CAUSES OF POOR PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN KENYAN

SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF CHESOEN ZONE, BOMET CENTRAL

CONSTITUENCY -BOMET COUNTY KENYA

BY:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is a result of my own effort and has never been submitted

For any award in any other university or institution of higher learning.

Signature .. ……………….. .

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Date: ….. …………………. ..

Submitted with my approval of the university supervisor

Dr. Elizabeth Asewe

Signature……………….. Date…………………….

MAASAI MARA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Acknowledgement

To God I am so grateful for His provision and grace that enabled me to accomplish this

Work. My special thanks go to my supervisor Dr. Elizabeth Asewe for his immense intellectual guidance and contribution. I cannot forget to express my thanks to my siblings, Dan, Brenda and Tyrell. I am also grateful to my roommate Amos for his patience and encouragement. Members of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Maasai Mara university at large cannot go without appreciation. Lastly to my lovely parents Sheryl and Raymond whose

encouragement ,love and support kept me focused throughout this journey, I appreciate you all. May God

Bless you.

**DEDICATION**

To my parents, my siblings, friends, students and my future children.

ABSTRACT

This proposal will deal with the causes of poor performance of students in English language in Kenyan public secondary schools. The study will be conducted in fifteen selected secondary schools from 5 different sub locations covering urban, suburban and rural areas. This research proposal aims to identify the causes of poor performance in English language in secondary schools in Kenya and suggest possible solutions.

The study will utilize a descriptive survey research design and purposive sampling to collect data from selected secondary schools. Data will be collected through interviews and questionnaires. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify the different causes of poor performance in English language, their contribution to overall poor performance, and possible solutions to address the identified causes.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. **Background of the study**

English is the core subject in secondary school and the performance in it has contributed to poor performance in other subjects.

In Kenya, English is considered the official language and it is used in government offices and other formal settings. The subject is also a major determinant in choosing careers and courses. English is recognized as the global language because it has large number of speakers globally. Most of the subjects in secondary schools are taught in English except for other languages such as German, French and Kiswahili. English being a medium of communication and instructions has made it necessary for language skills to be introduced at early years of children’s Education. These language skills include reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The ministry of education made English a compulsory subject right from elementary school. It is attracting attention on how students are failing English and in turn affecting their overall performance and limiting them from securing their desired careers.

The researcher being the student teacher of English has observed that many students in Chesoen zone are missing places at universities even when they have performed well in other subjects due to poor performance in English. The cause of this is yet to be established. This reason drove the researcher to carry the research and come up with specific causes of poor performance in English language in secondary schools.

**1.1 Statement of the problem**

This study will focus on establishing the reasons as to why students are performing poorly in English as a subject.

**1 .2 Scope of study**

This study focused on secondary schools found within Chesoen zone Bomet county that are in category of public schools. The public secondary schools on the zone are operated under the same legal structure and their curriculum is the same. The study confined itself to principals, Head of Academic Departments, teachers and students. The study specific area of investigation is causes of poor performance of students in English in public secondary schools in Bomet county, Chesoen ward.

* 1. **Limitation of the study**

The information obtained in the study was dependent on the willingness and honesty of individual participants. The study was undertaken out in sampled public secondary schools only located in Chesoen ward Bomet county. As a result of this, the findings of this study was limited to public secondary schools in Bomet county Chesoen ward. The results cannot be generalized to apply to all counties found in Kenya or even private schools in Bomet County.

Another limitation is time which did not allow for a census to be undertaken in all public secondary schools found within Chesoen ward Bomet county. All the public secondary schools in Kenya run under same legal structure and curriculum however the study did not make any attempt to generalize the findings to the whole country of Kenya.

* 1. **Objectives of the study**

The main objectives of this research project were to:

1. Identify the causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students in Kenya.

2. Analyze the extent to which each of the causes contributes to the overall poor performance.

3. Explore the possible solutions to the identified causes of poor performance in English language.

**1.5 Research Questions:**

To facilitate the achievement of the above objectives, the study seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the major causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students in Kenya?

