AN INVESTIGATION ON POOR PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG ECDE CHILDREN IN GATUNGE ZONE OF THARAKA DISTRICT IN EASTERN PRONVICE KENYA

BY

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RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE IODL IN PARTIA FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BANCHALOR OF EDUCATIONDEGREE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND PRIMARY EDUCATION OF KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY.

NOVEMBER 2010

DECLARATION

This study paper is my own original work. It has not been presented to any other institution of higher learning for award of a certificate, diploma or degree.

Sign ..... Date 22/4/2010

Name of student .....PETER NJERU KANYARU

APPROVAL

This research project has been submitted with my approval as the college supervisor.

Sign _____ Date 22/04/2010

NAME: MR. WOMUZUMBU MOSES

DEDICATION

My dedication goes to my family members. Wife Hellen Kangaria and children Nathan Mucee and Brian Kiobe who have been so patient while I was busy conducting the study and more so during my face to face sessions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

I am grateful to each and every person who helped me in one way or another to successfully undertake this research. I would like to sincerely thank my zonal TAC Tuter Mr. Peter Mugwika for his undertaking, cooperation and encouragement. My fellow colleagues at Twanthanju Primary School deserves a pat on the back for their unwavering cooperation and support throughout my course.

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DEFINATION OF TERMS.

(i) Performance - Ability to do a stated thing well or badly.

(ii) Sponsored - To be donated or paid for by a group of people or organization.

(iii)Education - This is the formal or informal process of acquisition of knowledge,

Attitudes or skills

(iv) Curriculum - This is what the learners is expected to learn, acquire and master

Within a given period of time.

(v) Respondent - People who will answer questions in the questionnaires.

(vi) ECDE - Early Childhood Development and Education.

ABSTRACT

This research report was to investigate on poor performance in English language among ECDE children in Gatunga zone of Tharaka District in Eastern province. It was guided by the following objective to examine the effects of poor performance in English on learners' education and to establish the strategies put in place to curb poor English performance in schools. The data collection tools used were interview schedules and questionnaires. The researcher discovered the following a major cause of poor performance in English subject among ECDE children in Gatunga zone is lack of motivation on the side of teachers. Also strategies put in place to curb poor English performance in schools in Gatunga of Tharaka District included adaptation of refresher courses to teachers of English. Major recommendations of the research are: to the teachers should always be referring to the syllabus and not textbooks create more time for English and for remedial teaching. To the learners, they should have good interaction with their teachers is as to create conducive environment for learning. The parents to provide books needed by their children such as story books which are good in improving the reading and working. The government should find a way of ensuring that the teachers are understaffed in schools. These ensures syllabus is covered at the right time.

CHAPTER ONE; INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background information

Formal education in Kenya was started by the early missionaries. The major aim of these missionaries was to spread Christianity in the so called dark continent of Africa and Kenya being one of them. To site a few examples, education was being managed by churches like the Salvation Army and Lutheran church who were involved right away from the start with activities of praying counseling and rehabilitating war victims.

The type of schools, types of education was started by different missionaries according to their different denominations. Before independence, the Kenya government adopted the 7:4:2:3 education system. This system was changed to 8:4:4 education system in 1985 and it's the education system in force up to date.

Syllabuses of all educational institution excluding universities have been prepared by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) which is also a curriculum developer in collaboration with Kenya National Examinations council.

The Kenya National Examinations council is charged with the responsibility of testing and awarding certificates up to diploma level. English language is very important to the Kenya Education system. It is the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. Therefore English affects the performance in all other subjects except Kiswahili.

The acquisition of grammar is a gradual process that progresses from simple to complex. Brown (1973) conducted longitudinal studies in language development and noted that many children acquire the rules of grammar in remarkable regular order. Studies have shown that there are individual differences but Brown's study shows that children do not start or begin language by imitating adult utterances. Children learn through imitation thus those around them should speak correct English.

English is used as a tool for interaction with others in schools. How mush a child talks is the best indicator of a child's language skills. Highly talkative children are found to have more sophisticated language skills compared to others.

