

Effects of Parental Visitation on Student's Performance in National Examinations in Public Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia West, Kenya

Peter Chemaget

Department of Educational Planning & Management, Kibabii University, Bungoma, Kenya

ABSTRACT

Parents make a greater contribution on academic performance of public secondary schools in Kenya. However, most of the public secondary schools have continued to perform poorly in examinations in the last five years. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of parental visitation to school on performance in national examination in public secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West. The study was based on Epstein's integrated theory of family-school relations, which is characterized by a set of overlapping spheres of influence. The study adopted a survey design. The research was both descriptive and correlation in nature. The target population for this study was 29 principals, 290 teachers, 11600 students and 11600 parents. The sample size was 9 principals, 87 teachers, 620 parents and 620 students for the two zones. Simple random sampling was used in selecting 9 schools, purposive sampling was used to select principals of the sampled schools, simple random sampling to select teachers. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select parents while stratified random sampling was used to select students based on their class level. Questionnaires, interview schedules, document analysis and observation were the methods used for data collection. Questionnaires were administered by a research assistant who also ensured that completed questionnaires were returned. Data gathered was analysed using statistical package for social sciences and presented in frequency tables, percentages, graphs and pie charts. The findings indicated that most of parents expected good performance from their children, but were not visiting the Schools. This greatly affected the performance of the students. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that parents' visitation to schools leads to improved academic achievement of the students.

KEYWORDS: Academic, Effects, Parental, Performance, Visitation

1. INTRODUCTION

Parents should be concerned with what their children undergo while in school. Parents visit the school during admission, parents' day, academic days, Annual General Meetings, visiting days and when dealing with disciplinary issues.

Parents have traditionally been involved with the school through such activities as parent-teacher conferences, attendance at PTA or school functions, and child-delivered memos. Although these activities seem rather passive, several studies have found a direct relationship between them and student achievement. During the academic year, most schools

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in the U.S. invite parents to come in for regular parent-teacher conferences. A parent-teacher conference is a meeting between Parents and teachers to discuss the students' progress in school. This meeting may take place as part of the regularly-scheduled conferences held by the school each year, or the teacher may contact a parent to schedule a meeting at other times during the school year. Parents can also request a conference with teachers if they have questions or concerns about their children by contacting the teachers to set up the meeting. Whether the student is having a positive or negative experience

in school, parent-teacher conferences help Parents and teachers to find ways to work together to ensure students success.

As society has become more complex and demanding, though, these relationships have all too often fallen by the wayside. Neither educators nor parents have enough time to get to know one another and establish working relationships on behalf of Students. In many communities, parents are discouraged from spending time in schools and educators are expected to consult with family members only when the student is in trouble. The result, in too many cases, is misunderstanding, mistrust, and a lack of respect, so that when the student falls behind, teachers blame the parents and parents blame the teachers. This can be avoided by often visits to schools by parents. School visits afford one of the best means to gain information about the educational program and to observe a child's performance in a classroom learning situation. In order to maintain security for all students and to avoid conflict with scheduled events or the disruption of critical educational activities (such as testing), the administration is required to approve all parent visitations. Visitations should last NO longer than 1-2 hours. Children should not accompany adults on these visits due to the distraction they may cause for the classroom students. The best way for parents to learn about the quality of public schools is by observing teachers in the classroom and seeing how the principal leads the school. A carefully scripted tour does not give parents a complete picture of a school. Principals and teachers should make every reasonable accommodation to show parents how their schools operate every day so that parents can make informed decisions about how to provide a high-quality education for their children.

The best schools have an open-door policy because they are proud of their academic programs. Of course, parents should schedule visits so that schools aren't overwhelmed with visitors, which can interfere with instruction. As a parent and an educator, I would be wary of schools that make visitation difficult. Schools should organize open houses during daytime, evening and weekend hours to accommodate parents' diverse schedules. At these open houses, parents, students and faculty present and respond to questions. We follow up with classroom tours where our teams can be seen in action. Parents tend to be more involved in their children's education at home than at school but this is changing. The 26th Annual PhiDelta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude toward the Public Schools finds that over the past decade the frequency of family contact with the schools has doubled. Areas

showing the greatest gains are attendance at school board meetings, attendance at meetings dealing with school problems, and attendance at plays, concerts, and athletic events (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994).

Henderson (1994) states that, parents are eager to play all roles at school. According to (Brittle, 1994), when parents provide volunteer assistance, act as audience for programs, and/or take part in the decision making process, they benefit the school, all children, and themselves. Several studies have addressed the importance of parent involvement within the school. A survey by (Dornbush, 1986) found that, regardless of the parents' educational level, there is a strong relationship between their degree of participation in school functions and their children's grades. Similar findings were reported from a study by (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). These researchers discovered that, although the mother's education is a wrong predictor of parent involvement with the school (and success), parent involvement itself has a significantly important influence on school performance. Thus, even parents with poor educational background(s) who are involved with their child's school activities can influence achievement outcomes.

