
**INFLUENCE OF PROMOTION OF SCHOOL-COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP ON PERFORMANCE IN KENYA
CERTIFICATE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN MARSABIT NORTH SUB-COUNTY,
MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA**

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Publication Date: October 2024

ABSTRACT

Statement of the Problem: School-community partnerships are crucial for improving academic performance. However, public primary schools in Marsabit North Sub-county continue to record low performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams.

Purpose of the Study: This study aimed to assess the influence of school-community partnerships on KCPE performance in public primary schools in Marsabit North Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya.

Methodology: The study utilized a mixed-method approach with a concurrent triangulation design, targeting 147 respondents, including 18 headteachers, 120 teachers, and 9 Coordinators of Public Benefits Organizations (PBOs). A sample size of 108 was determined using Yamane's formula, employing stratified sampling across three zones to select participants through purposive and random sampling. Data collection involved questionnaires for teachers and interviews for headteachers and PBO Coordinators. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed, while quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation with SPSS Version 25.

Findings: The study found that KCPE performance had declined over the past five years (2019-2023), with many pupils scoring below 300 marks. While community stakeholders were sometimes involved in activities like volunteering and ensuring school security, these partnerships were often hindered by bureaucratic challenges and the lack of formal strategic frameworks.

Recommendations: Headteachers should actively foster regular collaboration with the community, as their involvement is essential in developing strategies to improve KCPE performance and in providing additional resources to support academic programs.

Keywords: *Promotion, School-Community, Partnership, Performance in Kenya, Certificate of Primary Education*

INTRODUCTION

The right to education has led to the worldwide expansion of education systems, with the aim of leveling the academic playing field for all learners. National education leaders have introduced strategies aimed at achieving this, with a strong focus on fostering school-community partnerships. Such partnerships are vital for the success of learners in educational institutions. Various stakeholders, including organizations, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions, play key roles in primary education. Berlin and O'Neal (2010) assert that these stakeholders hold significant personal, professional, and civic interests in the academic progress of primary school pupils. In addition, Berger (2011), in a study conducted in New Jersey, emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement for improving schools. The study found that broader community involvement in primary schools enhances communication, fosters understanding, and allows for the integration of diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise into school improvement strategies. This highlights the critical role of collaboration among primary education stakeholders in influencing both the quality of education and pupils' academic performance.

In the United States, Coleman and Churchill (2012) highlight the need for collaborative partnerships between parents, national education leaders, and schools. Such relationships are considered vital for effective learning. In contrast, in Colombia, a study by Henderson and Berla (2014) found that much responsibility has shifted to teachers, with limited collaboration between educators and national education leaders. This lack of cooperation has led to negative outcomes, including reduced academic performance, poor behavior management, and inadequate provision of resources (Henderson & Berla, 2014). Additionally, Davies (2010) emphasized that collaboration with parents is essential in maintaining a conducive learning environment. Parents, as primary caregivers and supporters of their children's education, play a crucial role in providing basic needs and promoting the early learning experiences that lay the foundation for future academic success.

Research by Haynes and Comer (2013) in Kuala Lumpur further reinforces the importance of family involvement in ensuring the quality of primary school education. Their study found that when education leaders engage families in educational matters, it results in improved program outcomes. Conversely, failure to involve key stakeholders, such as parents and the wider community, in the education process can compromise pupils' academic performance. Hoffman