Poor performances in English at ECDE classes have been an outcry for teachers, Education Officers and Parents for the past three years. What drove the researcher's interest is the common use of mother tongue and Kiswahili as the media of communication.

The class teachers tend to spend more time in other subjects especially mathematics. This has resulted in poor base in English language. Inadequate resources in schools are another contributory factor. The schools have large class population and staffing situation is poor. The teaching methods are not varied whereby learners graduate to the next class without knowing how to read or write properly. Teachers tend to spend more time on higher achievers contrary to learners with learning difficulties. Therefore learners with learning difficulties lag behind in class. Many teachers have a tendency of ignoring learners with learning difficulties. Currently most children with learning difficulties are not catered for in ECDE centers and this result in poor performance. However poor performers can learn at their own pace if teachers take time, considers them and undertake special approaches when teaching them.

The low mean scores in English compared to the past recent years rose the researchers eye blows and wanted to find out.

The problems learners encounter with their teachers and vice versa.

What has contributed to the mass failure in the subject?

What can be done to change the negative attitude towards the low achievers for the benefit of the learners and the community at large?

1.1 Statement of the problem.

English is one of the languages used internationally and as a medium of instruction in the Kenyan education system. English problems occur in life and to be successful in life one has to be able to communicate in it in one way or the other and in one time or another. English has been performed poorly in Gatunga zone and yet as the official language in Kenya. The research has investigated the causes of poor performance in English in schools in Gatunga zone.

1.2 Purpose of the study.

The purpose of the study was to investigate on poor performance in English language among ECDE children in Gatunga zone of Tharaka District Eastern Province of Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the study.

The objectives of the study will be.

1. To examine the causes of poor performance in English subject.
2. Investigate the effects of poor performance in English on learners education.
3. To establish the strategies put in place to curb poor English performance in schools.

1.4 Research questions.

How was the performance in English in ECDE classes in all the schools in Gatunga zone for the past three years?

Why is English as a subject performed poorly?

What are the obstacles that hinder good performance in English?

What methods are used by teachers in handling English?

What measures are taken in handling English problem?

1.5 Significance of the study

The study is being conducted to find the cause(s) of poor performance in English as a subject. The research findings will be great significance to teachers, government, and community and future researchers.

- **1.61 Teachers**

It will help teachers with format on how to assist learners with poor performance so that they attain their full potentialities.

It will bring teachers closer to children with poor performance in education.

It will help teachers to understand children with specific learning difficulties and adjust the teaching approaches accordingly.

- **1.62 The government**

The government will realize the need to train and employ more teachers in school.

- **1.63 The community**
- The community will be mobilized to respond positively to the needs of children with poor performance.
- **1.64 The Learners**

The study will help the learners to have a positive attitude towards English. It will also help them to understand scientific concepts and skills such as sharing and cooperation.

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the study

Limitations

During the study the researcher was faced with the problem of time. The school schedule was so tight that there was no time to collect data from various key people related to the study such as Education Officers. The researchers therefore narrowed the data collection to teachers and pupils. Again time to go to the library for study was limited.

The problem of finances.

This practicum involved numerous expenses which must be met alongside family obligations and children's education.

Reference

Reference books and other materials were difficult to get.

Delimitations

The study was carried out in the schools of Gatunga zone. These schools neighbour each other and therefore there was no communication barrier since a common language was used.

Most teachers and pupils knew the researcher and therefore they were comfortable when giving the information.

The researcher hails from the area under study. He is familiar with the area and there are limited expenses in terms of transport.

1.8 Assumptions of the study

The study will be based on the followings.

That the respondents will be willing to give the required information. There will be cooperation of pupils, teachers, parents and administration to make the study a success.

That School will be on.

That transport will be available in the areas of the study.

That security in the areas to be visited will be guaranteed.

That language will not be a barrier to communication.

That the community will not be hostile and hospitality will prevail.

That the resources required for research will be available and adequate.

