Influence of Socio-Economic Factors on Standard 8 Pupils’ Academic Performance in Day Primary Schools in Mbooni West Sub-County

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of socio-economic status on standard eight pupils’ academic performance in Mbooni West Sub County, Kenya. The study investigated the influence of a family’s source of income, parents’ level of education and availability of facilities/resources on standard eight pupils’ academic performance. The respondents were randomly selected. The research instruments used in this study included questionnaires for standard eight teachers and pupils and interview schedules for head teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed and the results were presented using frequency tables, pie charts, bar graphs and percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis, which in turn was analyzed by organizing data into themes, patterns and sub-topics. The study established that there was a significant influence of socio-economic status on academic performance. The study further established that parents’ economic status had a strong bearing on pupils’ academic performance. In addition, the study established those parents’ occupation and availability of facilities/resources both at home and school significantly influenced academic performance. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should establish more boarding schools for pupils from Low Social Economic status homes in order to promote equity in education, access and hence good performance. The study also recommends that the government should engage in a serious campaign to create awareness for adult education for parents with low levels of education. The study further recommends that head teachers and teachers from day primary schools should carry out sensitization campaigns on the role of education in social, economic and political development of a nation.

Key words: Social economic status, academic performance, primary school

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Caldas and Bankston (1997) argue that Socio-Economic Status (SES) has a positive correlation with the students’ quality of achievement. Students with high level SES, insists Caldas and Bankston (1997) enroll in private and public boarding schools and academies and they perform better than their counterparts with low SES who mostly enroll in day public schools. Chinyoka and Naidu (2013) points out that students’ academic performance is influenced by a number of factors including the students’ age, gender, geographical belongingness, ethnicity, marital status, socio-economic status (SES), parents’ education level, parents’ profession, language used at home, religious affiliations, effects of family mobility and family lifestyles and the type of school the child attends. A study carried out in Jamaica by Evans (1999) on the influence of a family’s economic status on students’ academic performance found out that there was a significant correlation between students’ performance and their family backgrounds. The study further established that children from rich households performed fairly well in examinations compared to their counterparts from low socio-economic backgrounds. A study by Clarissa (1992) in Barbados examined how parents’ education level influenced secondary school students’ academic performance. The study established that parents’ educational level had a significant correlation with their children’s academic performance and that children whose parents were educated were more achieving in internal tests compared to their counterparts whose parents were less educated.

In China, Hunnum and Park (2004) carried out a study to investigate the influence of parents’ education level on the academic performance of their children. The study established that parent-child interaction supported the child’s aspirations and confidence. The study concluded that the parent-child interaction was more pronounced among parents who had attained high levels of learning and their children had a higher academic performance. In Latin America, Desarrrollo (2007) conducted a survey on the influence of parents’ occupation on their children’s academic performance. In the survey, Desarrrollo (2007) established that students whose fathers and mothers are civil servants or other government workers or employees in the private sector are on the average more studious and higher achieving in internal tests than children whose mothers and fathers are housewives and labourers respectively. Desarrrollo (2007) also demonstrated that doctors, engineers and lawyers have the greatest influence on their children’s academic performance. According to the findings of this study, children from this group of civil servants are among the best achievers in any internal tests in schools.

A similar study carried out in Malawi (Kunje, Meke and Ogawa 2009) among wealthy and poor households observed
that wealthier families tended to influence academic performance of their children than poorer families did. Kunje et al (2009) points out those wealthier households encouraged their children to go to school and do their homework. On the other hand, the study established that absenteeism, ill health, malnutrition, hunger and other elements from poor families worked against their growth and academic achievement at school. In another study in Malawi, Brady (2006) conducted a study on the influence of parents’ occupation on their children’s academic performance. The study established that peasant farmers mostly enrolled their children in day schools and used them on their farms when they were supposed to be in school. This, according to Brady (2006) resulted in chronic absenteeism from schools, which negatively influenced students’ academic performance. According to Brady (2006), such responsibilities exhausted the children and were less likely to perform well in examinations.

In Yaoundé, Cameroon, Blakemore and Cooksey (1981) carried out a study on the influence of parents’ education on their children. From the study, it was established that academic performance of students improved with their fathers’ level of education. Children of uneducated parents, argues Blakemore and Cooksey (1981) showed lower levels of performance in examinations. This, according to this study is a common scenario in the third world where most parents are uneducated. Supporting the ‘good home and school’ theory, Tyler (1977) pointed out that students whose parents are rich live in homes and study in schools that provide stimulating environments where they are encouraged to study and are supplied with relevant resources such as books, tables, chairs, cabinets, etc. Such children, according to Tyler (1977) stand better chances of good performance unlike their counterparts whose homes and schools are lacking such facilities and resources.

Adewale (2002) observed that children from poor rural backgrounds where nutritional status was relatively low and hence high health problems enrolled in day public schools and performed poorer at examinations than children from more affluent backgrounds. According to Abagi and Sheila (1994), a family’s social economic status greatly influences children’s academic performance. Poor households, according to Abagi and Sheila (1994) influence participation and performance as children from such economic backgrounds are perpetually absent from school due to unpaid school fees and a myriad other levies.

