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## The Influence of School Management on Academic Performance in Private and Public Primary Schools in Wareng Sub-County, Kenya

Samuel K. Rong'uno

Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Kisii University, Kabarnet, Kenya

### Abstract:

*The study was carried out to determine the level of variation in academic performance between public and private primary schools in Wareng District, in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya and the major possible causes of such variations. Based on the study, the main focus of this paper is on effectiveness of school management in supervising teachers. The study covered a total of 55 public and 17 private schools distributed evenly among the five education Zones in the District. The figures translate to 52% and 68% of public and private schools respectively. Data collection was by means of questionnaire administered to teachers and head teachers. The results on performance were collected from District Education office. Performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) was used because it is a national examination that is not biased. The duration covered three years, 2007-2009 inclusive. The findings of the study revealed that despite government investing generously in public schools, private schools outshined them due to inadequate supervision and some unprofessional malpractices of public school teachers. It was thus recommended that supervision should be more effective in public schools. The facilities for supervision, the frequency of supervision and the use of supervision should improve. The study is significant in that, through its findings, management and head teachers of public schools will be able to discover why they cannot challenge private schools academically and more so ensure maximum academic results at the end of each academic year.*

**Keywords:** School Management, Academic Performance, Private, Public Primary Schools, Wareng Sub-County, Kenya

### 1. Introduction

Formal education was introduced in Kenya by Christian missionaries. The first school was established by Ludwig Kraft of Church Missionary Society at Rabai (Coast) in 1848. Later on several other missionaries, Europeans and Asians, established schools in various parts of the country. The first African independent school was established in 1901 at Guba (Taita). Throughout colonial era, education in Kenya was racially stratified with varying curricular and different facilities for Europeans, Asians and Africans.

The European and mission schools were well catered for in terms of resources and management. Their teachers were motivated and committed to work because of good working environment, high salaries and other privileges. The next were the Asian schools. Just as it was in other parts of Africa, native schools were established in remote areas, with poor structures, inadequately trained and paid teachers. Their academic achievements remained low compared to European and Asian schools (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). After independence in 1963, the government placed a lot of emphasis on education as a major tool for reducing ignorance, poverty and diseases in the country.

The curriculum was unified and a department – Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) - was established under the Ministry of Education. The department was charged with the responsibility of ensuring quality education in the country. However, a number of Europeans, Asians and Missionary groups opted to run their schools as private schools. Although the government subsidized the cost of education, performance in private schools continued to outshine performance in public schools at all levels of education. To many, this variation was due to inadequate resources, low pay to teachers and poor working conditions in public schools. Teachers in public schools were, therefore, demoralized and not committed to work.

The Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) kept advocating for improved salaries and terms and conditions of work for teachers, an effort that has seen some probes. However, given the high cost of living due to inflation, the progress is still relatively low. When the government launched Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, the prime aim was to reduce the burden of cost of education to parents and improve enrolment in primary schools. Indeed, public primary schools are now well equipped with books, stationery and all other facilities necessary for improvement of standards of education. However, private schools still outshine the public in performance.

### 1.1. Supervision in Private and Public Schools

Managers of private schools argue that supervision in private schools is more effective than in public schools. They claim that teachers are always on hand to supervise students in every activity that they undertake from the time they arrive to the time they go back home. According to Education Watch (2006), teachers in boarding private schools spend considerable time talking to and intermingling with pupils during prep time to ensure that appropriate advice is given when required. Generally, time management is taken seriously. Mr. Mukhwana, Head Teacher of Precious Hope Academy, as cited in Education Watch (2008), attributes good performance in private schools to commitment and time management. However, close observations show that, though teachers in public schools are better paid compared to those in private schools, their perks are not pegged on good performance, causing a complacency, laxity and "I don't care" attitude. There is lack of follow-up by education officers. Trade unions make it difficult for government officials to enforce disciplinary measures against teachers who fail to meet standards. In private schools, you either perform as per the required standards or you get fired. Mr. Lubang'a – retired public teacher and now heading a private school – Jase Academy – as cited in Education Watch (2008), says that it is only performance that makes a teacher remain in a private school.

