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Environmental Factors That Affect the Teaching of Kiswahili Language in Public Mixed Secondary Schools in Nyamira North Sub-County, Nyamira County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Kiswahili is both a national and official language in Kenya. It is taught as a compulsory discipline and examined at the end of the secondary school cycle of education in Kenya. The area of study was in Nyamira North Sub-County in Nyamira County. The Students' performance in Kiswahili language in K.C.S.E has not been impressive nationally for a long period. The purpose of this study was to investigate the environmental factors that affect the teaching of Kiswahili language in secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub-County, Nyamira County. The specific objectives of the study were to: establish the environmental factors that affected the teaching of Kiswahili language. The research used a descriptive research design. The target population was one hundred and fifty five comprising of 35 principals, 35 Heads of Departments (languages), 50 Kiswahili teachers from all the sampled schools and 35 mixed day secondary schools. The study adopted two sampling techniques: Stratified sampling technique and purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using: questionnaires (for principals and Kiswahili teachers) and interview schedule for H.O.Ds'. Data collected were coded and entered into the SPSS version 20.0. The data was analysed and presented using tables and percentages. Findings of the study indicated that most students had a positive attitude towards Kiswahili and the main problem was failure to use of the library facility and inadequate teaching and learning instructional resources, lack of a formal school language policy and use of mother tongue and sheng' performance. The researcher recommended the schools to sponsor their teachers to attend capacity building seminars and workshops with a view to acquiring more techniques and sharing with other teachers on areas of difficult. It also emphasised that for better performance to be realised teachers of Kiswahili need regular in service trainings to prepare them for the changing dynamics of teaching language. The researcher hopes that this study would add to the field of knowledge and fill the gaps that are hindering the teaching and learning of Kiswahili.

Keywords: Communication, environment, Kiswahili, school system, teaching/learning

1. Introduction

Any school environment assumes a very critical part in the teaching/learning endeavor. This school environment alludes to both the internal as well as the external conditions. The internal school conditions incorporate the classrooms and every single structure that aid the process of learning. In places which have uncertainties students can't concentrate while studying in their classrooms. This situation is real in cattle rustling areas where the learners are mentally disturbed by the presence of the armed force trucks and helicopters are watching over these regions (Mwangi, 1985). The environment of such areas can likewise influence the teaching/learning of a particular subject. In parched and semi-dry locale like north eastern, learning closes at twelve as a result of the temperature. Instructors should create teaching conditions of their learners by holding regular symposium in their schools, coming up with Kiswahili clubs for students and conduct remedial programs (Joyce and Weil, 1972). Nature plays a part in the whole process teaching/learning of any particular subject. It has been noted that home condition affects what goes on in schools. Sledge & Morehead, (2006) says guardians can to a great extent influence performance of kids when they furnish them with ideal examination condition at home. Phillip (1998) says parental training and their societal position have some impact on students' accomplishment. Students who come from well off families have a tendency to be superior to those coming from households that are poor (Fergusson, Lloyd, & Horwood, 1991). All these explanations demonstrate that the environment both home and school have some effect on the execution of any educational modules. Ruo (1991) demonstrates that there exists a connection between what to write and the kind of the dialect that one is able to speak while outside.

Pat (2012) contends that school physical facilities allude to the schools' physical structure, the equipment and all other facilities for teaching and learning resources, the classroom size among others. The environment in teaching setting alludes to the emotional environment, tone, vibe, or atmosphere that wins in a specific setting. Nijhuis (2005) observed that school environment is of central significance to advance learning. This kind of climate winning in school is a never-ending motivation for the kids to take in more and that's only the tip of the iceberg. Further, he contends that classroom condition is the aggregate of all social, passionate, mental and physical components that make general commitment to the process of learning inside the classrooms. Goddard, Hoy and Hoy (2000) and Heck (2000) observed that good learning condition likewise enhances academic and expert measures of the school and prompts higher accomplishment.

