Imenti Central District, public primary schools have been performing poorly over the last six years in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams in comparison to other schools in Meru County and the Eastern province. This raises questions on the quality of learning in these primary schools. It is therefore important to determine the impact of learning resources on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. A sample size of 382 respondents participated in the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as tools for data collection. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented using frequency distribution tables and bar graphs. The study established that inadequate teaching and learning facilities affected the quality of teaching and learning. The researcher recommends public and private partnership to ensure adequate provision of teaching and learning resources in the public primary schools.

Key Words: Learning Resources, Quality of Learning

Introduction

Formal schooling is one of several important contributors to the skills and development of an individual and to human capital. The distribution of personal incomes in society is strongly related to the amount of education people have had (UNESCO, 2004). Education instills in the young crucial humanitarian values such as equity, tolerance and peace; promotes sustainable development, environmental protection, improvement in maternal and child health and participation in democratic social and political processes; and directly contributes to national economic growth (Serbessa, 2005). Access to good-quality schooling is thus, of central importance to national development.

Due to the importance placed on education by governments around the world, many countries, Kenya included, have invested heavily on Free Primary Education (FPE) (Bishop, 1989). While the investments in education have been quite successful at expanding enrollments in education, for any given level of efficiency, increased enrollments require increased resources, in order to maintain quality (Verspoor, 2008). If these resources are not forthcoming, the increase in educational quantity may come at the expense of quality (Duraisamy, James, Lane & Tan, 1997). Increasing the quantity dimensions of education is of little value if the quality dimensions are ignored.

In Kenya, concerns have been raised about the quality of learning in public primary schools especially since the commencement of FPE in 2003 (UNESCO, 2005; Sifuna, 2004). After the introduction of FPE, head teachers in many schools found themselves with more children to enrol than their capacity could hold (Ng'ethe, 2004). While there is a consensus that FPE is an appropriate policy addressing the problem of declining primary school enrolment in Kenya, a serious concern has been raised on the effects the programme has on quality of education (Swamura & Sifuna, 2008; Chuck, 2009; Oketch & Somerset, 2010; Shimada, 2010). Of major concern to this study are the factors that may impede the quality of learning in the schools.

The quality of learning in Imenti Central is of specific concern to stakeholders. According to KCPE results in the province for the last six years, the performance has remained poor. Table 1 shows the mean score and rank of the district in the province.

Table 1

KCPE Mean Scores for Imenti Central District

Year	Entry	Mean score	Rank	Index
2006	4425	227.41	50/52	-0.49
2007	4434	229.62	48/52	+2.19
2008	4445	225.6	50/52	-4.02
2009	4827	223.1	49/52	-2.50
2010	2611	222.75	51/52	-12.65
2011	2647	234.6	50/52	+3.84

Source: Imenti Central Education Office (2012)

Information on Table 1 shows that schools in Imenti Central District have been performing poorly in KCPE. This raises the question of quality of learning in these schools. If not addressed, this trend would negate the purpose for which FPE was introduced. The objective of this study was to determine the impact of learning resources on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The location of the study was Imenti Central District. The target population for the study was 20,776 subjects made up of 580 teachers and 20,186 pupils in 56 public primary schools in Imenti Central District and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) in the district. The researcher sampled 382 subjects made up of 350 pupils, 10 head teachers, 20 teachers and 2 QASOs to participate in the study.

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. Questionnaires were used to gather data from the students, teachers and head teachers while interview schedules were used to collect information from QASOs. Spearman Brown prophecy formula was used to estimate reliability and the correlation coefficient for questionnaire for the teachers was 0.938, head teachers 0.845 and that for pupils' questionnaires was 0.94 were obtained. Quantitative and qualitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. The results of data analysis were presented using frequency distribution tables, bar graphs and pie charts. Table 3 shows a summary of methods of the data analysis.

Results and Discussions

The study sought to establish how the sample was distributed by gender and the data is presented on Table 2.

