

CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' DISCIPLINE AND PERFORMANCE IN THE KENYA CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Students in secondary schools are still in the age of rapid physical, social, psychological and physiological developments. These developments are accompanied with variety of changes which if not well attended to lead to indiscipline which can negatively affect concentration on studies. In this paper, it is argued that there is a correlation between students' discipline and performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary School Education (KCSE). In Kenya, the Ministry of Education (MOE) collaborates with the stakeholders to ensure that students are cognizant of the correlation between discipline and performance in KCSE. The core business of the stakeholders as noted in the paper is to inculcate attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding that value discipline among students. It is further argued that the stakeholders' withdrawal from achieving the objectives of education lead to indiscipline among students and thus violating the schools' rules and regulations. The paper utilizes the Okumbe's (1999) Goal Setting Theory which posits that high-quality performance is based on the individual's set goals, principles and attitudes. Primary data for the paper were collected from the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) officials, teachers, parents, students, school management boards and the County Education Directors in Kenya. The paper identifies guidance and counseling, parenting and church involvement as mechanisms that can be utilized in inculcating discipline among secondary schools students in Kenya.

KEY WORDS: Discipline, examination, correlation, KCSE, objectives of education

1.1 Introduction

The education system in Kenya is geared towards nurturing the growth of the whole person through an integrated development of the physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual dimensions. Education in this context is a process of acquiring and developing desired knowledge, skills and attitudes among students. It is on this premise that Oluoch (1982) states that in Kenya both the church and the state are the main stakeholders in the provision of holistic education. This is because the two institutions consider secondary school education as an important component of an individual's. The secondary school cycle of education in Kenya is culminated with a national examination: Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Performance in KCSE determines a student's progress academically; to university or to a middle level colleges. It is also regarded as a transitional stage for higher education and training. To attain this, students are under obligation to maintain high standards of discipline which is reflected in academic performance of the examination..

As social organizations, secondary schools have formally established rules and regulations that are used to guide students and the teaching staff. They have common educational goals to pursue and so students have an obligation of working towards achieving the goals. School rules and regulations are formulated with a view of making students to be responsible on social, moral, spiritual and emotional issues. Some rules and regulations are provided by the Ministry of Education (MoE) while others are formulated by the stakeholders of individual schools. Those provided by MoE create harmony among Kenyan students while those for individual schools consider the exclusive social, moral, economic and physical situations of the schools. Nevertheless, both are geared towards forming intellectually, morally, socially and physically grounded youth. To implement the rules and regulations, the government, teachers, parents, church, students and community have big roles to play. Many Kenyan school students as the paper explains have not been performing on KCSE to their potentialities because discipline which is key in performance has been lacking

1.2 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by Okumbe's (1999) Goal setting Theory. In this theory, Okumbe argues that goal setting is central in the management of human beings. Goal setting theory is a motivation theory applicable in industrial and organizational psychology, human resource management and organizational behavior. Goal setting involves establishing specific, measurable and time-targeted objectives. Further, it is a major component of social, intellectual and moral development of individuals. Goals perceived as realistic are more effective in changing behavior. Okumbe goes on to say that working toward a goal provides a major source of motivation to reach the goal which, in turn leads to improved performance. Goal setting suggests an effective tool for making progress by ensuring that participants in a group with a common goal are clearly aware of what is expected from them if an objective is to be achieved. Goldstein, (1993) adds that goal setting provides a 'sense of direction' which enables people to specify their work towards their own objectives. Applied to this study, goal setting contributes to good discipline leading to good performance in KCSE. Disciplined students work hard to achieve their set goals and objectives.

1.3 Research Methodology

The study was carried out in Central province, Kenya. According to the MOE record Central Province has the largest number of schools and also has the leading record of strikes. A descriptive survey was used in describing the characteristics of a large population, making use of large samples, thus making the results statistically significant. Data were collected using questionnaires,

individual interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and review of other available materials. The respondents to the study included 114 students, 56 teachers, 20 principals, 5 MOE officials and 34 parents. The outcomes of the quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Further, the data were interpreted and discussed in relation to the research questions. On the other hand, the qualitative data generated from interview guide was presented in a narrative form.