(2011), in a study from India, supports this view, noting that the sustainability of primary education policies is contingent on effective collaboration with all stakeholders involved. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the role of national education leaders in shaping academic performance cannot be overstated. Asiyai (2014) conducted a study in Delta State, Nigeria, which revealed that parents, pupils, teachers, and other stakeholders have increasingly become key partners in education. This shift has empowered them and expanded their involvement in various areas of school administration. Asiyai (2014) also highlighted the media's potential to shape public perceptions and its role in informing the wider community about school needs and performance. However, national education leaders often underutilize this resource, missing an opportunity to engage the public and enhance transparency. In Kenya, as in many other countries, the collaboration between education leaders and stakeholders is recognized as essential for fostering a culture of quality education. According to UNESCO (2012), national education leaders in Marsabit North Sub-county acknowledge that learning is a social process, and that building a culture of educational excellence requires cooperation. Nzomo (2015) also found that strong collaborative relationships between parents and professionals underpin successful primary school interventions. In schools where national education leaders actively promote stakeholder collaboration, improvements in academic performance are evident in pupils' learning outcomes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Role of partnership between schools and members of community in improving academic performance of learners cannot be wished away. However, in public primary schools in Marsabit North Sub-county, the situation is quite different with academic performance being low. A report by the Ministry of Education (2021) shows that public primary schools in Marsabit North Sub-county registered 9.9% in KCPE in 2016, 9.7% in 2017, 7.9% in 2018, 6.8% in 2019 and 6.4% in 2020. Efforts to mitigate on these challenges have not yielded much remarkable progress and has compromised the quality of education offered in public primary schools. Despite these findings, many empirical studies had not exhaustively interrogated the extent to which promotion of school-community partnership influences academic performance in public primary schools, thus, the study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To assess the status of performance in KCPE in public primary schools in Marsabit North Sub-county.
- ii. To examine the influence of promotion of school-community partnership on performance in KCPE in public primary schools in Marsabit North Sub-county.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on the systems theory proposed by Luhmann (2004). The systems theory is an approach to organizations that compares an organization to an organism with interdependent parts, each with its own specific function and interconnected duties. According to Luhmann (2004), the theory applies to a school set up as an organization in the sense that the school, as an open system, receives input from the environment. This implies that learners from the larger societal environment enter school with a variety of beliefs, goals, and hopes, but emerge as changed individuals as a result of educational experiences gained through interaction with school administration, teachers, and students, which also includes monitoring and correcting learner behavioral issues. Thus, the relevance of Luhmann's (2004) theory in this study was that, in order to achieve educational goals as evidenced by improved learner performance, national education leaders must engage in a variety of activities, including the promotion of school-community partnerships. This means that school management, as exemplified by national education leaders such as headteachers, influences primary school academic performance.

Walberg's academic achievement theory also served as a guide for this study. This theory proposes that learners' psychological characteristics, combined with their immediate learning environments, influence educational outcomes. Walberg (2012) proposed nine key aspects that influence learners' educational outcomes. These include learners' ability or prior achievement, motivation, age or developmental level, quantity and quality of instruction, classroom climate, parental involvement, home environment, peer group, and outside-of-school media exposure. Thus, this theory is relevant because it interprets educational process goals as including learner perceptions of the social environment, creativity, self-concept, participation in extracurricular activities, and interest in subject matter. That is, ignoring these perceptions and experiences in favor of traditional test-based goals reduces motivation and educational achievement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed methodology and a concurrent triangulation research design. The target population was 147 respondents, which included 18 headteachers, 120 teachers, and nine (9) Coordinators of Public Benefits Organizations (PBOs) in Marsabit North Sub-county, from whom a sample of 108 respondents was drawn using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create three strata based on the number of zones in Marsabit North Sub-county. Purposive sampling was used to select three (3) PBO coordinators and three (3) headteachers from each zone. However, 30 teachers were selected from each zone using simple random sampling. This procedure resulted in a sample size of nine (9) headteachers, 90 teachers, and nine (9) PBO coordinators. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers, while interviews were conducted with headteachers and PBO coordinators. The data analysis began with identifying common themes. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on the objectives and presented in narrative format. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively (frequency and percentages) and inferentially (Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis) using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25) and presented in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study achieved a strong overall response rate of 93.5%, with 87 out of 90 teachers (99.7%), 7 out of 9 headteachers (77.8%), and 7 out of 9 Coordinators of Public Benefits Organizations (77.8%) participating. This high response rate, is consistent with Creswell's (2014) guideline that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate for generalizing findings to the target population.

