

## Impact Of Staffing On The Quality Of Learning In Primary Schools In Imenti Central District, Kenya.

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### **Abstract**

*The quality of learning that takes place in a school determines academic performance of the pupils and eventually transition rates to secondary schools. In Imenti Central District, public primary schools have been performing poorly over the last six years in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams in comparison to other schools in Meru County. This raises questions on the quality of learning in these primary schools. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of staffing on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District. A sample size of 382 respondents participated in the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as tools for data collection. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages. The results of data analysis were presented using frequency distribution tables, bar graphs and pie charts. The study established that high enrolment trends in primary schools led to overworking of the teachers. The study revealed that teachers did not effectively monitor pupils' progress which impacted on the quality of learning in the district. It was further established that to cope with teachers' shortage, some teachers combined classes while others employed multi-grading and multi-shifting teaching methods. The school heads, through the school committee also employed untrained teachers. The study established the staffing had a major influence on the quality of teaching and learning. The Government should urgently address the staff shortage to improve of the quality of teaching and learning in Imenti Central District.*

**Key Words-** Staffing, Quality of Learning

### **Introduction**

Formal schooling is one of several important contributors to the skills and development of an individual and to human capital. The distribution of personal incomes in society is strongly related to the amount of education people have had (UNESCO, 2004). Education instills in the young crucial humanitarian values such as equity, tolerance and peace; promotes sustainable development, environmental protection, improvement in maternal and child health and participation in democratic social and political processes; and directly contributes to national economic growth (Serbessa, 2005). Access to good-quality schooling is thus, of central importance to national development.

Due to the importance placed on education by governments around the world, many countries, Kenya included, have invested heavily on Free Primary Education (FPE) (Bishop, 1889). While the investments in education have been quite successful at expanding enrollments in education, for any given level of efficiency, increased enrollments require increased resources, in order to maintain quality (Verspoor, 2008). If these resources are not forthcoming, the increase in educational quantity may come at the expense of quality (Duraismy, James, Lane & Tan, 1997). Verspoor (2008) adds that other concerns surround the quality of instruction, the learning environment in schools, and the level of learning achievement. It was therefore important to examine the factors that impact on the quality of learning in public primary schools.

Verspoor (2008) conducted a study to determine the conditions and factors of effective schools in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Verspoor's (2008) findings indicated that schools associated with quality teaching and learning are characterized by emphasis on classroom factors such as time, grouping procedures, and instructional strategies; emphasis on school factors such as leadership, academic achievement, and staff development; focus on system factors like vision, standards, resources, relevant curriculum, and incentives to provide direction, and community factors such as home environment; and emphasis community support for education to ensure local relevance and ownership. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) noted that improvements in education quality and better learning achievements of learners in SSA will be determined in classrooms by motivated teachers who have the skills and resources to respond effectively to learner learning needs (ADEA, 2006). This study sought to determine the role of staffing on the quality of teaching and learning.

In Kenya, concerns have been raised about the quality of learning in public primary schools especially since the commencement of FPE in 2003 (UNESCO, 2005; Sifuna, 2004). After the introduction of FPE, head-teachers in many schools found themselves with more children to enrol than their capacity could hold (Ng'ethe, 2004). While there is a

consensus that FPE is an appropriate policy addressing the problem of declining primary school enrolment in Kenya, a serious concern has been raised on the effects the programme has on quality of education (Swamura & Sifuna, 2008; Chuck, 2009; Oketch & Somerset, 2010; Shimada, 2010). Of major concern to this study are the factors that may impede the quality of learning in the schools. The quality of learning in Imenti Central is of specific concern to stakeholders. According to KCPE results in the province for the last six years, the performance has remained poor. Table 1 shows the mean score and rank of the district in the province.