CHAPTER TWO; LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction.

English is an important subject in our school system. It is our official language and as such our children need to be fluent in both oral and written English. There is a lack of up to date information and exposure in English and thus teachers develop poor attitude. Up to date information can be communicated to schools by invitation to seminars, in-service courses and exhibitions. According to core module (2001) English is a creative subject. Since it is learnt as a second language, it needs reinforcement. Teachers may take the subject difficult and may therefore not be able to encourage learners (lack of role model). Mundia A. (1993) states the scenario or picture portrayed in the teaching and learning English is bad because of poor performance resulting from negative attitude of teachers, pupils and the society. Some believe that English is a girl language and this statement tends to make boys take it lightly.

2.1 Causes of poor performance in English

a) Teaching methods

According to J.S Farant (1997) poor method of teaching results in poor performance. For example a concept in English is taught in abstraction without relating it to real life experiences of the child. When application is done through real life experience, the child becomes motivated.

b) Educational factors

According to Wallace and Kaufaman (1975) poor performance can be caused by educational factors such as:

Inadequate and inappropriate teaching methods.

Lack of pre-requisite skills.

Lack of motivation.

Lack of learning or inadequate use of them.

c) Environmental factors.

Poor performance may be caused by environmental factors like poor nutrition, poor health and safety, inadequate sensory stimulation, emotional and social development.

D) Genetic factors Poor performance may be caused by factors that are inherited or as a result of malformation of genes after conception.

e) Negative attitude of pupils towards English.

Many pupils believe that English is a girl subject. Some boys therefore have taken the subject lightly resulting in poor performance in the subject.

g) Congenital decisions

Prenatal factors that lead to learning difficulties are passed to foetus through the mother's blood stream. Harmful factors that affect the foetus include drugs both legal and illegal. Long term effects of nicotine use by expectant mothers results in general low academic achievement.

h) Lack of stimulation.

If the child is not given opportunities to play or interact with his or her environment, his/her abilities to learn may be reduced.

2.2 Means of alleviating rehabilitation:

According to Njuki (2000) children with learning difficulties, (low achievers) can learn at their own pace. Teaching dealing with these learners should develop positive attitudes. They need to appreciate individual differences of each learner by doing the following.

Provide short, clear instructions for pupils.

Show willing to give them attention and love.

Adjust your expectation when teaching them and develop Individualized Educational Programmes (I.E.P) to remedy their work.

Provide opportunities for success.

Allow more time for the poor performers to complete given task.

Reward them whenever they attempt to answer any question.

Create a good rapport with them for better achievement.

Give poor performers activities that are equivalent to their abilities.

Mark their work and reward successful attempt.

Varying the teaching methods for example the use of discovery method of teaching whereby the learner is guided through questions to discover a principle or a concept. Some areas in English also require group work approach where by the weaker pupils will learn from the high achievers.

More use of teaching and learning resources.

2.3 Intervention measures

Most issues concerning poor performance have been discussed by books writers and teachers. Workshops and seminars have been organized to eradicate these problems.

According to core module (2001) Kenya government and Royal Danish government organized a education training for teachers country wide on how to teach English and other subjects. It stresses that learning should be "an active "and not "passive "process. This means that a child should be actively involved in learning (Piaget). Children understand a concept better when they manipulate an object or when they see than be told about the object. I hear, I forget, I see, I know, I do, I understand (Chinese proverb). The training produced key resource teachers (KRT) in every school.

Subject panels have been formed in every school in Gatunga zone. The English panel does the follow up of English performance and tries best to improve and lays strategies for improvement.

CHAPTER THREE; METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction.

This chapter will deal with the procedures which were used in carrying out research. The research will explain research site, target population, research approach, research design, sample and sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research site

The research was carried out in Gatunga zone, Tharaka North Division, Tharaka District Rwatha, Gaciongo, Karethani, Kathangachini and Makithi Primary Schools. These were to represent all the other schools in Gatunga zone.

