

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON STUDENTS' LEARNING AT HOME AND ITS EFFECT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TIGANIA WEST SUB-COUNTY, MERU COUNTY.

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Abstract

Achievement of quality education in Kenya today is a concern of every stakeholder. Parental involvement in homework monitoring is a major strategy to improving academic performance of students. This study aimed at establishing the parent's role in student's learning at home and the influence it has on academic performance in twenty eight public day secondary schools in Tigania West Sub-county, Meru County, Kenya. The study used descriptive survey design. The research study employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques in collecting and analyzing data. The study results were presented in tables and figures. The target population for the study was 3225 students and 28 principals. The parents of these students also made the target population. A sample size of six public day secondary schools was selected through purposeful sampling. From these schools 30 form four students, six principals and 30 parents made up the sample size. The study used questionnaires as research instruments to collect data from the sampled principals, students and the parents. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings revealed that students whose parents were more involved in homework monitoring in their education performed better than students whose parents were less involved. The findings revealed that parental involvement in monitoring homework for learners' education was weak. Therefore, it is imperative to create awareness on the importance of parental involvement in homework monitoring in their children's education for improvement in academic performance in public day secondary schools.

Key words: parental involvement, homework, academic performance

Introduction

Conducive home environment for learning is imperative for academic performance achievement. It is therefore important that the parents strive to provide environment that encourages learning and that prepares the learner for future career. According to Henderson (2002) parents' involvement in their student's learning at home enhances the students' academic performance in school. This is to say the role of parent involvement in the learning of the students is of ultimate importance. When parents are involved in their students' education at home, they do better in school because the students are not only motivated but also encouraged to perform. Teachers are called upon to tailor the learning at home along the parental involvement so that learners can as well discuss their future careers with their parents. McMillan 2000 and Barbour (2009) revealed that families whose students perform well in school, have established daily routine that provide adequate and conducive environment for study. They further argue that when parents are actively involved, students show improvement not only in academic performance but also positive attitude towards schoolwork. The parents monitor out of school activities for instant, setting time for watching television and guiding on the programs that they watch (Patrikakou, Weissberb, Redding & Walberg, 2005). McMillan (2000) noted that parental pressure has a positive significant effect on public school performance. Studies carried out suggest that parents with high aspirations are also involved in students's education (Gutman & Akaman, 2008). Therefore the role of parental participation in the child's performance cannot be underscored.

Modern technology and global competitiveness has posed serious challenges to the upbringing of the students both at home and in schools. The nature of parent's work, students' exposure to mass media and new policies concerning management of students are creating confusion and contradiction. For schools to maximize competitiveness in an environment where the students need

to be given special attention, it is imperative for teachers and parents to work as a team because their role is complementary.

Richardson (2009) in his study found out that the school system has failed to effectively reason out and build networks and linkages to the community. He identified three major reasons for low level of parental participation: lack of commitment of the schools to promote parental involvement, consider diverse views of teachers and administrators and strengthen communication between schools and parents. He further argues that when parents are called to school to discuss about their students performance, they are left feeling inadequate of their parenting skills, which makes them reluctant to actively get involved in the students affairs. In addition, when parents are invited to attend meetings, there are inadequate mechanisms to engage them effectively in collaborative relationship with teachers. In schools with mixed social-economic spectrum of students, less educated parents are reluctant to attend meetings and when they do, they tend to remain quiet. In these cases, meetings tend to be dominated by middle parent-class and teachers tend to pay more attention to elite parents. The most universal problem is poor attendance at school events that deal with educational topics, conveying important information or requiring work to be done (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Moreover, politicians and marketers dominate parents' meetings such that performance agenda is sometimes underscored or given negative publicity.

In some cases there is inconsistency of participation across all parents. As a result, teachers feel that creating and incorporating too many parental involving homework tasks may pose problems in that not all students receive parental assistance (Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon, Salinas, Janson, Voorhis, Martin & Greenfield, 2008). Hitchins (2012) points out that, teachers often admit that it is unrealistic to expect busy parents to spend considerable time working with their students on homework.