1.4 Correlation between Discipline and Performance in Examinations

Library research shows that indiscipline cases are major contributing factors to poor performance in examinations in most learning institutions around the world. In the USA for instance, indiscipline cases among others include fooling around, disturbing others and other off-task activities. This obstructs the smooth running of classroom activities when students are supposed to be doing assignments. This may explain why Ayoo, (2002) observes that aggression, immorality, defiance of authority, class disruptions, and generally not adhering to school and classroom rules and procedures affect student performance in examinations in both the developed and developing countries.

A study by researchers at Stanford University (U.S.A) polled some 770 students and asked how much effort they felt they were putting into their school work. Oddly enough students with low grades thought they worked as hard as those who performed well in examinations! Yet when their study habits were examined, it was discovered that they actually did far less homework than their high achieving schoolmates who were disciplined (Watchtower Bible and Tract society of New York, INC. 1989).

In Britain, through the 1986 Education Act and new articles of government and conditions of employment, a duty was laid on school administrators to encourage good behaviour, promote self-discipline and a proper regard for authority, secure acceptable standards of behaviour and regulate conduct of students to boost performance in examination (Ayoo, 2002). Similarly the Kenyan Ministry of Education conduct seminars annually to equip head-teachers with skills on how to maintain discipline in schools.

In India, indisciplined students especially the truant ones are guided and counseled by the guidance and counselling teacher(s). They are helped to get rid of their delinquent behaviour and learn the proper way of responding to social situations and conditions. In this way, they are able to perform well in examinations (Vishala, 2008). Similarly, In Botswana, schools study shows that indiscipline cases such as violence, bullying, vandalism, alcohol and substance abuse, truancy, inability or unwillingness to do homework interferes with teaching and learning process. The end result is poor performance in examinations. This is because students, who use cigarettes and other substances, like school less, skip school more often, hence score lower grade. It should however be noted that besides good discipline, there are other factors that determine good performance in KCSE.

Kenyan students especially those from rural schools have a tendency of not attending school daily because of distance, harsh weather conditions and lack of motivation from the community. This partly contributes to low performance in examinations especially in the semi-arid areas. This is why the government has increased efforts of educating the public on the importance of education to the growth of economy and poverty reduction.

1.5 Centrality of Discipline among Students in Schools

Mbiti (1998) states that students should be disciplined in order to make informed decisions. Ideally, discipline means more than adhering to the rules and regulations provided by the MoE, the church or the school administration. It entails the learner's ability to discern what is right or wrong. This should occur in an atmosphere devoid of fear or resentment and handled politely but firmly with understanding. Discipline among students in Kenya is highly valued because it makes students responsible citizens and responsible members of society.

The aim of school rules as Griffins (1996) observes is to enable learners to develop values such as love, respect and trust for one another. They also create in students an urge to develop their own integrity in identification of norms and values without compulsion or supervision. Eventually, this makes them to become responsible adults. Sound discipline is an essential ingredient in the creation of a happy and liable school-community that performs its function properly in the training of responsible citizens. Consequently, indiscipline among students as was found in this study affect the smooth learning of schools leading to poor performance in examinations. This is because indiscipline makes students to lose focus on the educational goals which are only achieved through such values as hard-work, time management, respect for others, high plane of spirituality and self determination. Such fundamental values are indispensable if good performance in examinations is to be realized. Indisciplined students violate school rules and regulations thus affecting the smooth and orderly functioning of the school system. Owing to the broad and new challenges arising from socio-economic changes and technological advancements, the task of managing discipline in secondary schools has become complex. Legal notice No. 40 (1968) Section 19 of Kenya's Education Act indicates that schools are expected to be centers of formation of good behaviour and acceptable moral and social conduct among students.

Gangelosi (1997) states that indiscipline affect students' performance in KCSE and other examinations. Most respondents in this study viewed discipline in Kenyan schools as manifesting itself in lateness, chronic absenteeism, truancy, rudeness, insubordination, disrespect, unacceptable verbal expressions of dissatisfaction, abuses, non-compliance to rules and regulations, drug and substance abuse, destruction of property, bullying, boycotts, assault, rape and arson among others. To address these malpractices most respondents observed that it remains the responsibility of parents, teachers, church and society to ensure that students are given adequate guidance on the correlation between performance in KCSE and maintaining high standards of discipline.