Table 1

KCPE Mean Scores for Imenti Central District

Year	Entry	Mean score	Rank	Index
2006	4425	227.41	50/52	-0.49
2007	4434	229.62	48/52	+2.19
2008	4445	225.6	50/52	-4.02
2009	4827	223.1	49/52	-2.50
2010	2611	222.75	51/52	-12.65
2011	2647	234.6	50/52	+3.84

Source: Imenti Central Education Office (2012)

Information on Table 1 shows that schools in Imenti Central District have been performing poorly in KCPE. The current study sought to investigate the influence of staffing on the quality of teaching and learning which impacts on performance in KCSE.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Education is key to the development of human resources. Despite the government's effort to promote FPE with a view of promoting opportunities for education, public primary schools in Imenti Central District have always been among the bottom four in the last five years in Eastern province at KCPE examinations. This raises the question of quality of learning in these schools. It also means that a lot of pupils miss opportunities in national secondary schools and probably this would negatively affect their future careers and livelihoods. If not addressed, this trend would negate the purpose for which FPE was introduced. Therefore the study sought to investigate the impact of staffing on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District.

## Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study was 20,776 subjects made up of 580 teachers and 20,186 pupils in 56 public primary schools in Imenti Central District and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) in the district. The researcher sampled 382 subjects made up of 350 pupils, 10 head teachers, 20 teachers and 2 QASOs to participate in the study from 10 schools. The head teacher was purposively selected, giving 10 head teachers for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select 2 teachers from each of the 10 schools, giving a total of 20 teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select two QASO officers in charge of Abothuguchi East and Abothuguchi West divisions.

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. Questionnaires were used to gather data from the students, teachers and head teachers while interview schedules were used to collect information from QASOs. The researcher conducted a piloting study in four schools in the neighbouring Buuri district in Eastern Province. Reliability was estimated by Spearman Brown prophecy formula using test retest technique. With a reliability coefficient of 0.938, 0.845 and 0.94 for teachers, head teachers and pupils respectively the instruments were considered reliable. Validity of instruments was ensured through the expert judgment of the supervisors in Chuka University. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using tables.

## Results and Discussions

The study sought to establish how the sample was distributed by gender and the data presented on Table 2 reveals the findings.

Table 2

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Category of respondent	Male		Female		Total percentage
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Head teachers	6	60.0	4	40.0	100
Teachers	10	50.0	10	50.0	100
Pupils	168	48.0	182	52.0	100
DQASO	2	100.0	0	0	100
Total	187		195		

According to the findings in Table 4, majority (60.0%) of the head teachers respondents were males and 40.0% were females. Of the teachers, 50.0% were males while 50.0% were females. The teachers' respondents comprised of deputy head teachers, senior teachers, heads of subjects and class teachers. The information shown in Table 3 further shows that majority of the pupil respondents (52.0%) were girls while 48.0% were boys. This implies that there was heterogeneity in terms of gender among the respondents that took part in this study

The study sought to establish the academic qualification of the Head teachers and Teachers respondents and this information is presented on Figure 1.