Another hindrance to parental involvement in their children's homework is lack of teacher training in promoting home-school involvement (Gina, Ansong, & Osei-Akoto, 2012). Some teachers believe that they do not have the authority to work with parents collaboratively unless they are allowed to do so by the school leadership and management (Mandel, 2008). Furthermore, even if they wanted to interact with the parents there may not be much time left from their busy schedule for parent involvement activities (Patrikakou, Weissberb, Redding & Walberg, 2005). According to Berger (2011) effectiveness of mitigating challenges designed to eliminate the achievement gap is thwarted by two major factors namely; lack of parental involvement by parents whose students are low academic achievers and secondly, some fail due to illiteracy and others due to the nature of their work which occupies their ample time or they are working away from their students.

There are parents who are ignorant of their role in learner's performance hence they believe that running schools should be left up to educational managers or professionals (Sanders, 2005).

Some parents may fail to participate in their students homework because they may have encountered academic difficulties or other painful experiences during their time in school. In addition, many parents do not want to become involved because they question their ability to make a difference (Gina, Ansong, & Osei-Akoto, 2012).

Available literature has revealed that studies have been carried out focusing on the existence of the relationship between the parent-teacher relationship and the academic performance of the students. From these studies there are various benefits identified from intensive and active involvement of parents in their students' academic performance. These include learners' awareness of family supervision and respect for parents in relation to school work. The parents learn to balance time spent on chores, other activities and school work. There is improved school attendance. The parents understand their role and develop confidence in parenting. All parties involved become aware of

changes in home conditions for learning as students proceed through school. On the other hand, teachers are able to understand family background, family culture, the views and ambitions of the students. They also appreciate the use of parents' network for communications. The students become aware of their own progress and the action required in improving their academic performance. In addition they understand the school policies and make informed decision about courses and programs. There is also general awareness of the challenges of parenting and parents get support from other parents and the school. However, similar studies have not been carried out in public day secondary schools in Tigania West Sub-county, Meru County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Performance of students in academics has been greatly attributed to the teachers. However, there are many stakeholders who also play vital role in determining the learner's performance. A parent is the first teacher of the child especially at early life before handing over the child to the classroom teacher. Therefore the parent-teacher involvement in monitoring homework on academic tasks is vital in determining the child's achievements. Regrettably, the parental role seems to be underplayed in public day secondary schools in Tigania West Sub-County in Meru County. There is need to underscore the importance of parent-teacher involvement in monitoring homework on academic tasks in public day secondary schools in Tigania West Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya

Significance of the Study

The importance of the study is to operationalise the Kenya Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic of Kenya, 2013) which underpins the crucial role of parents in academic performance of their students in Tigania West sub-county and Kenya as a whole. The findings of the study will inform the policy makers in reviewing the functions of the parents' participation in homework monitoring on academic tasks. The findings will further enlighten the parents on their homework monitoring roles in facilitating academic performance of their students. The results will enhance parent-teacher and student relationship in pursuit of better academic performance.

Methodology

The study used descriptive survey method. Descriptive methods are widely used to obtain data useful in evaluating present practices (Kothari 2004) and in providing bases for homework monitoring. The researcher found this method relevant to the study because it involved responses to similar questions by many participants within the sample and thus suitable to analyze the frequency of the data. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in data collection and analysis. The research included open-ended questions, which gave the participants an opportunity to express their views.

The study was carried out in Tigania west sub-county in Meru County. The day schools selected were those that have sat for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) for the last five years. Tigania west sub-county borders Isiolo County to the west and Buuri Sub-county of Meru County, Part of Imenti North Sub-county of Meru County to the west and south, then Tigania East Sub-county of Meru County to the north and Tharaka Nithi County to the south and east.

The study targeted principals, parents and students in public day secondary schools. According to Tigania West Sub-county Director of Education office there are a total of 3225 students and 28 principals in public day secondary schools. The parents of these students were also part of the target population. Tigania West sub-county is divided into 3 educational zones: Uringu, Kianjai and Akithi. The researcher used purposeful sampling to select two schools from each educational zone. Purposeful sampling was used because some schools in some zones had not sat for KCSE for the last five years. Further, the researcher included form four students in the study because they were believed to have wide knowledge and experience of the school. The sample size used for this study is shown in the table below:

Table .1: Sampling frame

Description	Day	No of F4	Sampled	principals	Parents of Sampled	Totals
	School	Students	Students		Students	
Zone 1	KK Lumbi	44	4	1	4	53
	Thinyaine	64	6	1	6	77
Zone 2	Machaku	44	4	1	4	53
	Miathene	68	7	1	7	83
Zone 3	Kunene	53	5	1	5	64
	Kithiiri	40	4	1	4	49
Totals		313	30	6	30	379