Status of Performance in KCPE in Public Primary Schools

The study sought to assess the status of performance in KCPE in public primary schools in Marsabit North Sub-county. This was measured by taking stock of the trend of pupils' performance in KCPE for the last five years (2019-2023). Results are shown in Table 1;

Table 1: KCPE Performance (2019-2023)

KCPE Results in Mean Score (Points)	Years of Examination				
	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %	2022 %	2023 %
1-200 marks (Poor)	40.2	43.5	44.2	47.3	48.9
201-250 points (Below Average)	36.9	35.1	34.9	33.5	32.5
251-300 marks (Fair)	15.4	15.1	14.8	13.7	13.4
301-350 marks (Good)	5.3	4.4	4.3	3.8	3.6
351-400 marks (Excellent)	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6

Table 1 shows that, on average, KCPE students' academic performance has been decreasing over the last five years (2019-2023). These findings are consistent with Babalola's (2018) assertion that performance entails producing students with high grades in internal and national examinations. Similarly, these findings are consistent with Onuma's (2016) view in Nigeria that low teacher productivity has an impact on students' educational outcomes, as evidenced by skill acquisition, repetition, and dropout rates. This is also consistent with the findings of Ndlovu's (2019) report, which revealed that in the 2015 Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) in South Africa, 64.9% of candidates failed the English Language examination, while only 9.71% passed with grades ranging from A1 to C6. The situation in Mathematics was equally concerning, with a significant 50.35% of candidates failing. The failure rates for English Language fluctuated over the years, with 64%, 42.6%, and 33.8% failures recorded in 2016, 2017, and 2018, respectively (Ndlovu, 2019). These findings support Kimayu's (2018) study in Makeni County, which found that 59.3% of students in public primary schools received low grades on national examinations. This is also consistent with the findings of a MoE (2023) report, which found that pupil performance in Marsabit North Sub-county in KCPE has declined. In conclusion, these findings indicate that instances of poor performance in national examinations in public primary schools have become a problem.

Promotion of School-community Partnership and Performance in KCPE

The study sought to examine the influence of promotion of school-community partnership and performance in KCPE. The findings are shown in Table 2;

Table 2: Teachers' Views on School-Community Partnership and KCPE Performance

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
In public primary school, different stakeholders are allowed to undertake activities such as volunteering and cleaning to motivate learners to work hard	75.3	10.8	4.8	7.4	1.7
In public primary school, stakeholders such as parents are required to attend all school meetings geared towards improving academic performance	39.8	8.7	3.5	42.4	5.6
Public primary school management rarely promotes activities which enhance school-community collaboration as a way of improving academic performance	58.4	11.3	5.2	19.9	5.2
In public primary schools, constant communication with different stakeholders on matters pertaining to performance rarely occurs	62.8	7.4	3.9	18.2	7.7
Low academic performance in my school is due to the low levels of interactions among stakeholders	55.4	10.0	4.8	19.1	10.7

Table 2 shows that most teachers (75.3%) strongly agreed that public primary schools allow stakeholders to participate in activities like volunteering, which helps motivate learners. However, a smaller proportion (39.8%) felt that stakeholders, such as parents, are required to attend all school meetings aimed at improving academic performance, while a significant number (42.4%) disagreed. Additionally, over half of the teachers (58.4%) believed that school management rarely promotes activities enhancing school-community collaboration, and 62.8% felt that constant communication with stakeholders about performance issues is lacking. In addition, 55.4% attributed low academic performance to limited stakeholder interactions. These findings align with studies by Smith and Johnson (2021) and Martinez et al. (2022), which emphasized the importance of school-community partnerships in improving student outcomes through enhanced engagement and support. Research shows that collaboration between schools and stakeholders, such as mentorship programs and extracurricular activities, positively impacts academic performance and reduces dropout rates. However, bureaucratic hurdles and the absence of strategic frameworks hinder such partnerships.