Muhammad (2010) argues that school environment is of central significance in advancing learning. By and large, research has demonstrated that factors nearer to the students' real learning process had the most grounded affect. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993) demonstrate that school ecological variables have more effect than distant elements, for example, regulatory attributes of the training framework at the national level. Scheerens (2003) remarked after a study that the accessibility of the teaching and learning resources upgrades the viability of schools as they are fundamental things that can achieve great academic execution. Shiundu and Omulando (1992) contend that the head teacher as an administrator assumes an imperative part in whatever goes around in school. The head teacher is in charge of legitimate execution of the school educational modules, gives important teaching and learning resources, ensure teachers are motivated, administers developmental assessment guarantees that the educational programs is all around actualized by the school vision and mission lastly sets system for the educational programs assessment and advancement. School administration along these lines, should attempt to give vital facilities with an aim of educating and particularly buying of important reading material, building and outfitting laboratories with the right apparatus and chemicals to encourage viable learning in the school.

Class size is yet another vital area among the school factors. Fabunmi and Okore (2000) see class factors as vital in the teaching and learning exercises, especially when the students' academic execution is being considered. He proceeds with that class size is an imperative factor in connection to academic execution of the students. Moreover, he contends that there is accord among different researchers and educationists that, the smaller the classroom size or teacher and student ratio, the higher the accomplishment and that the students' accomplishment goes down as class estimate increments. In perspective of this reality, one might say that teacher to students ratio is one of the critical components determining great academic performance.

Higgins and Moseley (2005) classified the school environment into four: the physical environment, school products and services (food, accommodation), the school systems and processes (school management and administration) and communication (among the students, teachers, administration, parents and all other stakeholders). All these affect the teaching and learning process in any given institution. Moos (1979) has given a model to show the school and classroom environment which can be equated to this study. Moos further looked at the factors affecting teaching and learning. In Moos model, school environment comprises: school organization, teacher characteristics, school, and classroom climate as shown in Fig 1. All these interrelate to produce effective teaching and learning. This model was relevant to this study since the researcher looked at what constitutes a school environment in relation to teaching and learning.

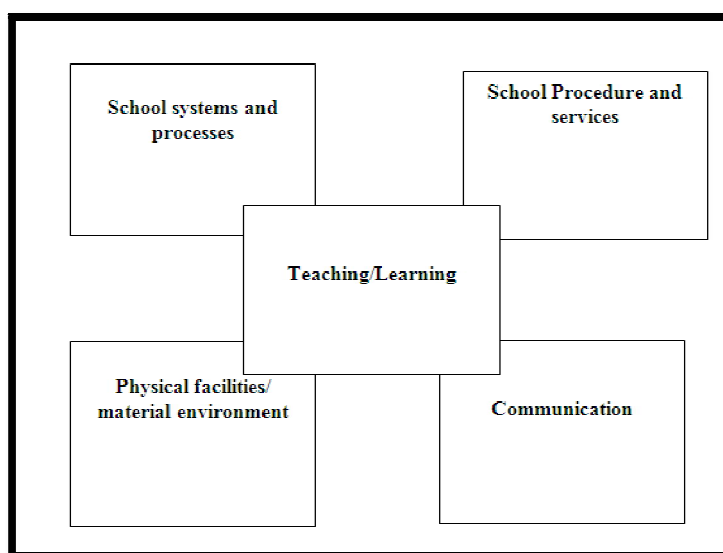


Figure 1: Moo's (1979) Model of School and Classroom Environment

Jagero, (2011) in his study on school environment factors affecting boarding schools in Kenya, identified the following factors: lighting system, reading space, reading materials, noise from classmates, lack of proper accommodation, boarding facilities and lack of teachers. All these factors positively or negatively affect teaching and learning of Kiswahili language. Jagero's argument looked at one characteristic of schools -boarding only. This research was unique as it focused on mixed day schools with a mean score of C- and below.

Higgins and Moseley (2005) further categorize the school environment into four groups: teacher characteristics (level of training, teaching styles, attitudes), learner characteristics (entry behaviour, attitude, discipline, society

influence), school physical environment (buildings, textbooks, ICT, lighting, noise, climatic conditions) and school management characteristics (language policy, motivation policy, subject support policy). All these factors directly or indirectly influence the performance and achievement of teaching and learning of Kiswahili subject. Higgins and Moseley were relevant to this study since their study focused on learners and teacher related factors affecting teaching as shown in Fig 2.2 below.