Source: (Tigania West sub-county Education office, 2014)

The research study used questionnaires to gather data from the principals, the students and the parents. Questionnaires were found adequate for the purposes of this study since questionnaires could be tailored to address specific research objectives (Mugenda and Mugenda 2003, Kothari 2004). The questionnaires were also used as interview guides because they had open-ended items. Since questionnaires guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, they proved useful for this study because the participants were able to divulge confidential information about parent involvement and parent teacher interactions without reservations. This ensured honesty and accuracy in answering the questions and generation of data.

The questionnaires also allowed the researcher to reach a large sample within a short time and at a low cost, enabling the researcher to gather a wide range of information. The questionnaires had three sections; biographical data, closed ended statements on educational issues and open-ended questions on the participants' opinion about the issues. The participants responded to the closed ended questions by ticking on their correct answers in the spaces that were provided. The variety of questions asked allowed the researcher to meet specific objectives of the study. Principals of the selected schools were also participants in the study thus allowing the researcher to collect data that reflected the whole school. The research included 10% of the students and parents in the study as a representative sample. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) a sample of at least 10% of the population is considered representative and appropriate when the targeted specific individual respondent has special qualities or characteristics. The choice of sample size was also influenced by other factors such as school enrolment and geographical distribution of the population.

FINDINGS

The findings were as follows

Demographic Data of Parents

Table 2: Demographic Data of Parents

	Frequency	Percentage
GENDER		
Female	20	66.67%
Male	10	33.33%
Total	30	100%
MARITAL STATUS		
Divorced	5	16.67%
Married	13	43.33%
No answer	1	3.33%
Single	11	36.67%
Total	30	100%

LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
Primary	15	50%
Secondary	8	26.67%
Diploma	4	13.33%
Degree	3	10%
Total	30	100%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
Self employed	20	66.67%
Government employee	2	6.67%
Private sector	2	6.67%
No answer	6	20%
Total	30	100%

The total numbers of parents' participants were equal to total number of students' participants. The data showed that most of the parents 66.67% were females while the males comprised 33.3% of the participants. On the marital status question, majority of the parents 43.33% were married, 16.67% were divorced, 36.67% were single and 3.33% avoided the questions.

On the level of education, majority of the parents were primary school leavers, 50%; secondary school education level, 26.67%; diploma holders were 13.33% and minority, 10%, were degree holders.

Considering the employment status the responses were distributed as follows: 66.67% of the parents were self-employed, 6.67% were government employees, 6.67% were in the private sector and 20% did not respond to the question.

Parental Involvement in Monitoring Homework.

Table 3: Parents' participation in monitoring homework

	Frequency	Percent
No	17	56.67%
Yes	13	43.33%
Total	30	100.0%

Table 3 shows that 56.67% of the parents did not participate in monitoring homework for their children while 43.33% were doing the monitoring. Majority of the parents were not involved in monitoring homework which is linked to poor performance in academic work. The results agreed with Henderson (2002) who found that students whose parents were involved in checking their homework have higher academic achievement.

Majority of the parents were unaware of their roles in their student's education at home. Although majority of the parents indicated having checked their student's homework, they seemed not to understand the meaning of parental role in monitoring the homework in their children's learning. This was perhaps due to the low level of education of most parents. The study also found that many of the parents rarely checked the progress of their students and a majority who did, made it rarely. Most empirical studies show students perform better in school when parents are involved (Richardson, 2009) but a few show that parental involvement may not always be associated significantly and positively with student's educational performance (Barbour, 2009).

Conclusion

Majority of the parents were not involved in monitoring homework which is linked to poor performance in academic work. Parents should be proactive in monitoring and supervising their children as they carry out homework given to them by their teachers. The parents should be aware of their constitutional role as emphasized by Kenya Basic Education Act 2013 (Republic of Kenya, 2013), in relation to maintaining quality education in enhancing academic performance.

Recommendations

There should be capacity building for parents to empower them on how to monitor and supervise their children in carrying out their homework while at home. Further research should be carried out on challenges facing parents in monitoring homework given to their children by teachers.

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