Table 2

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Category of respondent	Male		Female		Total percentage
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Head teachers	6	60.0	4	40.0	100
Teachers	10	50.0	10	50.0	100
Pupils	168	48.0	182	52.0	100
DQASO	2	100.0	0	0	100
Total	187		195		

According to the findings in Table 2, majority (60.0%) of the head teachers respondents were males and 40.0% were females. Of the teachers, 50.0% were males while 50.0% were females. The teachers' respondents comprised of deputy head teachers, senior teachers, heads of subjects and class teachers. The information shown in Table 2 further shows that majority of the pupil respondents (52.0%) were girls while 48.0% were boys. This implies that there was heterogeneity in terms of gender among the respondents that took part in this study. Information was sought on the age of the pupil respondents. This information is illustrated on Figure 1.

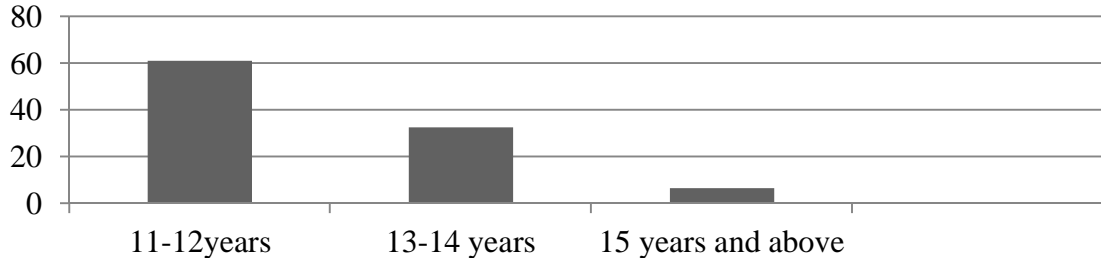
Figure 1. Age Distribution of Pupils Respondents

Figure 1 shows that majority (60.9%) of the pupils were aged between 11 and 12 years whereas 32.6% were aged between 13 and 14 years and 6.6% were aged 15 years and above. This implies that most of the pupils were in the age bracket recommended for this level of education.

The objective of the study was to find out the impact of learning resources on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District. To address this objective, respondents were presented with eleven statements based on learning resources in schools. The respondents were required to give their ratings ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Table 3 presents the results obtained from pupils respondents.

Table 3

Pupils' Responses on Learning Resources

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Text books were adequate	10	2.9	36	10.3	68	19.4	142	40.6	94	26.9
exercise books were adequate	0	0.0	15	4.3	0	0.0	200	57.1	135	38.6
Classrooms were enough to accommodate all pupils	22	6.3	89	25.4	36	10.3	114	32.6	89	25.4
Desks are not enough for all pupils	67	19.1	198	56.6	9	2.6	52	14.9	24	6.9
Classes are spacious and conducive for learning	85	24.3	95	27.1	48	13.7	46	13.1	76	21.7
Teachers rarely use teaching aids in their teaching	114	32.6	89	25.4	22	6.3	89	25.4	36	10.3
Teaching aids are not adequate	142	40.6	94	26.9	10	2.9	36	10.3	68	19.4
Reference materials were adequate	0	0	0	0	90	26.0	102	29.0	158	45.0
The school has a library facility	0	0	0	0	0	0	200	57.1	150	42.9
Most of the teachers are trained	0	0	0	0	300	86.0	50	14.0	0	0
Teachers were always provided with what they require to teach	0	0	0	0	270	77.0	55	16.0	15	7.0

The data in Table 3 indicates that majority of the pupils disagreed (combined strongly disagree and disagree) that school had adequate text books (67.9%) and exercise books (95.7%) for all pupils, classrooms were enough to accommodate all pupils (58.0%), reference materials were adequate (74.0%) and the school has a library facility (100.0%).