Parenting styles in particular have a relationship with the student character in and out of school. Munyaka (2008) opines that parents and guardians have a big role in the inculcation of discipline among students. It was noted by most respondents that some parents have shifted their roles to the teachers who are already overwhelmed with other responsibilities in and out of the schools. Some of the latest cases of indiscipline cases examined in this study included Endarasha and Komothai Boys' schools and Kanunga High School among others. (Daily Nation, Wed. Nov. 10th 2010: 16). Analyses of the school grades/ mean-score in the named schools prove that there is a correlation in students' behavior and performance. Indeed, all the schools recorded low grades in KCSE a year before and after the recorded incidences.

Most parents and guardians observed that education ceases to be meaningful if there is no observation of personal and collective responsibility in discipline. Discipline is important because it makes a person to be organized and systematic in his work. It enables one to achieve set goals in

life, to respond positively to challenges and guard against negative influences. This confirms Griffin's (1996) argument that discipline is the central pillar for students' success and excellent performance in examinations.

Mbiti (1998) argues that discipline has to do with the unquestionable recognition of authority, the readiness to obey instructions and uphold the code of regulations as laid down by the governing authority. Okumbe (1999) adds that there are two types of discipline: preventive and corrective discipline. This implies that school discipline is for modifying students' behavior. Once the undesirable behaviour is corrected, a high standard of desirable behaviour is maintained hence effective curriculum implementation and excellent performance in examinations. It was established in this study that discipline has declined among secondary school students in Kenya because teachers, parents, and other stakeholders only concentrate in secular curriculum. Further, it was noted that syllabus coverage takes precedence of the guidance and counseling sessions meant to equip students with knowledge on the correlation between good academic performance and discipline.

There can be no order in schools nor can the objectives of the education system be achieved, unless clear rules and regulations are established to enforce discipline. In a school situation, a high standard of discipline must be observed if the school management has to implement the curriculum effectively and to achieve maximum performance. Hence for the learning programmes of any school to succeed, students' discipline is mandatory. Eshiwani (1993) agrees with this view when he says that schools discipline must be maintained at all times because it is only when there is discipline that proper learning can be expected to take place.

When indisciplined students are guided and counseled by the guidance and counseling teacher(s), they are helped to get rid of their delinquent behaviour and learn the proper way of responding to social situations and conditions. After getting reformed, they re-energize their efforts in studies which in turn lead to good performance in KCSE.

As the foregoing discussion demonstrates, discipline and academic performance are closely related. Where there is good discipline, there is improved academic performance and where there is lack of discipline students perform dismally in their examinations. Academic performance is pegged on discipline as no study time is wasted to punish students who are deviant. It provides a conducive learning environment for students in schools.

1.6 Causes of indiscipline among students in Kenya

Indiscipline cases among students in Kenyan secondary schools are caused by many factors that include peer pressure, inadequate parenting, learning disabilities, personal stress and poor health. However Gangelosi (1997) hastens to add, and correctly so, that "It is a fallacy that the presence of such factors compel students from being responsible for their own behaviors, and teachers need to deter them from such appropriate behaviors. According to Awuor (2008), high-handed administration, lack of dialogue and rigid rules are to blame for increasing cases of students' unrest. Political interference, drugs and general social disorder also contribute to school riots. Most informants observed that when stress is severe and prolonged, some youths become overwhelmed, resulting to self-destructive and antisocial ways. Consequently such students develop defensive behaviour patterns, display hostile biases towards adults, and bring a menacing interpersonal

demeanor to school. This affects performance as a lot of time is wasted to solve these discipline issues.

In the course of carrying out field work for this study students lamented that management in most schools was dictatorial; a practice that antagonize students. Communication between teachers, on the one hand and learners, parents and the community on other hand is more often strained. Griffins (1996), states that the more free and happy a boarding school is, the less the stress and possibility of an occurrence of a strike, hence good learning environment which in turn results to good KCSE performance.

Drug and substance abuse among students was also a cause of indiscipline in schools in Kenya. Most cases of students' unrest reported in the 1990s were attributed to drugs. Some of the affected schools were St. Kizito, Nyeri, Bombolulu and, Kyanguli High schools among others. Riots in the named schools left many students dead

According to a report on causes, effects and remedies of indiscipline in secondary schools in Central province in Kenya, prepared by the Provincial Education Board (2001), teachers and parents were blamed for failing to instill discipline in the children. Political interference and feuding among community members also contributed to unrest in schools. The report revealed that some members of school boards with vested interests also incited students to riot so that they could achieve their socio-political goals.