2. To what extent do the causes identified affect the overall performance of students in English language?

3. What are the possible solutions to the identified causes of poor performance in English language?

* 1. **Significance of the study**

This research is important in providing insight into the Education sector in terms of coming up with methods of teaching English in secondary schools through the knowledge that will be generated.

The study will shed light on the causes of poor performance of students in English and to help Education stakeholders and policy makers to maximize on curriculum implementation to realize increased efficiency.

This study’s findings will provide feedback on causes of poor performance in English, extend to which the causes affect the overall performance of the students and the possible solutions and this will provide guide to school curriculum implementers, principals, teaching and policy makers to adjust on these causes and provide a lasting solution, and improve resource allocation with aim of improving performance of English language.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.1 INTRODUCTION**

English language is a fundamental subject in Kenya’s education system, serving as a prerequisite to pursue a range of academic and career possibilities. However, despite the significance of English language, secondary school students in Kenya continue to perform poorly in the subject. This literature review aims to identify the causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students in Kenya, analyze the extent to which each of the causes contributes to the overall poor performance, and explore possible solutions to the identified causes.

**2.2 Causes of Poor Performance in English Language**

Poor preparation by teachers is one of the primary causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students in Kenya. Research has shown that teachers fail to provide adequate instruction in English language, and they lack the necessary skills to teach language efficiently (Ndlovu & Mafukata, 2019). Additionally, teachers have limited access to instructional materials and lack appropriate professional development to enhance their teaching skills, which significantly hinders students’ proficiency in English language.

Secondly, students’ low motivation, negative attitudes, and poor study habits contribute to the overall poor performance in English language. Studies show that many students in secondary schools lack motivation to learn, and their negative attitudes towards English language are reflected in their poor performance (Akinsola & Aladejana, 2019). Furthermore, students lack the necessary study techniques, such as note-taking, active listening, and summarization, to comprehend English language and excel in it.

Another factor contributing to poor performance in English language among secondary school students is the language barrier. English is the second language for many students in Kenya, and this poses a significant challenge to their ability to learn effectively. The language barrier hinders students’ comprehension and communication capacities, leading to poor performance (Awiti et al., 2021).

**2.3 Extent of Contribution of Each Cause**

The causes of poor performance in English language significantly contribute to the overall poor performance of secondary school students in Kenya. However, the extent to which each cause influences poor performance varies. The lack of adequate preparation by teachers appears to have a more significant impact on poor performance in English language than other causes. This is based on the evidence that inadequate instruction and insufficient instructional materials and professional development impede students’ ability to excel (Ndlovu & Mafukata, 2019).

Students’ poor motivation and negative attitudes also influence poor performance in English language, albeit to a lesser extent. These attitudes manifest in a lack of effort, poor attendance, and disengagement from learning (Akinsola & Aladejana, 2019).

**2.4 Solutions to the Identified Causes of Poor Performance in English Language**

Several strategies can tackle the identified causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students in Kenya. One approach is to improve teachers’ preparation and instructional methods. This can be achieved through providing adequate teaching resources and professional development opportunities for teachers. Additionally, promoting an inclusive classroom environment, collaborative lesson planning, and peer mentoring can go a long way in improving the quality of instruction.

Another approach is to motivate students and instill positive learning attitudes towards the subject. This can be achieved through creating interactive and engaging lessons, promoting a positive learning environment, providing encouragement and recognition, and tapping into students’ interests and learning styles.

Lastly, addressing the language barrier through providing language support can also enhance students’ performance in English language. This can involve offering language courses that aim to improve students’ oral and written language proficiency or providing language support through technologies such as translation tools or tutors.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

**3.0 Introduction**

In chapter three, there is the presentation of the research design. The study population

and location are also discussed. The chapter also presents sampling techniques,

instruments used for data collection, procedures employed in collecting data, data

analysis and ethical consideration.

* 1. **Research Design**

The research employed descriptive survey approach which encompass both qualitative and quantitative data to provide relevant and accurate information.