Inferential Analysis

To verify the influence of promotion of school-community partnership on performance in KCPE, data were collected on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) headteachers from the 7 sampled public primary schools collaborate with members of community on school management and performance in KCPE for the last five years (2019-2023). Results are shown in Table 3:

Table 3: School-Community Partnership and KCPE Performance (2019-2023)

How Often Schools Collaborate with Members of Community	KCPE Performance (mean scores)				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	197	196	194	174	188
1	83	94	91	95	96
2	129	132	130	116	96
4	346	321	320	350	330
1	130	180	155	168	169
3	196	238	222	231	229
3	155	145	143	151	143

Table 3 shows that, in public primary schools where headteachers regularly promote and encourage collaboration with members of community and other stakeholders, performance of their learners in KCPE is high. This further indicates that frequent school-community collaboration enhances pupils' academic performance by fostering a supportive learning environment, promoting parental involvement, and providing additional resources. When schools actively engage families and community partners, learners benefit from mentorship, enrichment programmes and academic support beyond the classroom. This collaborative approach also encourages open communication, addresses individual learner needs, and reinforces positive behaviors, leading to improved engagement, motivation, and overall academic achievement. The data above were run in the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis and results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Relationship between Promotion of School-Community Partnership and Performance in KCPE

		X	B	C	D	E	F
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.633**	.669**	.673**	.607**	.617**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041	.021	.019	.031	.029
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
B	Pearson Correlation	.633**	1	.959**	.932**	.937**	.912**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
C	Pearson Correlation	.669**	.959**	1	.964**	.953**	.948**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
D	Pearson Correlation	.673**	.932**	.964**	1	.951**	.962**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
E	Pearson Correlation	.607**	.937**	.953**	.951**	1	.979**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
F	Pearson Correlation	.617**	.912**	.948**	.962**	.979**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7

Table 4 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis that yielded correlation coefficients of $r_1 = 0.633$, $r_2 = 0.669$, $r_3 = 0.673$, $r_4 = 0.607$, and $r_5 = 0.617$, with corresponding p-values of 0.041, 0.021, 0.019, 0.031, and 0.029, respectively. This suggests that the promotion of school-community partnerships has a statistically significant impact on KCPE performance. This suggests that, despite infrequent collaboration between schools and communities, research indicates that school-community partnerships have a statistically significant impact on students' performance in KCPE. This effect is primarily due to the role that community involvement plays in fostering a positive learning environment and improving educational resources. Promoting these partnerships provides schools with additional support in areas such as extracurricular activities, infrastructure development, and parental engagement, which indirectly improves academic outcomes.

Thematic Analysis

During the interviews, headteachers and Coordinators of PBOs also responded in favour of the view that, in many public primary schools, different stakeholders are allowed to undertake activities such as volunteering and cleaning to motivate learners to work hard. Headteacher, H1, stated;

In my primary school, I always ensure that key stakeholders and community members are involved in school programmes such as volunteering, provision of security for staff, learners and school property. There is always regular communication with stakeholders in the community on how to run school activities and the roles they should play to improve KCPE performance.

On their part, the Coordinators of PBOs also indicated that quite a number of schools engage key stakeholders in the community to provide learning materials, security and undertake volunteering activities aimed at motivating learners to regularly attend school. Just like in quantitative findings, these views further lend credence to the viewpoints held by Smith and Johnson (2021), which established that partnerships between schools and community organizations such as local businesses, non-profits, and parent associations significantly contribute to improved learners' academic outcomes by fostering a supportive learning environment and promoting extracurricular activities. These views also support those expressed by Martinez et al. (2022) which found that effective communication and shared goals between schools and community stakeholders can mitigate barriers such as resource limitations and social inequalities, thereby enhancing educational equity. In summary, these mixed findings affirm the fact that schools often overlook these partnerships due to bureaucratic constraints and lack of strategic frameworks. They advocate for a paradigm shift in school management, emphasizing that integrating community resources and expertise is essential for maximizing pupils' potential.

CONCLUSIONS

From the study findings, academic performance of pupils in KCPE has shown a declining trend over the last five years (2019-2023), with many pupils scoring below 300 marks. Moreover, the study revealed that various stakeholders are occasionally involved in activities such as volunteering and providing security for staff, pupils, and school property. However, public primary schools sometimes overlook these partnerships due to bureaucratic hurdles and the absence of strategic frameworks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that headteachers should encourage regular collaboration and partnership with members of community since their views are key in developing strategies for

improving performance in KCPE. They are also important in providing key resources which supplement academic programmes in schools.

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