

Ways of Improving the Quality of Education in Primary Schools

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Abstract- Quality education entails proper implementation of the curriculum's formal, non-formal, and informal dimensions. Quality education is reflected in performance in national examinations, where private schools tend to outperform public schools in Kenya. This study aimed to identify ways of improving the quality of education in primary schools by examining practices in private schools that contribute to their better performance. A sample of 13 head teachers, 56 teachers, and 405 students from 45 private schools in Bungoma County, Kenya, was used. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The study concluded that ensuring sufficient teaching and learning resources, manageable class sizes, adequate staffing, teacher appraisal, and motivation are vital for improving the quality of education.

Indexed Terms- Quality education, Primary schools

I. INTRODUCTION

The provision of quality education is a fundamental goal for any education system, as it plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals and societies. In Kenya, the quality of education in primary schools has been a subject of concern and debate, particularly regarding the disparities observed between public and private institutions. While private primary schools have consistently demonstrated better performance in national examinations, public schools often grapple with challenges that hinder their ability to provide quality education.

The concept of quality education encompasses the proper implementation of the curriculum's formal, non-formal, and informal dimensions. It is a multifaceted concept that involves various factors, including the availability of teaching and learning resources, class size, staffing levels, teacher

appraisal, and motivation. These factors have a direct impact on the learning environment, instructional effectiveness, and ultimately, student performance.

One of the most significant indicators of quality education in Kenya is the performance in national examinations, such as the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). Private primary schools have consistently outperformed their public counterparts in these examinations, raising questions about the underlying factors contributing to this disparity. While some argue that private schools enjoy privileges and resources unavailable to public institutions, it is essential to understand the practices and strategies employed by private schools that foster a conducive learning environment and enhance student achievement.

This study aims to explore the ways in which private primary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya, have been able to provide quality education, as evidenced by their better performance in national examinations. By examining factors such as teaching and learning resources, class size, staffing levels, teacher appraisal, and motivation, the study seeks to identify best practices that can be adopted or adapted by public primary schools to improve the quality of education they offer.

Understanding the strategies and approaches employed by successful private primary schools can inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in developing effective measures to enhance the quality of education in public institutions. Ultimately, this research endeavors to contribute to the ongoing efforts to ensure equitable access to quality education for all children in Kenya, regardless of their socioeconomic background or the type of school they attend.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The quality of education is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various factors contributing to the effective delivery of educational services and the achievement of desired learning outcomes. Researchers have extensively studied the influence of teaching and learning resources, class size, staffing levels, teacher appraisal, and motivation on the quality of education and student performance.

2.1 Teaching and Learning Resources

Adequate teaching and learning resources, such as desks, chairs, textbooks, and instructional materials, are essential for creating a conducive learning environment and enhancing the quality of education (Lattif & Muhammad, 2021). A study by the Center for Open Education (2021) highlighted the importance of textbooks in promoting effective learning, as they provide structured content, examples, and exercises that support the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

2.2 Class Size

Class size is another critical factor that influences the quality of education. Smaller class sizes are often associated with improved student performance and increased teacher-student interactions (Salilu & Hossain, 2016). Manageable class sizes allow teachers to provide individualized attention, monitor student progress effectively, and employ diverse teaching strategies to cater to different learning needs (Ashley et al., 2014).

2.3 Staffing Levels

Appropriate staffing levels, including an adequate number of qualified teachers and a favorable pupil-teacher ratio, are crucial for maintaining the quality of education. A study by Mwingi and Muthaa (2015) revealed that high enrollment trends in public primary schools led to overworked staff members, inadequate teaching and learning facilities, and poor sanitation facilities, ultimately impacting the quality of learning.

2.4 Teacher Appraisal and Motivation

Teacher appraisal and motivation are essential components of quality education. Regular performance appraisals can help identify areas for

improvement and facilitate professional development opportunities for teachers (Osati, 2019). Additionally, motivated teachers are more likely to be engaged, committed, and dedicated to their profession, positively influencing student learning outcomes (Edinah, 2017).

These factors, among others, have been extensively researched, and their impact on the quality of education has been widely documented. However, it is crucial to understand the specific practices and strategies employed by successful private primary schools in Kenya, as they have consistently demonstrated better performance in national examinations compared to their public counterparts.

III. METHODOLOGY RESEARCH

3.1 Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population included 45 private primary schools, 45 head teachers, 186 teachers, and 1,350 students in Bungoma County, Kenya. A sample size of 30% of the target population was used, with purposive and simple random sampling techniques employed.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the research instruments. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science Software (SPSS), with percentages, tables, charts, and graphs employed for data presentation. Qualitative data were analyzed using an explanatory approach.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study investigated various factors contributing to the quality of education in private primary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya, and their influence on performance in national examinations.