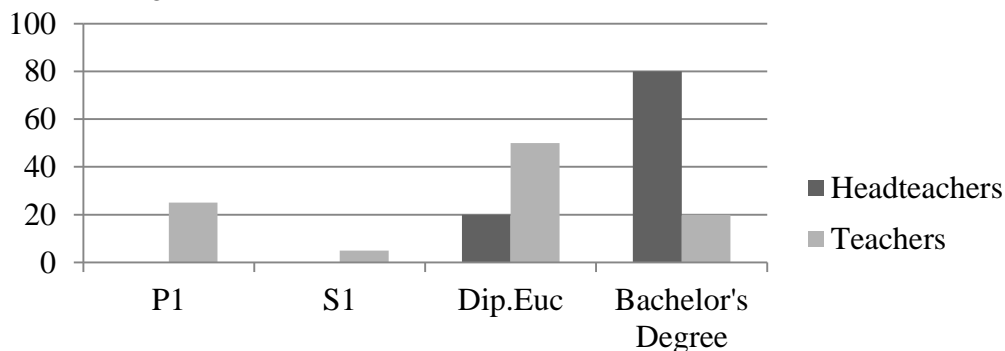


Figure 1. Head teachers' and Teachers' Academic Qualification

Figure 1 shows that majority (80.0%) of the head teachers had bachelor degree qualifications while 20.0% of the head teachers had diploma in education qualification. The requisite qualification to be appointed as a head teacher in primary schools is a minimum of P1 with at least five years teaching experience according to the ministry of education. This implies that head teachers who participated in the study were qualified for that responsibility and were expected to carry out their mandate effectively. Further, the findings reveal that majority (50.0%) of the teachers had diploma in education qualification whereas 25.0% had P1, 20.0% had bachelor's degree and 5.0% had S1 qualifications. This further implies that most teachers had the recommended qualifications and training to teach in primary schools in Kenya.

The length of time spent in an organization leads to the development of shared understandings and experiences (Smoley, 1999). Increased tenure in an organization is positively related to effectiveness and performance (Mahoney, 1988). The study sought to establish the number of head teachers and teachers years of service and the results are shown on Figure 2.

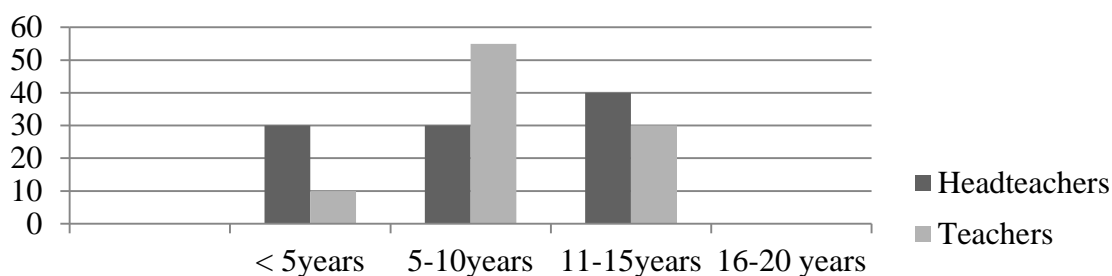


Figure 2. Work Experience as Head teacher or Teacher

As indicated by the information shown on Figure 2, majority (40.0%) of the head teachers who participated in this study had a working experience of between 11-15 years, (30.0%) had an experience of 5-10 years while (20.0%) had worked in headship below 5 years. This implies that majority of the respondents had taught for a long time and hence they could be able to give school related factors which influence quality of learning in school. Borman (1993) and Schmidt (1986) states that work experience improves performance but only indirectly via relevant knowledge and skills because prior work experience provides the opportunity for individuals to acquire relevant knowledge and skills that could in turn enhance performance in the job.

### Impact of Staffing on Quality of Learning in Primary Schools

The objective of this study was to establish the impact of staffing on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District. The professional role of a teacher is a demanding one and stretches from classroom teaching, curriculum development, examination processing and evaluation, material preparation to modelling the behaviour of the students and acting as role models to the society (Okumbe, 2001). To address this objective respondents were presented with statements to rate the impact of staffing on quality of learning in their schools. Table 3 shows the responses obtained from pupils.

Table 3  
Pupils' Responses on Staffing

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Adequacy of teachers.	49	14.0	65	18.6	33	9.4	111	31.7	92	26.3
Frequent transfer of teachers.	58	16.6	42	12.0	21	6.0	132	37.7	97	27.7
Loss of teachers through death	10	2.8	78	22.3	34	9.7	160	45.7	68	19.4
Too much work.	99	28.3	88	25.1	13	3.7	80	22.8	70	20.0
Difficulty handling many pupils.	112	32.0	162	46.3	45	12.8	31	8.9	0	0.0
Some lessons are not taught.	49	14.0	65	18.6	33	9.4	111	31.7	92	26.3
Availability to assist learners when needed.	42	12.0	21	6.0	58	16.6	132	37.7	97	27.7
Punctuality of teachers.	88	25.1	13	3.7	80	22.8	70	20.0	99	28.3
Adequate covering of syllabuses.	55	16.0	45	13.0	160	46.0	90	26.0	45	13.0
Employment of more teachers.	196	56.0	44	13.0	76	22.0	34	10.0	0	0

