

## **Home-Based Factors Influencing Performance of Pupils on Transition from Lower Primary to Upper Primary in Ekerenyo Division, Nyamira County, Kenya**

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**Abstract:** This study examined home-based factors influencing the performance of pupils on transition from lower to upper primary in public schools in Ekerenyo Division. The study adopted descriptive research design. The target population was all teachers and education officers in the division from which a sample size 109 respondents were obtained. The main data collection instruments were questionnaires, interview guides and observation checklist. The study revealed that the main home-based factors such as poverty, drug abuse, language barrier, parent involvement and HIV and AIDS were the major variables influencing performance of pupils on transition from lower primary to upper primary in Ekerenyo Division, Nyamira County, Kenya. It was recommended that concerted efforts among categories of stakeholders particularly parents should be encouraged to enable them provide basic needs at home and monitor their children's education as they progress to higher levels of education[141 words].

**Keywords:** Home-based factors, academic performance, pupils, transition from lower to upper primary, Ekerenyo Division, Nyamira County, Kenya.

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### **I. Introduction**

#### **Background to the Study**

Over a decade has passed since the international community adopted the six Educations for All (EFA) goals at the World Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, as well as the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 that call for increased access to quality basic education and training which have been domesticated in Kenya (World Education Forum, 2000; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). This broad Vision of education and the holistic approach to sector development was fully embraced by Kenya as a critical vehicle for realizing Vision 2030, the road map for development (Odhiambo, 2010; Gikondi et.al, 2010; Republic of Keya/UNESCO, 2012). The Constitution of Kenya 2010 unequivocally promises all Kenyans unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the progress made thus far in order to exploit the full potential of education for each and every child, youth and adult in the nation (Republic of Kenya, 2010a, 2012a,2012b). In addition, the Basic Education Act 2013 reiterates the fact that basic education which has been made free and compulsory in Kenya should be operationalized through the legal framework enshrined in the Act (Republic of Kenya, 2012a). Both the Constitution 2010 and Basic Education Act 2013 guarantees and provides legal mechanisms of ensuring that every Kenyan citizen gets access to basic education and other economic and social rights that hinge upon the citizens access to, and performance in, education, as much as on the application of knowledge, attitude and skills gained through the educational experience( Republic of Kenya, 2010a 2010b, Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2012 ; World Banks, 2012; Republic of Kenya,2013; Waweru & Orodho,2013).

As the post-2015 goal-setting process continues, education has increasingly been discussed as not only a development goal in its own right, but also as a key way of reaching other development goals (United Nations, 2013). And for good reason: a country that provides free access to quality education for all its citizens is far more likely to reduce poverty, promote economic growth, lower child and maternal mortality and achieve social inclusion( Rose, 2013; United Nations, 2013). The importance of education and learning is adroitly highlighted in the Recent Draft Executive Summary for the United Nations World We Want Post-2015 Global Consultation on Education positions education as both a human right and the foundation for development (United Nations,2012, 2013).

There are many educational levels through which a child or learner moves. Each time he/she moves from one level to the other, transition occurs. Transitions start right from pre-school to early schooling which in some regions start as early as age three or four. Early Childhood Education poses new experiences (such as learning new things, being in a new

environment) as well as challenges (such as coping with new friends and environment) to the learners at this level. When these learners move to standard one, which is another level, they are faced with another set of new but different experiences. For instance in early childhood classes, learning activities are different, their classes or normally guided learning activities end at eleven o'clock according to their syllabus but as they join lower primary, that is, standard one, they stay in class until 12.40 p.m. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (2004) policy brief on early childhood states that the aims of early childhood education curriculum must be broad and contributive to the child's overall development as well as to their later success in school. The policy implies that the curriculum for early childhood education should be broad and provide for the overall development and successful learning. Experiences the children receive in their early years in school help them to undergo successful transitions in different levels of education and curriculum.

Another very important transition in educational continuum for learners or children in their early years is from lower primary to upper primary. At this level, the child encounters new challenges, if they were not prepared well. For instance, in lower primary, pupils interact with only one teacher, whom they own and none other is like him or her. As Johnson (2003) says, the basic understanding of transition is that it is the process of change that may require substantial preparation, planning and adjustment. Transition as a process of change requires preparation. To 'prepare' refers to making 'ready'. The teacher has a role in preparing the learner for a successful transition.

Leinhardt (1989) and Wassermann (1991) point out that teachers use knowledge about their children in classrooms – their backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses to create lessons that connect new subject matter to pupils' experiences. This means that the teachers must have an understanding of the content to be able to guide the learner through. Teachers use this knowledge to adapt their teaching to accommodate pupils who learn in different ways (Sava & Orodho, 2014). Leinhardt and Wassermann further add that expert teachers know and recognize pupils experiencing difficulties diagnose sources of problems in their learning and identify strengths on which to build. The teachers, who know their learners, provide for teaching and learning experiences and strategies that are suitable for the learners without compromising content as outlined in the syllabus or curriculum for the level of learners. Burrell and Bubb (2000) say that the start of primary schooling had been perceived as one of the most important transitions in a child's life and a major challenge of early school. Initial success at school both socially and intellectually leads to a virtuous cycle of achievement while Ghaye and Pascal (1989) add that this can be a critical factor in determining children's adjustment to the demands of the school environment and future progress.