4.1 Availability of Teaching and Learning Resources

The study found that most private primary schools had adequate teaching and learning resources, including desks, chairs, textbooks, charts, storybooks, and playgrounds. Specifically, 61.8% of respondents strongly agreed that their schools had enough desks for all pupils, while 55.35% strongly agreed that teachers had adequate tables. Regarding textbooks, 50% of respondents indicated a pupil-to-book ratio of 2:1, which is considered favorable for effective learning.

The adequacy of teaching and learning resources was found to have a significant positive influence on performance in national examinations. The logistic regression model showed that an improvement in teaching and learning facilities was associated with an increased likelihood of exhibiting an improvement in performance (Odds Ratio = 1.884315, $p = 0.000$).

4.2 Class Size and Performance

The study revealed that most private primary schools had manageable class sizes, with 20.2% of respondents reporting class sizes between 15 and 20 pupils, and 30.9% reporting class sizes between 21 and 25 pupils. Smaller class sizes were associated with better performance in national examinations, as they allow for more teacher-student interaction and individualized attention.

The Chi-Square test results indicated a significant association between class size and students' performance in their examinations ($\chi^2 = 17.801$, $p = 0.038$). The strength of the association was strong and negative ($\gamma = -0.403$, $p = 0.037$), suggesting that smaller class sizes were associated with better performance.

4.3 Staffing Levels and Quality Education

The study found that teachers in private primary schools had a relatively lighter workload, with 33.3% of respondents indicating that each teacher taught between 25 and 30 lessons per week, and another 33.3% reporting 15 to 19 lessons per week. The manageable workload allowed teachers ample time for teaching, assigning and marking assignments, and providing one-on-one interactions with students. The Chi-Square test results showed a significant association between teachers' workload and students'

performance in their examinations ($\chi^2 = 12.383$, $p = 0.006$). The strength of the association was strong and negative ($\gamma = -0.620$, $p = 0.006$), indicating that a lower workload for teachers was associated with better student performance.

4.4 Teacher Appraisal and Motivation

The study found that teacher appraisal and motivation were widely practiced in private primary schools. Approximately 88.5% of respondents indicated that teacher appraisal was conducted, while 94.5% reported that teachers were motivated in their work, primarily through personal recognition and incentives.

The Chi-Square test results revealed a significant association between teacher appraisal and students' performance in their examinations ($\chi^2 = 17.455$, $p = 0.042$). This finding suggests that regular teacher appraisal and motivation contribute to improved student performance by enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

The results of this study highlight the importance of various factors, such as adequate teaching and learning resources, manageable class sizes, appropriate staffing levels, teacher appraisal, and motivation, in improving the quality of education and fostering better performance in national examinations. These findings can inform policymakers, school administrators, and stakeholders in developing strategies to enhance the quality of education in both private and public primary schools in Kenya.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that ensuring sufficient teaching and learning resources, manageable class sizes, adequate staffing, teacher appraisal, and motivation are crucial for improving the quality of education and enhancing performance in national examinations in primary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the quality of education in primary schools in Kenya:

1. Provision of Adequate Teaching and Learning Resources:

- The government and school authorities should allocate sufficient funds to ensure that all primary schools have access to essential teaching and learning resources, including desks, chairs, textbooks, instructional materials, and playground facilities.
- Partnerships with non-governmental organizations, private sector entities, and community stakeholders can be explored to supplement resources and support the procurement of educational materials.

2. Maintaining Manageable Class Sizes:

- Policy measures should be implemented to regulate class sizes in primary schools, aiming for a maximum of 25-30 students per class to facilitate effective teaching and learning.
- Additional classrooms and infrastructure should be constructed, and more teachers should be recruited to accommodate the increasing student population while maintaining optimal class sizes.

3. Appropriate Staffing and Workload Management:

- The government should prioritize the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers to ensure adequate staffing levels in primary schools.
- School administrators should implement strategies to distribute workloads equitably among teachers, ensuring that their teaching responsibilities are manageable and allow sufficient time for lesson preparation, marking assignments, and providing individualized attention to students.

4. Regular Teacher Appraisal and Motivation:

- A comprehensive teacher appraisal system should be established to evaluate performance, identify areas for improvement, and provide professional development opportunities.
- Incentive and recognition programs should be developed to motivate and reward outstanding teachers, fostering a culture of excellence and commitment to quality education.

5. Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:

- Platforms should be created for public and private primary schools to collaborate, share best practices, and learn from each other's experiences in providing quality education.

- Workshops, seminars, and professional development programs should be organized to facilitate the exchange of ideas, strategies, and innovative approaches to enhance teaching and learning.

6. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:

- A robust monitoring and evaluation system should be implemented to assess the quality of education in primary schools regularly.
- Data on student performance, teacher effectiveness, and resource utilization should be collected and analyzed to inform decision-making and drive continuous improvement efforts.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders in the education sector can work towards improving the quality of education in primary schools, ensuring that all children in Kenya have access to a conducive learning environment and the opportunity to reach their full potential.

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