n=350

The information in Table 3 shows that most of the pupils disagreed with the statements that there were adequate teachers (58.0%), frequent transfer of teachers (65.4%), loss of teachers through death (65.1%), teachers were punctual (78.0%) and teachers were always available to assist learners when needed (65.4%). However, majority of the pupils agreed with the statements that teachers had too much work (54.4%), teachers had difficulty handling many pupils (78.3%) and some lessons were not taught (78.0%). Further, the results indicate that pupils agreed with the statement that more teachers needed to be employed (69.0%). Most of the pupils were non-committal on the adequate coverage of syllabus by the teachers. This may be attributed to the fact that many pupils may not be having any idea when and when not the syllabus is covered in the different subjects. From the findings revealed by pupils' responses, it could be deduced that the quality of learning in primary schools was being affected by teachers work load, large class sizes, inability to attend to all lessons and teacher shortage. This concurs with the findings of Ng'ethe (2004) and Asyago (2005) who found that the increasing enrolment of pupils in primary schools was making it difficult teachers to offer quality education. The head teachers and teachers' responses regarding the impact of staffing on the quality of learning were sought and the data obtained is presented in Table 4.

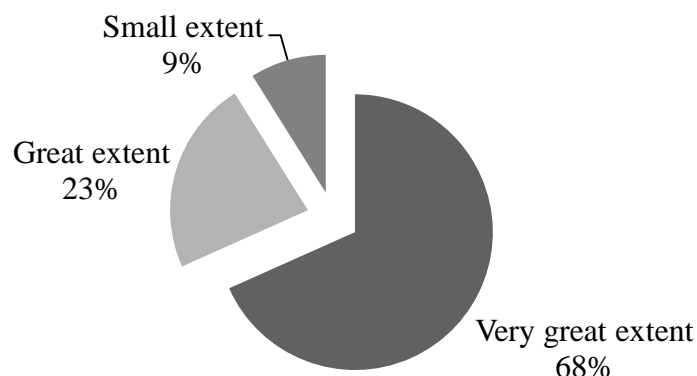
Table 4  
Head teachers and teachers Responses on Staffing

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Adequacy of teachers.	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	40.0	18	60.0
Frequent transfer of teachers.	0	0	4	13.0	0	0	15	50.0	11	37.0
High teacher attrition	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	67.0	10	33.0
Too much workload.	24	80.0	6	20.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Difficulty handling many pupils.	12	40.0	9	30.0	3	10.0	6	20.0	0	0
Some lessons left untaught.	19	63.0	7	23.0	0	0	4	14.0	0	0
Available to assist learners when needed.	9	30.0	0	0	21	70.0	0	0	0	0
Punctuality of teachers.	7	23.0	10	33.0	0	0	9	30.0	4	14.0
Adequate covering of syllabuses.	6	20.0	4	14.0	0	0	16	53.0	4	14.0
Employment of more teachers.	30	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

n=30

The information in Table 4 shows on that most of the head teachers and teachers disagreed with the statements that teachers were adequate (100%), there were frequent teacher transfers (87.0%), there was high teacher attrition (100%) and syllabuses were adequately covered (67.0%). There was however agreement by majority (100%) with the statement that teachers in primary schools had high workloads and that 70.0% had difficulties dealing with large number of pupils. Further, most head teachers and teachers were in agreement that some lessons were left untaught due to shortage of teachers and that teachers were punctual in attending classes. The study also established that there was no adequate syllabus coverage as indicated by 67.0% responses while all the head teachers and teachers agreed that there was need to employ more teachers to enhance staffing.

The study further sought to determine from the pupils the extent to which staffing impacted on the quality of learning. Figure 3 shows the pupils rating as measured on a five point Likert scale.



**Figure 3.** Pupils Responses on the Extent to which Staffing Impacted on the Quality of Learning

The study established that majority (69%) of the students respondents felt that the extent to which staffing impacted on the quality of learning was very great as compared to 23% and 9% that felt that staffing influenced learning quality to great extent and small extent respectively. The study sought to determine head teachers and teachers responses on the extent to which staffing impacted on the quality of learning in primary schools. The information is shown on Table 5.