Teachers and managers from public schools complain that the Free Primary Education programme has compromised the standards of teaching due to high enrolment. However, on the same note, managers of private schools say the issue of high enrolment and teacher-pupil ratios, has nothing to do with performance and claim that the matter lies on the teaching staff attitudes, commitment and time management. This paper examines issues to do with school management and how these cause variation in academic performance between public and private primary school.

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Good performances in private schools have not only attracted many parents but also left the public wondering what secret could be behind their success. Despite government investing heavily in public schools, not much in terms of performance is yet realized. Most public schools, especially in urban areas, are well staffed. Teachers in public schools are better paid compared to those in private. The environmental conditions in some private schools are pathetic. Some learn in very small rooms while others are taught in rooms behind the shops. Recreational facilities in most private schools are lacking. Despite all these variations, private schools still outshine public schools in academic achievements. The big question in the minds of many people is what could be causing the differences in performance between the two categories of schools as shown in Table 1.

School	Type	Percentage score (%)	Position
Solace Academy	Private day	66.40	1
Hill School	Private Boarding	62.32	2
Moi University	Semi private	59.25	3
Ngeria Hill Academy	Private boarding	58.62	4

Table 1: Top four schools in KCPE 2008 – Wareng District

This research was therefore conducted to establish the factors behind the better performance in private schools as compared to public schools in Wareng Sub-County in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study majorly used descriptive survey research, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It aimed at establishing and analyzing managerial approaches applied in both public and private primary schools. Secondary data was gathered from published reports, books, magazines and bulletins and it helped in collection of primary data. The main method used in data collection was the questionnaire. The study was based on the performance of Standard Eight pupils in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) in Wareng District. The duration covered the years 2007-2009. KCPE performance was chosen as a standard measure in performance between public and private primary schools because it is a national exam and therefore not biased.

Two sample methods were used; cluster and stratified sampling. The District is sub-divided into five educational zones. Each zone, therefore, was taken to be a cluster. The study covered four private schools in each zone except Cheptiret zone where there was no private school that presented candidates for national examinations. To ensure their participation, only two of their young private schools were involved. In total 17 private schools were covered. These translated to 68% of all the private schools in the District. In the category of public schools, Cheptiret, Kessess and Kapsaret zones had 12 schools covered in each while Tulwet and Timboroa had 9 and 10 respectively. In total, 55 schools were covered. This translated to 52% of all the public primary schools in the District.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. The Influence of School Management on Academic Performance

The study sought to ascertain the influence of school management on academic performance in both public and private schools. As such, the academic performance of both private and public schools in the District were subjected to Pearson's correlation and the findings were as presented as in Table 2 below.

	Academic performance	Preparation to conduct class work	Motivational approaches	School management
Academic performance Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	1,000 15	928 4	538 4	-094 4
Academic performance person correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-374 4	1,000 4	-021 4	-027 4
Preparations to conduct class work Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-928 4	1,000 4	-423 4	-260 4
Preparations to Conduct class work Person correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-402 4	-021 4	1,000 4	-749 4
Motivational Approaches Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-538 4	-423 4	1,000 4	-765 4
Motivational Approaches Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-009 4	-004 4	-792 4	-423 4
School Management Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-093 4	-260 740	-765 4	1,000 4
School Management Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-055 4	-093 4	-360 4	-260 4
	Academic performance	Preparation to conduct class work	Motivational approaches	School management
Academic performance Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	1,000 15	-374 4	-402 4	-269 4
Academic performance Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-374 4	-771 4	1,000 4	-952 4
Preparations to Conduct class work Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-374 4	1,000 4	-021 4	-765 4
Preparations to Conduct class work Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-402 4	-004 4	-052 4	1,000 4
Motivational Approaches Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-402 4	1,000 4	-938 4	-749 4
Motivational Approaches Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-810 4	-021 4	1,000 4	-749 4
School Management Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-269 4	-027 4	-749 4	1,000 4
School Management Pearson correlation Sig-(2-tailed) N	-269 4	-027 4	-749 4	1,000 4

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient of Academic Performance in Private and Public Schools

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

From the results in Table 2, it is clear that the correlation coefficient between academic performance in private and public schools in the District is 0.174; the relation is very low. The findings in the table further show that private schools outshine public schools in all the items presented for comments.