Other evidence suggests that when parents participate in school-related activities, they not only have a more positive view of the school (Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989) but their children have better attendance, better behaviour and higher achievement motivation. It would be reasonable to conclude that this results from the children adopting their parents' attitudes towards school. Auerbach (2007), for instance, asserts that parent involvement is socially constructed and politically contested through the lenses of race, class, culture and gender. Low-income parents are often underrepresented among the ranks of parents involved with the schools. There are numerous reasons for this: lack of time or energy (due to long hours of heavy physical labor, for example), embarrassment or shyness about one's own educational level or linguistic abilities, lack of understanding or information about the structure of the school and accepted communication channels, perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administrators, and teachers and administrators' assumptions of parents' disinterest or inability to help with children's schooling.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design- Descriptive survey design is one in which information is collected without changing the environment, that is, nothing is manipulated (Best & Kahn, 2007). A descriptive study can provide information about the naturally occurring health

status, behaviour, attitude or other characteristic of a particular group. Descriptive studies can answer questions such as what is, or what was. Both primary and secondary data sources were used. The descriptive research design was relevant in this study since it enabled the research to answer research questions which were “what” in nature.

Study Area- Geographically, the study was conducted in Trans-Nzoia- West Sub-county. Tans-Nzoia West is found in Western part of Kenya in the former Rift Valley province. It is located about 400km North West of Nairobi on the Trans African highway and 120km north of equator. Trans-Nzoia is situated in the shadows of Mt. Mount Elgon, a massive solitary volcanic mountain on the border of eastern Uganda and western Kenya. Trans- Nzoia has a cool and temperate climate with average annual temperatures ranging between a minimum of 10°C to a maximum of 27°C. The elevation of Trans-Nzoia West Sub-county varies from 2100 meters to 2700 meters above sea level.

The main economic activities are maize, coffee and tea growing and dairy farming. Natural resources available are wildlife and forestry. The Sub-county is characterized by the presence of fast-growing secondary schools. The settlement of the study area is cosmopolitan in nature and there is a variety of schools ranging from single stream, single sex, mixed and multiple streams. Most parents are peasants and may not fully involve in the education of their children.

Target Population- The target population in this study consist of, 23519 (Parents, PTA, BOM and students in public secondary schools in Saboti and Central zones of Trans-Nzoia West Sub-County), 290 teachers from 29 schools and 29 principals of those public secondary schools in two zones. The student population for the study is 11600 students from the 29 public secondary schools in the Saboti and Central zones, according to data available at the county education office February 2015.

The population was summarized as follows;

Table 1 Target population and Sample Size

| Category | Population | Sample | Percent |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| Principals | 29 | 9 | 30% |
| Teachers | 290 | 87 | 30% |
| Parents | 11600 | 620 | 5.3% |
| Students | 11600 | 620 | 5.3% |
| Total | 23519 | 1336 | |

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size- In order to produce statistically valid results through the utilization of multivariate analytical techniques, a large sample size is required (Hair et al, 1995). For the purposes of this study the sample consisted of 9 principals drawn from the 9 schools; 2 County boys only schools, 3 Sub-County girls schools and 4 Sub-County mixed schools from the two zones of Central and Saboti, 87 teachers drawn from 290 teachers in the two zones according to (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), 620 parents and 620 students were selected from the two zones, based on Krejcie and Morgan(1970) see table 1 above for sample size determination for a given population. There are 29 secondary schools in Saboti and Central zones of Trans-Nzoia- West Sub-county. Stratified simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 9 schools. Thereafter, purposive sampling technique was used to select the principals of the sampled schools.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Parent Visitation to the School

The study sought to investigate the effect of parental visitation to school on academic performance in public secondary schools in Trans Nzoia West sub-county. The Response was analysed and the result was as shown in the table 2 below;