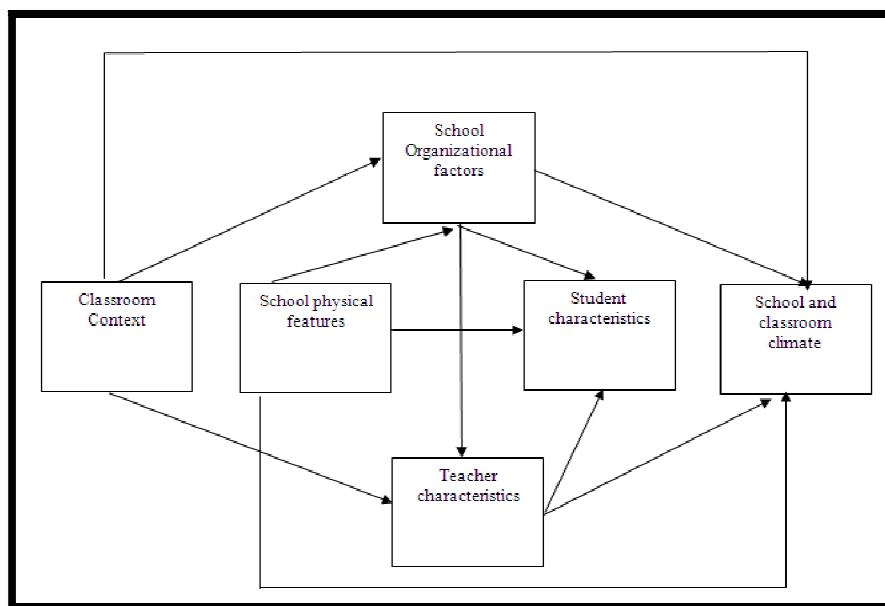


Figure 2: The School Environment (Higgins et al., 2005)

Sanoff and Sanoj (2001) argue that even though it is difficult to quantify the contribution of the school buildings to student performance, it is vital to design buildings that will create a stimulating and motivating environment especially for the teachers and other staff who may stay in the environment for very many years. The design of buildings used in a school set up is part of the environmental factor that directly affects both students and teachers and this contributed to the study because they are examples of environmental factors affecting teaching and learning of Kiswahili.

Jagero (2011) in his study on school environment factors in boarding schools concludes that noise from fellow students contribute significantly to poor performance of the students. The research does not say to what extent noise contributes to the poor performance. Shield and Dockrell (2004) contend that external commotion levels don't for the most part influence levels of classroom clamor, which are for the most part reliant on internal elements like nature of the classroom and number of children. Their study is important to this study because the researcher looked at noise and its effect as one of the environmental factors affecting teaching Kiswahili although their study focused on all subjects while this study specifically looked at Kiswahili language.

Earthman (2004) argued that day lighting offers the most source of light in the classroom in relation to student performance. Barnitt, (2003) observed that adequate lighting within a classroom could be realized by means of integrating indirect and direct sources of lighting. Knez, (1995) on the other hand established that proper and ideal conditions of lighting translated to enhanced performance by learners while inappropriate and inappropriate lighting conditions led to poor or reduced performance by learners. Although they did not specify the type of school they looked at whether primary or secondary schools, it is likely that this could be one of the drawbacks that instructors face in an endeavour to teach Kiswahili at secondary schools.

A study by Otieno (2009) on causes of poor performance in secondary schools in Gusii reveals that lack of proper facilities and textbooks contribute significantly to poor student performance, especially among sub-county schools. This view is supported by Musasia (2012) who also identified lack of school facilities and equipment as a major cause of poor performance in secondary schools. Similar sentiments are carried in the Eshiwani's (2001) study on poor performance in Mathematics. He singles out the issue of textbooks that he says are insufficient considering mathematics teachers are not always readily available. Their studies are important to this study since teaching and learning resources were some of the environmental factors affecting teaching of Kiswahili language. Earthman (2004) conducted a study by means of survey and established that the ratio of textbook to students was unequal whereby there were more students compared to textbooks, as the ratio was one textbook for five students.