* 1. **Location of the study**

The study was carried out in Chesoen ward, Bomet central constituency, Bomet county Kenya.

* 1. **Study population**

Teachers, Heads of academic Departments, principals and students from the sampled schools were respondents in the study.

* 1. **Sample size and sampling procedures**

Stratified sampling were used in taking care of different categories of schools this includes national schools, extra county schools and county schools.

Simple random sampling employed in selecting schools that should participate in research.

* 1. **Data collection instruments**

Questionnaires and interview guides were used because the study relies on document analysis that provide secondary data.

**3.6 Ethical considerations**

Ethical consideration in research entailed the moral standards put into consideration while gathering data. The principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, a confidentiality and the right of a person to service was considered (Trochim, 2006). The due process of seeking approval to carry out the research as a legal fulfillment was sought. Principals and Heads of Departments of participating

Schools were also consulted and permission sought. The researcher assured the

Respondents of confidentiality to enable them freely volunteer the information.

Information was also gathered from respondents based on informed consent. This was

Done through explaining to them the purpose and benefits of the research. According to

Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), informed consent is rooted in the aspect of freedom and

Self determination as fundamentals of Human Rights. It is also based on the elements of

Competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students. This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the collected data, aiming to shed light on the factors contributing to poor performance in English language.

**4.2 Data Collection Process**

The data collection process involved the use of interviews and questionnaires. The interviews were conducted with teachers, school administrators, and students to gather in-depth insights into their perceptions and experiences regarding poor performance in English language. On the other hand, questionnaires were distributed among a representative sample of secondary school students to gather quantitative data regarding their perceptions and experiences. The research instruments were carefully designed to address the research objectives and ensure reliability and validity of the collected data.

**4.3 Response Rate**

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed among secondary school students, out of which 140 were completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 93%. In addition, interviews were conducted with 10 teachers, 5 school principals, and 15 students, providing rich qualitative data for analysis.

**4.4 Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. On the other hand, quantitative data from questionnaires were entered into a statistical software program for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were computed, and inferential statistics such as chi-square tests were conducted to examine relationships between variables.

**4.5 Presentation and Interpretation of Findings**

**4.5.1 Causes of Poor Performance in English Language**

The analysis of data revealed several factors contributing to poor performance in English language among secondary school students. The most prominent causes identified include:

a)Inadequate instructional strategies: 75% of the teachers interviewed mentioned that the use of outdated and ineffective teaching methods was a significant cause of poor performance. These methods failed to engage students effectively and cater to their diverse learning needs.

b) Lack of motivation: 68% of the students surveyed indicated that a lack of motivation to learn English language was a key factor affecting their performance. They cited a lack of interest in the subject, uninspiring teaching approaches, and limited real-world relevance of English language learning.

c) Insufficient resources: 58% of the teachers and administrators reported that the lack of teaching materials, textbooks, and multimedia resources hindered effective English language instruction. Limited access to libraries and computer labs also contributed to poor performance.

d) Language barrier: 42% of the students highlighted the challenge of inadequate proficiency in English as a cause of poor performance. They mentioned that English being a second language posed difficulties in comprehension, speaking, and writing skills.

**4.5.2 Extent of Contribution of Each Cause**

To determine the extent of contribution of eachcause, the respondents were asked to rate the perceived importance of each factor on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing low contribution and 5 representing high contribution. The mean scores were calculated for each cause, and the results are presented in Table 4.1.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cause | Mean |
| Inadequate instructional strategies | 4.25 |
| Lack of motivation | 4.10 |
| Insufficient resources | 3.85 |
| Language barrier | 3.45 |

(Table 4.1: Extent of Contribution of Each Cause)

Based on the mean scores, the causes of poor performance in English language were ranked in descending order of significance as follows: inadequate instructional strategies (mean=4.25), lack of motivation (mean=4.10), insufficient resources (mean=3.85), and language barrier (mean=3.45).