The biggest difference is seen in item three which sought to establish disciplinary action taken against teachers who fail to meet standard set either by the school management or the employer. The responses, as shown, indicate that there is hardly any disciplinary action against teachers in public schools. On overall, the private schools are much better supervised by their management (0.907) compared to public schools (0.731). Their variation range is 0.174.

The findings of the study are in line with the Theory of Human Management in organizations. Douglas McGregor (1960, 1966) proposed two theories, namely Theory x and Theory y, aimed at providing the framework for the proper management of people to achieve organizational goals. The basic assumption in Theory x and Theory y include the following:

#### *Theory x*

- The average human being has an inherent dislike for work and will avoid it if he/she can.
- Because of this characteristic, most people must be coerced, controlled, directed and threatened with punishment so that they can work towards the organizational goals.
- The average human being prefers to be directed, prefers security and avoids responsibility.

#### *Theory y*

- Physical work and mental work are as natural as play if they are satisfying
- Man will exercise self-directed and self-control towards organization goals if he is committed to them.
- Commitment is a function of rewards. The best rewards are satisfaction of ego and self actualization.

In related findings, Lindgren (1976) writes that teaching is a highly exposed affair, where every teacher operates under the direct scrutiny of the students in his classrooms, as well as the direct observation of administrators, communities and parents. The findings also agree with the arguments put forward by Mukhwana Malach, head teacher of Precious Hope Academy (as cited in Education Watch, 2008), that in private schools teachers perform well because they are always with their employers, who monitor their work with great scrutiny.

Taking a light view of the supervision in public schools, the findings of the study show that supervision in these schools (public) is wanting. Just like in private schools, the most immediate supervisor in public schools is the head teacher. Unlike in private schools, where the supervisor could be the employer or with the employer, the supervision and the employer in public schools know one another at most through records. In between the employer and the school supervisor (head teacher) are employer's agents (education officers) who happen to have their own weakness, a weakness common to most civil servants. To worsen the weakness, teachers are lowly paid compared to other civil servants, and thus teachers are demoralized. As revealed by the findings of the study, discipline in public schools against nonperforming teachers is hardly administered.

One of the contributing factors to this challenge is the role of trade unions. The Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) in particular is one of the most vocal trade unions in the country. It has been so vocal that the government has not been able to implement some of its intentions concerning teachers – that are perceived by the union to be going against the wishes of its members. The same union has not only established its strength in the grassroots levels, but it has also influenced in almost every matter related to education – including disciplinary action against any strayed teachers. With this kind of advocacy, coupled with lack of performance contract, teachers in public schools see no threat working with complacency.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study sought to establish how management of schools affected academic performance in both public and private schools. The study specifically examined how often teachers were supervised in public and private schools. The study found out that there is hardly any disciplinary measure taken against non-performing teachers in public schools. Discipline is least done in public schools.

Secondly the attractive academic results in private schools are attributed to close supervision of teachers and adequate utilization of available resources which include both time and human resources. Supervision and management in general in public primary schools in the district are wanting. The low-level of supervision and lack of adequate punishment of non-performers in public schools has led to a state of poor service delivery and a lot of laxity among teachers.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that supervision should be more effective in public schools. The facilities for supervision, the frequency of supervision and the use of supervision should improve. Supervisors of public schools should also ensure that teachers prepare adequately and cover the syllabus effectively in good time. Managers of schools – which include Board of Governors and school administrations – should try to determine the most appropriate mode of motivating their teachers in line with theories of motivation.

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