Arenda (2007) observed that teachers ought to integrate teaching media when using textbook as this approach enhanced the learning experience and outcome. According to Kathuri (1993), teachers can realize effective teaching when they employ suitable instructional resources, as they (resources) possess essential aspect vis-à-vis the process of teaching and their application translate to positive teaching and learner performance outcome. As such, it is imperative for teachers to adequately plan and efficiently utilize instructional resources; however, teachers are likely to face drawbacks in utilizing instructional resources if they fail to apply teaching resources i.e. textbooks appropriately and adequately in teaching and learning environments.

Earthman (2004) in his study rated temperature, air quantity, and heating as essential individual entities for student performance in any given subject. Young and Hyge, (2003) pinpoint the significance of these elements in reports that detail the needs of American schools as crucial. Fisher (2001) rated temperature, air quantity, and heating as likely to affect student behaviours and outcomes. In Kenya, research finds temperature to be a key factor in schools in arid and semi-arid areas (ASAL) and parts of the Kenyan coast that negatively affect performance (Kinyua, 2006). He further notes that performance of students in these arid and semi-arid (ASAL) regions has been significantly below standards mostly due to harsh climatic conditions which disrupt classes especially in the afternoon. This creates an uncomfortable environment for the learner who is then unable to concentrate. These studies concentrated on students in semi-Arid and arid areas without looking at other regions.

From the studies and model in Fig 2 above, it is succinct that environmental factors play an essential role in determining performance. It clearly indicates that school environmental factors can be broadly grouped into four as school physical factors, teacher characteristics, student's characteristics, and school management characteristics as shown in Fig 2.3. This study sought to identify other environmental factors apart from the ones already studied that affected the teaching and learning of Kiswahili language in public mixed day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub-County and its dismal performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education.

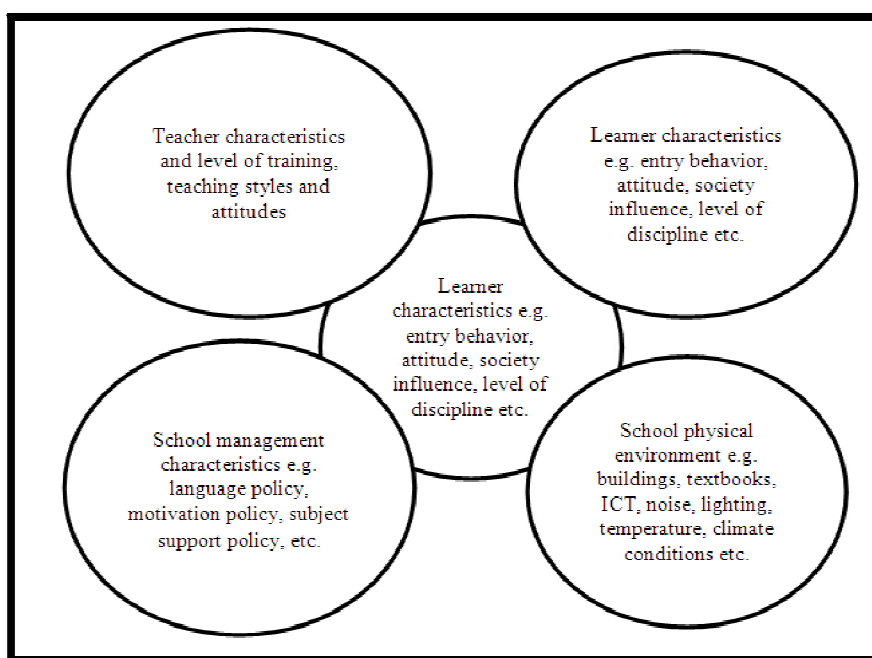


Figure 3: Factors Affecting the Achievements of Teaching and Learning Kiswahili

2. Methodology of the Study

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design because it makes it possible for researchers to test hypothesis by collecting data in relation to the objectives of the study. This design was appropriate because it made it possible for the researcher to get critical and succinct data or information in relation to the status of Kiswahili performance in Nyamira North Sub-County and draw conclusions on facts discovered.