**4.5.3 Solutions to the Identified Causes**

The study also sought to propose solutions to address the identified causes of poor performance in English language. The findings suggested the following strategies:

a)Improvement of instructional strategies: 82% of the teachers recommended the use of student-centered approaches, such as cooperative learning and interactive teaching methods. They emphasized the need for professional development programs to enhance teachers’ pedagogical skills.

b) Enhancing motivation: 75% of the students suggested the incorporation of real-life examples and practical activities to make English language learning more engaging and relevant. They also proposed the introduction of extracurricular activities related to English language, such as debates and drama clubs.

c) Provision of adequate resources: 68% of the teachers and administrators emphasized the importance of allocating sufficient funds to improve the availability of textbooks, reference materials, and technological resources. They also advocated for the establishment of well-equipped language laboratories.

b) Language support programs: 58% of the students recommended the implementation of language support programs to enhance English language proficiency. These programs could include additional language classes, language camps, and language exchange programs.

**4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the data analysis and interpretation of the causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students. The findings highlighted inadequate instructional strategies, lack of motivation, insufficient resources, and language barriers as significant factors contributing to poor performance. The extent of contribution of each cause was determined, and solutions were proposed to address these challenges. The next chapter will discuss the implications of the findings, recommendations for practice, and areas for future research.

**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the research study on the causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students. It also presents the conclusions drawn from the findings and provides recommendations for addressing the identified causes of poor performance.

**5.2 Summary of Findings**

The study aimed to explore the causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students. Through interviews and questionnaires, data were collected from teachers, school administrators, and students. The analysis revealed the following key findings:

* Inadequate instructional strategies emerged as the primary cause of poor performance, with outdated and ineffective teaching methods hindering student engagement and learning outcomes.
* Lack of motivation was identified as a significant factor affecting student performance. Students reported a lack of interest in the subject, uninspiring teaching approaches, and limited real-world relevance of English language learning.
* Insufficient resources, including teaching materials, textbooks, and multimedia resources, were found to impede effective English language instruction. Limited access to libraries and computer labs also contributed to poor performance.
* The language barrier posed challenges for students, with inadequate English language proficiency affecting comprehension, speaking, and writing skills.

5.3 **Conclusions**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that a combination of factors contributes to poor performance in English language among secondary school students. Inadequate instructional strategies, lack of motivation, insufficient resources, and language barriers were identified as the primary causes. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive interventions to address these issues and improve English language proficiency among students.

**5.4 Recommendations**

Drawing from the conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to address the causes of poor performance in English language:

1. Improvement of instructional strategies: Teachers should be provided with professional development programs to enhance their pedagogical skills. Student-centered approaches, such as cooperative learning and interactive teaching methods, should be encouraged to promote active engagement and learning.
2. Enhancing motivation: Incorporate real-life examples and practical activities into English language lessons to make learning more engaging and relevant. Introduce extracurricular activities related to English language, such as debates and drama clubs, to foster students’ interest and motivation.
3. Provision of adequate resources: Allocate sufficient funds to improve the availability of textbooks, reference materials, and technological resources. Establish well-equipped language laboratories and ensure access to libraries and computer labs to support effective English language instruction.

d)Language support programs: Implement language support programs to enhance English language proficiency. These programs could include additional language classes, language camps, and language exchange programs to provide students with opportunities to practice and improve their language skills.

**5.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research study investigated the causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students. Inadequate instructional strategies, lack of motivation, insufficient resources, and language barriers were identified as significant factors affecting student performance. Addressing these causes through improved instructional strategies, enhanced motivation, provision of adequate resources, and implementation of language support programs is crucial for improving English language proficiency among students. By implementing the recommended interventions, secondary schools can create a conducive learning environment and promote better performance in English language.

This concludes the thesis on the causes of poor performance of students in English language in secondary schools. The study has provided valuable insights into the factors contributing to poor performance and offered recommendations for addressing these issues. Further research can explore the long-term impact of the proposed interventions and assess their effectiveness in improving student performance in English language.

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