3.2 Target population.

The study targeted teachers and learners gotten at random from ECDE classes.

3.3 Research approach and research Design.

The researcher decided to use qualitative research approach in data collection. He selected research survey design. The teachers involved were issued with questionnaires to fill. Learners were interviewed as the researcher recorded the information gotten from each interviewee in the questionnaire for data analysis.

3.4 Sample and sampling procedure.

The actual number of subject in the study is fifteen teachers and fifty pupils from five schools in the zone. The selection of schools was based on convenience. Teachers and learners were chosen at random from ECDE classes.

3.5 Research instruments

The researcher used structured questionnaires to collect information from teachers. Learners' interviews were also guided by the questionnaire for learners.

3.6 Data collection

This involves the researcher traveling to the sampled schools, visiting the administration to build a rapport with the head teachers after which appointments were made. This was necessary because the Head teachers had to arrange with the class teacher.

The researcher handed over the questionnaires to the sampled ECDE teachers. These teachers were given time to fill them and then the researcher collected the filled questionnaires for data analysis.

For the learners, individual information on children was collected through direct interviews which involved first creating a favorable atmosphere and rapport with the children. This was done so as to help children relax and feel confident and minimize inhabitations. The children were addressed in a friendly, warm manner. The children interviewed answered oral questions and expressed their own feelings and gave out their opinions freely.

3.7 Data analysis

The information was tallied; frequency distribution tables prepared and percentages were worked out. These were used to draw pie charts or bar graphs to illustrate the information where necessary.

3.8 Strength of the study.

In this study all the parties involved example school administration, teachers, pupils were very cooperative. They offered warm and friendly atmosphere because they were very willing to contribute and facilitate the study.

3.9 Time plan and financial budget.

The research is expected to take approximately one month. Various resources will be however required to make the research a success. These are contained in the financial budget shown in appendix (G).

CHAPTER FOUR; PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0 Introductions

This part is the analysis of information obtained from the ECDE teachers in Gatunga zone. The data obtained is arranged according to the research questions which were given to the respondents. It was presented in tables using frequencies. The frequencies were used to work out percentages from which some figures inform of graphs were drawn. Each of the target group has been dealt with separately and discussion on data analysis follows immediately below the tables or figures. The reasons given in each table or figure are summary of various ideas the respondent expressed in open, closed ended set of question.

4.1 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONAIRES FROM TEACHERS.

Question 1

Do you like teaching English as a subject?

Table 1

Response	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	12	$\frac{12}{15} \times 100\% = 80\%$
No	3	$\frac{3}{15} \times 100\% = 20\%$
Total	15	100%

Observation.

Table 1 show that most of the teachers (80%) who teach English like it and enjoy teaching it as to compare with 20% who don't.

Question 2 Do you always cover syllabus in English in the class you teach?

Table 2

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always	0	0%
Not always	15	$\frac{15}{15} \times 100\% = 100\%$
Total	15	100%

Observation.

The table shows that, majority of teachers (100%) or all teachers don't complete English syllabus.

3. The causes of poor performance in English subject.

Table 3

Poor teachers	10	20%
Limited resources (book)	05	10%
Pupils background	12	24%
Poor attitudes of the pupils in the subject	09	18%
Limited motivation to teachers	14	28%
TOTAL	50	100%

Observation:

From the table above it is clear that the major cause of poor performance in English subject among ECDE children in Gatunga zone is lack of motivation on the side of the teachers. According to respondents, they attribute 28% of the slam to the government and other stakeholders who don't motivate the teachers to do their work effectively. It is further noted that some teachers are poor i.e. they don't qualify to teaching English subject; this is indicated by 10% according to respondents. Other causes indicated for poor performance in English subject include; pupils background, pupils poor attitudes the subject (9%) and lastly and not the least limited resource; that lack of limited text book contributed to

4. The effects of poor performance in English on learners' education.

Table 4

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Failure in study	20	40%
School dropout	05	10%
Limited socialization	10	20%
Few chances of academic progress	15	30%
Total	50	100%

Observation

From the above table, it was revealed from respondents that the effects of poor performance in English on learners Education is greatly on academic side 40% of the respondents believe that failure in English subject causes failing of the learner in academic world. It was also noted that failing or poor performance in English leads to limited socialization of a student, as shown by 20% in the table. Also great percentage, 30% was noted with the few chances of academic progress by the learners and 10% indicated that poor performance in English as a subject and also a means of communication leads to school dropout of learners.