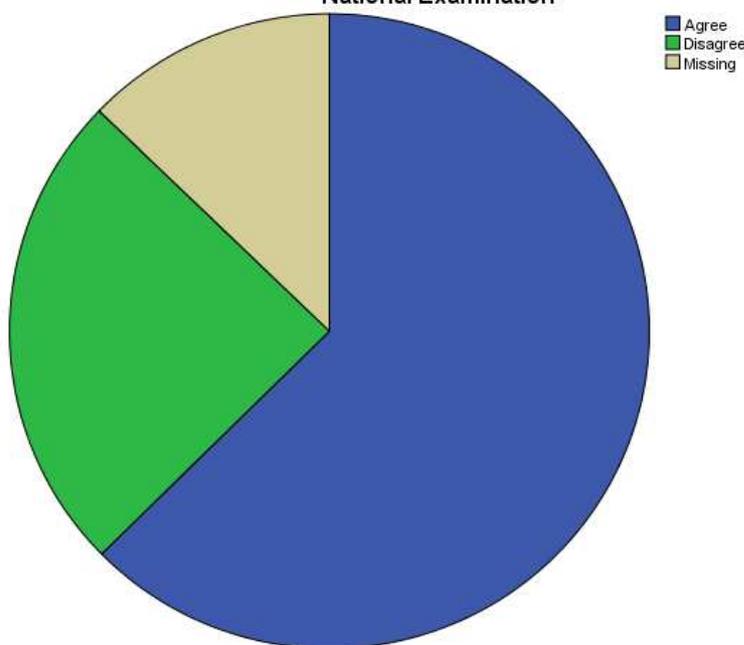
Table 2 Parental Visitation to School

| N = 1126 | Mean | Std. Dev. | Skewness | Agree | | Disagree | | Missing |
|--|------|-----------|----------|-------|---------|----------|---------|---------|
| | | | | N | Percent | N | Percent | |
| Parent Visitation to Schools Influence Students' Academic Performance in National Examination. | 1.28 | 0.450 | 0.970 | 705 | 71.8% | 277 | 28.2% | 144 |
| Parents Discuss Academic Progress of their Students with Teachers During AGM Occasions | 1.20 | 0.399 | 1.514 | 690 | 80.1% | 171 | 19.9% | 265 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|-------|--------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| Parents Discus Academic Progress of their Students with Teachers During Open Days Occasions | 1.59 | 0.492 | -0.363 | 334 | 41.1% | 479 | 58.9% | 313 |
| Parents Discus Academic Progress of their Students with Teachers During Opening Day | 1.64 | 0.481 | -0.579 | 308 | 36.1% | 545 | 63.9% | 273 |
| Parent Visitation during Discipline cases Influence Students' Academic Performance in National Examination | 1.14 | 0.347 | 2.078 | 866 | 86.0% | 141 | 14.0% | 119 |
| Parents Discus Academic Progress of their Students with Teachers During Academic Day Occasions | 1.10 | 0.306 | 2.593 | 936 | 89.6% | 109 | 10.4% | 81 |
| Parents Discus Academic Progress of their Students with Teachers During Visiting Day Occasions | 1.55 | 0.497 | -0.221 | 374 | 44.5% | 466 | 55.5% | 286 |

Source: Author, 2017

Figure 1
Parent Vistation to Schools Influence Students' Accademic Performance in National Examination



Source: Author, 2017

Majority of the respondents were in agreement with the two variables. On parent visitation to schools influence students' academic performance in national examination variable, 705 out of 982 responses agreed giving a percentage of 71.8% while 277 disagreed giving a percentage of 28.2% of the total. The mean for this variable was at 1.28 and the standard deviation was 0.450. For the variable, parental visitation during discipline cases influence students' academic performance in national examination, 866 out of the 1007 responses agreed with a percentage of 86.0% while 141 disagreed with a percentage of 14.0%. The mean for the variable was at 1.14 and the standard deviation was at 0.347. The two Variables show that there is a positive correlation that parental visitation to schools influence students' academic performance in national examination.

Sternberg's (Republic of Kenya, laws of Kenya 2008) is in agreement that the type of parental involvement that draws parents in the school physically is the most effective in improving academic achievement; attending school programme; extra-curricular activities, conferences and back to meets. It concludes that "when parents come to school regularly it reinforces the view in that child's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life" and this leads to better performance in national examination.

4. CONCLUSION

On the issue of the parental visitation to schools, the research findings reveals that large number of parents do not visit school to discuss their children's academic affairs. In the interviews, it was found that some parents hardly check their children exercise

books because they do not know english language which was used in secondary school curriculum. However, it was raised that some parents do not cooperate with school to look in to education matters of their children which lead to poor performance.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should advise parents to cooperate with school administration through close supervision of their children academic progress and through balancing of domestic chores with studies at home. This will improve performance of students. School system should introduce and make sustainable counselling unity to deal with students. This will help to solve some of the problems originating from their parents as well as helping them to cope with those problems. This has to mean that school guidance and counselling has to be strengthened in secondary schools to respond to the needs of students who their home settings do not encourage home learning. This can be done by allowing parents to frequently visit schools so as to check the where about of their students.

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