In Kenya, Jagero (1999) conducted a research on the influence of home and school facilities on students’ academic performance in Kisumu district. The study established that lack of reading materials at home and school was a major factor influencing students’ academic performance in public schools. The study further established that children from households whose mothers and fathers were educated and were enrolled in day schools were more disciplined and performed well in examinations than children whose parents were illiterate. Examining the issue of poverty in Kenya, Onyango (2003) notes that poverty is one major causes of children’s poor academic performance. Onyango (2003) explains that poor families are large and unemployed and are usually peasant farmers. The study established that children from such poor families perform miserably at examinations compared to their counterparts from rich households. This is because students from such families are on the road at the end of every month to look for fees.

In a related study, UNESCO (2002) observed that quality education is influenced by the type of school the learner enrols. If the school is poor there will be minimal support and hence poor academic performance. Machebe (2012) in his study on the influence of parents’ educational background on students’ academic performance established that students whose parents never went to school did worse than those whose fathers and mothers had some formal education and therefore concluded that a parent’s level of education correlated positively with the academic performance of their children in either day or boarding schools. In another study carried out in Kenya on the influence of parents’ occupation on their children’s academic performance which targeted children from a farming community, Mensch and Lloyd (1998) established that most of the farmers send their children to day schools and used them to perform some duties on their farms. This, according to the findings of this study deprived children of valuable time they could use on their homework. This leads to poor academic performance.

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of socio-economic status on standard 8 pupils’ academic performance in primary schools in Mbooni West sub-county, Kenya.

**III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was guided by descriptive survey design. The target population comprised of head teachers, all the standard eight primary school teachers and class eight pupils. The study utilized three methods of data collection namely, use of questionnaire, observation schedule and interview. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences software programme version 22 and presented in tables and graphs while qualitative data from open ended questions was groped per study themes and presented in narratives.

**IV. DISCUSSION OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS.**

The study sought to establish the achievement levels of pupils in day primary schools. The findings are shown in Table 1.
The research findings in Table 1 revealed that (55.60%) of the pupils enrolled in day primary schools scored 249 marks and below at the end of term one Sub County test, in the year 2015. Only (44.40%) of the pupils enrolled in day primary schools achieved 250 marks and above in the same test.

The research findings seem to imply that pupils’ academic performance is a product of wide-ranging factors. This confirms what the researcher established during the interviews with the head teachers. One of the head teachers had this to say, “most students who are day scholars do not get sufficient time to revise when they go home”.

The researcher wanted to find out which variables had the greatest influence on pupils’ academic performance in day primary schools. The analysis is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors that influence pupils’ academic performance in day primary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family source of income</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>44.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ level of education</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ occupation</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of teaching/learning resources</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>34.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research findings in Table 2 indicated that the family’s source of income had the greatest influence on pupils’ academic performance at (44.79%) while the least significant influence on pupils’ academic performance was pupils’ parents’ occupation at (8.59%) of the responses. Parent’s level of education was rated at 11.66% while availability of teaching/learning resources was rated at 34.96. The findings imply that the parent’s source of income had a strong bearing on pupils’ academic performance in day primary schools. The support accorded to the pupil to a larger extent was dictated by availability of funds with some dropping from school because of unavailability of school fees.

The researcher sought to determine the influence of the level of education of parents on their children’s academic performance in day primary schools. The study established that parents whose level of education is high influenced their children’s academic performance positively. On the other hand, low levels of education of parents influenced their children’s academic performance negatively. Further, the research established that parents’ occupation had a significant influence on children’s academic performance in day primary schools. From the research findings and observations, it was clear that parents who had steady flow of income influenced the academic performance of their children. On a negative note, the study established that children whose parents were small scale farmers were more likely to perform poorly in examinations.

V. CONCLUSION

Pupil’s academic performance in day primary schools is a product of many players and actors. Parents’ sources of income either positively or negatively influence pupils’ academic performance in day primary schools and this is determined by the parents’ profession, salary earned and other related factors. Further, parents’ level of education has a strong bearing on their children’s academic performance in day primary school. Where the parents’ level of education was high, the pupils’ academic performance tended to improve. In the context of specific occupations, the study concludes that those pupils from rural farming background were disadvantaged in terms of academic performance and are likely to drop from school.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education should encourage and establish boarding schools for pupils from parents of low Social Economic Status homes. The strategy will help support the children because it will delink them from their homes and domestic chores which leave them physically, emotionally and mentally tired and with no time and energy for home work and personal studies.
The government of Kenya should come up with ways of empowering citizens of low Social Economic Status homes through creation of jobs and provision of loans and grants for local entrepreneurship. This will give them economic power to provide for their children’s education.

The Ministry of Education should increase support of day schools through an enhanced Free Primary Education by providing more finances to cater for infrastructure. The government should also lobby other players in the field of education to support such schools in order to buy sufficient facilities.

REFERENCES