On the other hand, majority (75.7%) of the pupils agreed that desks were not enough for all pupils, teachers rarely use teaching aids in their teaching (60.0%), and Teaching aids were not adequate (67.5%). Most pupils were neutral on the statements that most teachers were trained (86.0%) and teachers were always provided with what they required to teach. The pupils may not be aware of the qualifications of the teachers who teach them or whether or not the teachers were always provided with teaching resources. This would probably be the reason for their neutral opinion regarding the statements that most of the teachers were trained and were always provided with what they require

to teach. Based on these findings, it therefore emerges that most schools were ill equipped with teaching and learning resources and hence negatively affected learning quality. This concurs with Ng'ethe (2004) findings that quality of learning in most public primary schools was largely being affected by lack of adequate tuition resources supports these findings. The findings are in agreement with the observation by Mbaabu (1983) that lack of physical facilities, materials, equipment and tools was the major intra-organizational problem that head teachers were facing in Kenya.

The study sought to determine from the head teachers, teachers and pupils respondents on the extent to which learning resources impacted on the quality of learning in primary schools. This information is shown on Table 4.

Table 4

Extent to which Learning Resources Impacts on the Quality of Learning

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very great extent	16	53
Great extent	12	40
Small extent	2	7
Very small extent	0	0
No extent	0	0
Total	30	100

Majority (53%) and 40% of the respondents indicated that learning resources had an impact on the quality of learning to a very great extent and great extent respectively.

Respondents were asked to propose strategies that should be adopted to address the shortage of teaching learning resources in primary schools. This information is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Methods being employed to Address Shortage of Teaching and Learning Resources

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Engaging pupils in the development of some materials	179	51
Improvisation	140	40
Educational visits	31	9
Total	350	100

The methods being used by schools to address the shortage of teaching and learning resources elicited from pupils included engaging pupils in the preparation and development of some teaching and learning materials (51%), improvisation (40%) and educational visits (9%). When asked to give their best suggestions on strategies that could enhance the acquisition of teaching and learning resources, the information obtained is presented in Figure 2.

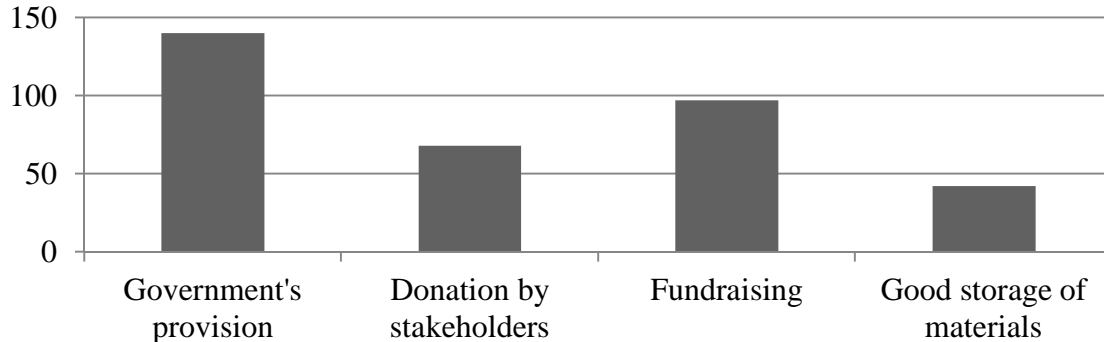


Figure 2. Strategies that could enhance the Acquisition of Teaching and Learning Resources Suggested by Pupils

The strategies suggested by pupils to enhance the acquisition of teaching and learning resources included provision by the government (40.6%), through fundraising (26.9%), donation by stakeholders (19.4%) and having good storage for acquired materials.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the researcher made the following conclusions:

- i. Most primary schools lacked adequate teaching and learning resources such as text books, exercise books, teaching aids and reference materials.
- ii. The lack of adequate teaching and learning resources contributed to a great extent to the academic achievement of learners in the KCSE examinations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations have been made:

- i. The Ministry of Education and local community should establish a central library facility for use by two or three schools within the same location.
- ii. To achieve improved performance in the KCSE examinations, various take holders in the education should work together to provide adequate teaching and learning resources in the public primary schools.

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