Teachers and parents have contributed to indiscipline in schools by failing to provide proper guidance to the children they send to schools. Some of them provide their children with a lot of pocket money without proper guidance on how to spend it. Worse still, it was revealed by teachers that some parents are defensive of their children whenever they are involved in indiscipline cases. This demoralizes the teachers who are charged with the work of disciplining students in the schools. Other parents are either over strict or hostile to their children. In most schools, the study established that teachers are unwilling to listen to the students grievances. Cases were also cited where students unrest emerge when head-teachers with a poor service record is imposed to a school by the MoE and TSC. When teachers of reputable service record are transferred and replaced with those who have been rejected elsewhere students protest and demonstrate sometimes causing serious damages..

In families where there is spousal violence or where parents correct their children through harsh punishment like beating or where parents are constantly absent from home, a sense of insecurity and lack of self esteem develop in the children. Self-esteem can also be destroyed during puberty if young people are not fully explained about the physical changes taking place in their bodies. They therefore live with shame resulting from the unexplained conflicts in themselves. Lack of clear mission and vision in life also gives rise to conflicts in oneself particularly if a learner is not very good academically. This can bring about a build-up of tension in learners that they may be expressed through violent activities..

Some teachers in the course of their work promote indiscipline in schools by overburdening learners with excessive work. This is especially so if students are made to remain in class long after school hours making them to become fatigued. Other times the students are given very little work and they get bored. When students are not occupied with school work they direct their energies into unproductive ventures like drug abuse, sexual immorality or school riots.

Ayieko (1988) notes that school rules should be clear and not too cumbersome to be followed. Rules which are vague or meaningless are bound to be and can be easily broken. This study revealed that most rules and regulations broken by students are those designed by individual schools. Further, it was discovered that most schools which are on record for indiscipline in Kenya are those whose students had issues with the locally formulated rules other than those from the MoE.

A society which is dominated by acts of violence endangers the youth into assimilating violent tendencies to the detriment of their lives. Mass media as most parents observed expose the youth to a culture of violence. As such there is need to control the number of violent movies and television programmes which the youth watch at home and in schools. Undirected energy particularly in schools where co-curricular activities are minimal or in residential areas where amenities for leisure are non-existent can lead to build up of tension which may be released through violent activities at school (Ayieko, 1988). It is therefore evident that violence in schools is not a phenomenon which just occurs abruptly. It is the sum total of everything which will have happened to the learners from childhood to the day of the unrest.

Indiscipline may be classified as disruptive, or non-disruptive. Gangelosi, (1997) says that non-disruptive indiscipline include mind wandering and day dreaming, which results into a student refusing to participate in class activities, failing to complete homework and assignments, failing to bring to school required materials, being under the influence of debilitating drugs, being absent or tardy and cheating on tests. He classifies disruptive indiscipline as talking, interruption, clowning, being discourteous, failing to clean up and violent disruptions vandalizing, bullying, fighting, attacks on teachers among others. These indiscipline cases have a direct negative impact on student academic performance as most of the time is spent doing punishments or being at home after being given suspension. Furthermore, there may be poor personal relationship with teachers and fellow students leading to non-attendance to homework and the lack of academic discussion fora. This study revealed that disruptive discipline is a major cause of poor performance in KCSE.

Gregory (2010) says that students who smoke cigarettes and other substances mostly miss classes and eventually score lower grades in examinations. Similarly students who are truant have lower grades because they often absent themselves from schools. This hinders their concentration in academics. If the absenteeism is coupled with drug abuse, the situation worsens. Blandfords (1989) observes that drug abuse hampers learning as those on drugs lack concentration in their studies. They waste time thinking on how to acquire drugs. The study deduced that drug abuse in schools leads to decline in the academic standards.

There are other factors that contribute immensely to good KCSE results. These factors fill gaps left out by discipline in colouring examination results. These factors include friendly school administration, professionally qualified teachers, physical facilities/teaching aids, resource materials and enabling environment. Regarding the latter, Eshiwani (1983) laments that neighbouring communities sometimes sell drugs like bhang and illicit brew (*chang'aa*) to students thus affecting their performance.

To minimize cases of indiscipline in secondary schools one of the administrators suggested that students should be given considerable freedom of movement and speech. Schools should ensure an

environment in which discipline and punishment are not synonymous and students are orderly, happy and free from undue stress. School administration and students should have social meetings, once a week where they can air their problems. This as the administrator added, helps diffuse tension among the boys and hence concentrates on studies, thus boosting KCSE performance.