A sample of 48 was taken from a target population of 155 according to Orodho, (2009) recommendation which states that anything between 10-30% is suitable a study. 30% was considered for this study.

Type Of Population	Target Population	Sample Population (30%)
Schools	35	11
Principals	35	11
H.O.Ds	35	11
Kiswahili Teachers5015		
Total15548		

Table 1: Sampling Frame

3. Findings and Presentation of Results

3.1. Supervision of Teaching Work in School

Supervision is an important component in education management and administration as this is the avenue which feedback on how well the curriculum implementation is taking place can be gotten. In this study the researcher wanted to know whether it is practiced and how often. The results recorded in Table 2 below shows the supervision done to the Kiswahili teachers by the heads of departments. 22.2% (2) of the respondents supervised the teachers daily, 44.4% (4) supervised the teachers weekly, 22.2% (4) said it was done monthly and 11.1% (1) said it was termly.

Number of times	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Daily	2	22.2	22.2
Weekly	4	44.4	44.4
Monthly	2	22.2	22.2
Termly	1	11.1	11.1
Total	9	100.0	100.0

Table 2: Supervision of Teachers' Work by Heads of Department

Principals were asked whether they supervise their teachers and they all said yes, that is 100 % (12). The other item in the question that followed up the supervision wanted to know the frequency of this supervision required that the principals indicate how often they did this important function. The results were recorded as once a month 50 % (6) of the principals supervised the teachers while the remaining 50% (6) principals' responded that they did it regularly.

3.2. Language Policy in Schools

Language policies in schools have a big impact on language teaching and learning consequently affecting the performance of Kiswahili in national examinations. The researcher wanted to find out from the respondents if school language policies had a bearing on Kiswahili performance as indicated in Table 3.

Language policy	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
3 days Kiswahili	1	11.1	11.1
Use of English and Kiswahili	6	66.7	66.7
None	2	22.2	22.2
Total	9	100.0	100.0

Table 3: H.O.Ds, school's Language Policy

Heads of departments of languages when asked to respond to what whether or not language policy existed in their schools, 11.1% (1 out of 9), said the school had 3 days of communicating in Kiswahili, 66.7% (6 out of 9) recorded that their schools used both English and Kiswahili as a language for communication, while 22.2% (2 out of 9), responded that there existed no language policy in their schools. The teachers of Kiswahili were asked to respond on the language that students use mostly for communication. On responding 30.0% (6) responded that Ekegusii was used for communication, 50.0% (10) said Kiswahili was used for communication, while 10.0% (2) used English for communication and (10.0%) (2) Recorded that the students communicated using sheng' language, as represented by Table 4 below.

Language Mostly Used	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Ekegusii	6	30.0	30.0
Kiswahili	10	50.0	50.0
English	2	10.0	10.0
Sheng	2	10.0	10.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0

Table 4: Language Mostly Used by Students for Communication While in School

3.3. Effect of Language Policy on the Performance of Kiswahili Subject

Data collected was analysed and the following results in Table 5 from the responses of principals, heads of department and teachers were given. On responding 100% (12) of the principals responded that there was an effect of language policy on performance, 100% (9) heads of department agreed that there was an effect of language policy on performance while (60%) (12 out of 20) of the teachers said, there was a slight effect of language policy on performance. The remaining 40% (8) of the teachers said there is no effect on performance.

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Principals Yes	12	100.0	100.0
H.O.Ds Yes	9	100.0	100.0
Teachers yes	12	60.0	60.0
No	8	40.0	40.0

Table 5: Response on Effect of Language Policy on Performance

The findings on language policy prove that language policies in schools were not enforced well in some schools. All principals and Head of departments used English and Kiswahili while addressing students. Students also communicate using the two languages. The findings are in accordance with those of Yambi (2010) who from a study in Illinois on Swahili-English speaking children found out that in most African countries, languages designated for school instruction were also designated as official and national languages. English is most preferred by the principals to Kiswahili whenever they are not using a mixture of both languages. Most teachers preferred using Kiswahili because it is their duty to foster the development of the language.

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