**Table 5**

**Teachers Responses on the Extent to which Staffing Impacted on the Quality of Learning**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very great extent	18	60.0
Great extent	12	40.0
Small extent	0	0
Very small extent	0	0
No extent	0	0
Total	30	100.0

Majority (60.0%) of the head teachers and teachers' respondents indicate that to staffing has an impact on the quality of learning to a very great extent. This concurs with the pupils' response.

The study sought to establish free responses from the teachers regarding the challenges that schools were facing on staffing. The information generated from the head teachers and teachers is presented in Table 6.

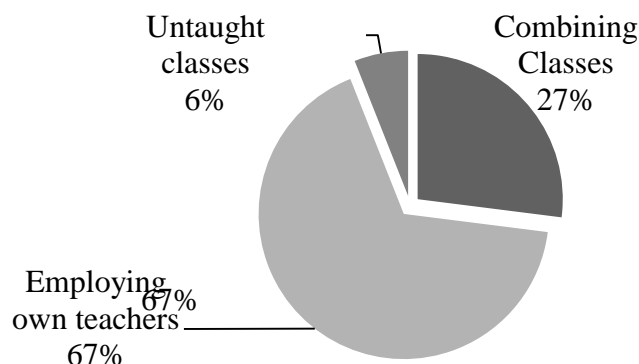
**Table 6**

**Teachers Responses on Staffing Challenges Facing Primary Schools**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Serious teacher shortage	16	53
Heavy workloads among the few teachers	10	33
Employment of form four leavers	2	7
Multi grade teaching	2	7
Total	30	100

The study established from the head teachers and teachers that the staffing challenges facing primary schools included serious teacher shortage (53.0%), heavy workloads among the few teachers (33.0%), employment of form four leavers (7.0%) and multi grade teaching (7.0%). Most of these challenges were also indicated by the pupils' responses.

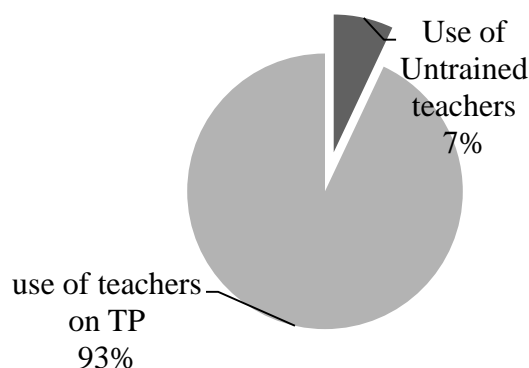
When asked what the schools were doing to mitigate the problem of staffing; the information that was provided by the head teachers and teachers is shown on Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Head teachers and Teachers Responses on Strategies being employed to Address Staffing Problem

The data on Figure 4 shows that schools were coping with teacher shortages by; employing temporary teachers through school committee (67%), combining classes (27%), leaving some pupils untaught (6%). This implies that schools were using temporary methods to solve the problem of staffing which may be detrimental to the quality of learning.

The study further sought to establish what pupils felt were the mechanisms being employed to address the challenges facing schools on staffing. The information elicited is presented on Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Pupils' Responses on methods being employed to Address Staffing Problem

Majority (92.86%) said that schools were employing untrained teachers to handle the shortfall while the rest (7.14%) said that schools were relying on college students on teaching practice to manage the problem of teacher shortage. This was a clear indication that most schools had a problem of teacher shortage.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the researcher made the following conclusions:

- i. Staffing had a major impact on the quality of teaching and learning in Imenti Central District, this is because the classes were overcrowded and the interaction between teachers and learners was minimal.
- ii. In mitigating the problem of inadequacy of teaching staff, the schools were using multi-grade teaching, shifting, and employment of untrained teachers which compromised the quality of teaching and learning.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations have been made:-

- i. To address the problem of staffing in the learning institutions, the government should urgently employ adequate teachers to match the enrolment for learners after the introduction of Free Primary Education.

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