1.7 Effects of school discipline on academic performance

Discipline and academic performance have a relationship. Ayieko (1988) convincingly argues that students with good discipline tend to perform better than those who are undisciplined. Indeed academic performance is pegged on discipline as no study time is wasted in punishing deviant students. It provides a conducive learning environment for students in schools.

In view of the above, it is evident that secondary school discipline must be maintained at all times. It is only when there is good discipline that proper learning can be expected to take place and students perform well in examinations. School unrest disrupts learning thus leading to poor curriculum implementation. In this study it was noted that students unrest lead to destruction of school property, discouragement of teachers, poor academic performance, under enrollment, negative financial implication, dropout and general psychological suffering of the students.

Incidents of strikes have occurred in Kenyan secondary schools in which libraries and laboratories have been set ablaze leading to enormous financial losses. Obviously, without equipped laboratories and libraries, good performance in examinations is 'an illusion'. Lack of or inadequate or underequipped laboratories and libraries prevent students from greater understanding, reinforcement and retention of subject matter during private studies (Gregory (2010). Thus, students' indiscipline wastes a lot of time and this affects their studies hence their performance. Following the students' indiscipline, the resource materials and facilities are wasted, teacher-student relations are strained and the climate of mutual respect necessary for learning compromised. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Kenya, listed lack of assistance in doing homework, shortage of teachers, teachers' academic qualification, students' absenteeism and indiscipline as the causes of poor examination results in secondary schools (MOE, 2010).

1.8 Truancy as a cause of poor performance in KCSE

In Kenya, many youths suffer an obsessive dread of school commonly referred to as 'school phobia'. It is often triggered by violence, peer cruelty and pressure among students. Such students go to school, but they suffer constant turmoil and physical distress. They end up performing dismally in examinations as their mind is divided between two worlds. Truant students often have poor concentration in studies as they feel that they cannot perform well in examinations.

1.9 Effects of non-class attendance on KCSE Performance

Data from the study showed that personal motivation is important in learning. It makes a student to put himself/herself on a schedule that is followed faithfully. Consequently he/she works hard to achieve the set goals like doing homework and not wasting time watching TV (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, INC 1989). An article in the journal of educational psychology in USA showed that simply making 'an increase in time spent on homework has a positive effect on a student's grades in high school'. In fact with one to three hours of homework a week, the average low ability student can achieve grades commensurate with an average ability student who does not do homework.

1.10 Effects of Suspensions on KCSE Performance

Schools in Kenya suspend errand students for a period of at least two weeks. This gives them a period to cool off (Docking, 1980). It further pressures the family perhaps for the first time to come to school in order to discuss the matter that is referred to as Office Discipline Referral Order (ODR). Such suspension serves as a deterrent not only to the concerned student but also to other indisciplined students. However, this in the process wastes a lot of student's learning time and soil the teacher-student relationship. .

1.11 Conclusion

The aim of education is to produce individuals not only who are not only knowledgeable but also who possess healthy personality. Maintaining students' discipline is an issue that remains an uphill task in secondary schools in Kenya. As discussed in the paper indiscipline affects academic performance of students. In response to students' indiscipline the government through the MOE has policy guidelines denouncing the use of corporal punishment in favour of more positive methods of managing behavior. Nevertheless, indiscipline cases are witnessed in the schools. Discipline among students in secondary schools in Kenya has a big relationship with their performance in KCSE. Through discipline, students in secondary schools develop social adjustments, responsible attitude towards life, skills for self-development and improved performance in examinations. Schools further form character among students which benefits them and society as a whole. Secondary schools in Kenya as discussed in the paper still struggle with issues inconsistent with the MOE's educational rules and regulations. Contrary to the expectations of parents, MOE, society and teachers, indiscipline cases such as drug and substance abuse, student unrest, national examination irregularities, sexual immorality and harassments, unwanted pregnancies, moral decay and abortions among others. The social, moral and academic standard of graduates from secondary schools in Kenya reveals that the intended objectives of education are not achieved. After completion of secondary school education cycle, some engage the use and sale of drugs, drunkenness, laziness, promiscuity, prostitution, fornication, violence, stealing and misuse of family and public resources. Besides leading to poor performance in KCSE, these experiences indicate that some schools in Kenya do not attain the goals of education. This challenges the definition, understanding, identity and mission of secondary education in Kenya.

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