4.2 Strategies put in place to curb poor English performance in schools.

Table 5

Strategies in place	Frequency	Percentage
Fresher course to teach	15	30%
Introduction of Nursery Education	13	26%
Improvement in teachers payments	08	16%
Provision of English, instruments material	10	20%
Improvement in teaching learners environment.	04	08%
Total	50	100%

Strategies put in place to curb poor English performance in school in Gatunga zone of Tharaka District included adaptation fresher course to teachers of English; this according to respondent was 30%. Another 26% of the respondent said introduction of Nursery education has helped improve on English performance 20% as observed above indicated that provision of English instruction material to school by the ministry of education and other stakeholders has worked as appropriate strategy to improve on English performance.

4.6 General comment in learning English subject.

Table 6

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Take it serious	15	15 x 100 = 30% 50
Take it positively	35	35 x 100 = 70% 50
Total	50	100%

Observation

The table shows that majority of the learners (70%) felt that it is good to take English subject positively while (30%) would rather take it seriously.

CHAPTER FIVE; SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with all what has been concluded in other chapters and suggestion which can be used to improve the performance of English in Gatunga Zone

5.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the data analysis, it is clear that 80% of the teachers' respondents like English as a subject compared to 20% respondents who feel it is a brother. From the learners' respondents, 70% are for the subject apart from the very small percentage (30%) who need motivation to improve and enjoy the subject.

From the data it is evident that 80% of the teachers and learners feels that the time allocated for English lessons is not enough because the subject needs more practice se for the masterly of the content (as shown on table 6 and 18)

Despite teachers and learners willingness to do better to improve the subject, it is clear that teachers encounter the problem of time where the time allocated is not enough for the loaded syllabus. Lack of enough reference books compared to increasing number of learners due to be free primary education is a major problem. Another failure is that teachers don't group their learners.

Grouping learners is very essential because it helps the learners to understand the content better from their fellow learners.

About the issue of using teaching aids it is clear that majority of teachers don't make use of them. Teaching aids are very essential for the masterly of the content. At this point of view and the above discussion, the researchers feels that to be able to have teachers and learners improve in English performance the following should be considered.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reveals that for the subject to bring the encouraging scores, teachers and learners have a lot to do to brink back glory of the subject like in the past years. The researcher recommends the following.

5.2.1. To the teachers

- The teachers should always refer to the syllabus and not the text books as indicated in table 2.
- Teachers should create more time for English and for remedial teaching and encourage learners to do a lot of practice in English
- Subject panel on English should be revived and strengthened and taken seriously in all schools in Ntima zone in order to improve performance.
- Teachers should use reinforcement to encourage and motivate learners for the efforts made.
- Form class study groups which help in the masterly of the content if well organized
- Teachers should attend in service courses to learn new skills of teaching.
- Teachers should use appropriate learning resources to enhance learning.

5.22 To the learners

- Learners should create their humble time to read story books to improve their skills in reading and writing.
- They should have good interaction with their teachers so as to create conducive environment for learning.

- They should take advantage of discussion groups in the class so as to learn from each other.

5.23 To the parents

- Parents should take part in improving the performance by encouraging children to take every subject in school seriously.

- Parents should provide books needed by their children and story books which are good in improving the reading and writing skills.

- Parents should also give their children humble time to study at home not loading them with a lot of domestic chores (work).

- Parent should reward children for the effort they have done to create morale in school work.

5.24 To the government

- The Government should find a way of ensuring the teachers are not under staffed in schools. This ensures syllabus is covered at a given time as shown in table 2

- The government should make an effort to follow up the management of free primary education funds. To ensure that these funds are used well to avoid cases of text books and not enough as indicated in table 5.

- Appeal to the Government to come up with a syllabus which is not much loaded so as to complete within the time allocated (refer to table 6)

- The government should organize refresher courses, seminars for teachers to enlighten them above modern methods of teaching English.

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APPENDIX A - LETTER TO EDUCATION OFFICER

PETER NJERU KANYARU
P.O GATUNGA
THARAKA
5TH JANUARY 2010

THE AREA EDUCATION OFFICE
P.O. BOX 45
MARIMANTI

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a student at Kampala International University perusing a bachelor of Education degree in Early Childhood and Primary Education. As part of the requirements the students are expected to undertake a special study paper on a specific topic that pertains Early childhood and Primary Education.

I hereby request for permission to send questionnaires to schools in your zone so that I can get information required to complete my research topic. The information I get from schools will be confidential.

Yours faithfully

PETER N. KANYARU

STUDENT RESEARCHER

APPENDIX B – LETTER TO HEADTEACHERS

PETER N. KANYARU
P.O. GATUNGA
THARAKA
13TH JANUARY 2010

THE A.E.O
THARAKA NORTH DIVISION

Dear Sir/Madam

REF: RESEARCH

I am a student at Kampala International University perusing a perusing a bachelor of Education degree in Early Childhood and Primary Education. As part of the requirements the students are expected to undertake a special study paper on a specific topic. I am studying the causes of poor performance in English among ECDE children. I hereby request for permission for your teachers and pupils to fill questionnaires. The experience of the these teachers and pupils will help me to complete my study paper.

Please note that the information I will get from the school will be treated as confidential and I will call on you to make convenient appointment.

Thanking you in advance.

PETER N. KANYARU

APPENDIX C – Questionnaire for teachers

I would like to be acquainted with challenges, problems or difficulties you may be encountering on the teaching of English and how to cope with them.

To help me do this, fill the questionnaire below.

Don't write your name.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated positive responses

1. Do you like teaching English as a subject?

Yes ☐

No ☐

2. Do you always cover syllabus in English in classes you teach?

a) Always ☐

b) Not always ☐

3. Who could associate with the poor performance of English in your school?

a) Teachers ☐

b) Parents ☐

c) Pupils ☐

4. Whom can we blame for poor performance in the school?

a) Pupils ☐

b) Teachers ☐

5. Do you have adequate reference books used in teaching English?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

6. Do you usually use teaching aids when teaching English?

a) Often ☐

b) Sometimes ☐

c) Never ☐

7. Is the time in a day enough for English subject?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

If no what do you recommend _____

8. How have you grouped your learners as English Teacher?

a) Ability grouping ☐

b) Mixed ability grouping ☐

c) Buddy grouping ☐

9. Do you reinforcement to the learners who do well so as to encourage them?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

If yes what kind of reinforcement? _____

10. What general recommendation would you make to assist the improvement of English in Gatuga Zone _____

11. A part from the time allocated do you have remedial teaching for poor learners in English?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

12. What advice can you give other teachers in handling English?

a) Use reinforcement ☐

b) Encouragement ☐

APPEDIX D – interview / questionnaire for learners

1. Do you like English as a subject?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

2. Do you like your English teacher?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

3. Who is contributing to the performance?

a) Pupils ☐

b) Teachers ☐

c) Parent ☐

4. Do you always cover the work from textbook in all classes?

a) Always ☐

b) Not always ☐

c) No ☐

5. Do you have enough reference books for Learning English?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

6. Is the time allocated for English lessons enough?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

7. How often are learning materials used by the teachers when teaching English?

a) Sometimes ☐

b) Often ☐

c) Never used ☐

8. Are there any learning groups in English in your class?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

9. Do you receive any parent from your teachers after scoring good marks?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

10. Do your teachers use extra time to assist weak learners?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

11. Do you like teaching method used by the English teachers?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