This implies that all that surrounds the child should be conducive to his / her learning experiences. The environment of the child includes the parents who occupy the very first place of making the child emotionally ready, at home, to join school. Without prior preparation, planning and adjustment, the learners who perform very well in lower primary, do very poorly or relatively poorer in their first examination in standard four and may continue to get low grades unless there is an intervention to correct the situation. The intention of the study was to find out factors that influenced performance of pupils on transition from lower to upper primary level in Ekerenyo Division. The foregoing indicates that there are several factors influencing performance of pupils on transition from lower to upper primary level in Ekerenyo Division. However, the factors influencing low performance in upper primary level are not yet well documented. It is against this backdrop that this study was prompted to examine the school based factors influencing pupils' low performance as they transit to upper primary classes in Ekerenyo Division.

### **State of the Art Review**

In describing socially and economically disadvantaged as children from poor families, Nasibi (2003) contends that they consist of slow learners, average and the talented. Nasibi counsels that when interacting and teaching these groups of learner, the teacher need to be aware of their home backgrounds. The teacher should use a simple language, provide opportunities, relate the course content to their lives and interests, and motivate them while teaching by showing the worthiness and practical value of the subject matter being taught. This was possible if learner's experience was the starting point (Nasibi, 2003). Becker (1964) argued that education was referred to as an economic good because it was used for consumption and investment. On the same note, Schultz (1981) found that education of children is an investment in human capital. In other words, what Becker and Schultz were saying was that when people spend money for educational services, they were investing in the learners and the acquisition of skills, knowledge and values which were used in beneficial activities to benefit them and their families at household level.

Arnold (1993) notes that parent's decision to take their children to school was influenced by the costs of educating their children and by the perceived benefits of education. So people can be willing to pay highly for good educational programmes or institutions whose educational outcomes (perceived benefits) are high. To such parents, the cost of education is not a problem as long as they are able to pay for it. The parents who do not value the benefits of education, the cost involves becomes an issue even when they can afford it. Kundu and Bose (1986) said that the child's language development was influenced to a great extent by his home environment. The child hailing from a lower socio-economic background will be restricted in the use of language. This might be because the child does not spend adequate time with their parents. The child was also restricted in their social contacts. Education makes a two-pronged attack on society-social control and social

change. By transmitting to the individual the ideas and ways of the group, education was an important agency of a social control which is an influence exerted by society upon its members for the purpose of maintaining the solidarity of the group. While education preserves, transmits and stimulates the wholesome culture, the society also, according to its changing conditions, expects the school to review and plan its work according to the demand aspirations of the changing society (Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu & Nthinguri, 2013).

The whole planning of the school, including the curriculum should reflect the changes in social values, norms and patterns. Kombo (2005) points out that there was a definite relationship between educational attainment and the socio-economic background of the families including the level of education of both parents. Lack of finances for meeting educational needs may hinder transition of pupils from one level to another. As Clemens (2004) cites neither proximity to a school nor public education spending has a significant influence on decisions to enroll children in school in developing countries, which are determined considerably more by parental income and education level. According to Clemens, the major factor that determines whether the child would learn is the economic status of parents. The government may subsidize the cost of educational programmes, or even offer educational programmes without any payment, but if the parents have low income, they may not enroll their children in school. In other words, some parents may not enroll their children in school to receive education, simply because they do not feel that education is of any importance to the children. Some parents may not enroll their children in schools, because the children are assisting them to do household chores. The children are used as sources of cheap labor instead of hiring or employing people to do the work. Children are denied access to education through wrong decisions made by their parents. The perceptions, practices and attitudes held by the society in which the child is brought up play a significant role on whether the child will enroll in school or not (Orodho, Waweru & Getange, 2014). Transition from one level to another may be affected by poverty which leads to a learner lacking basic needs such as clothing, food and shelter, attitudes held by learners and parents/ guardians.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Education has been accepted as a basic human right that is to be provided to all children or citizens of a country (UNESCO, 2004). According to UNESCO educational opportunities should be offered to every child in all countries. The government of Kenya has made an effort to make education accessible to all and improve the quality of education at all levels by revising the curriculum, availing teaching and learning resources and recruiting and staffing of qualified teachers. Despite the efforts made by the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education to popularize education and make it accessible to all, there are still factors affecting learners academic performance at lower primary and upper primary levels. Notwithstanding the frequent revision of curriculum and availing instructional resources through the free primary education policy poor students academic performance of a learner at various levels still persist, hence causing great concern to education stakeholders. For instance, a learner who at standard three obtains very low marks, say below 20% in all subjects, if moved (transits) to standard four, is likely to continue performing poorly in academic programmes because the child did not master the content in the previous class. In Ekerenyo Division, upper primary pupils perform poorly in their examinations than pupils in lower primary. The high performance in lower primary and sudden drop in performance in upper primary raised concern for the study.

### **The Purpose and objective of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine home-based factors influencing academic performance of pupils on transition from lower to upper primary level in Ekerenyo Division in Nyamira County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were two fold, (i) to profile the pupil's academic performance on transition from lower to upper primary school, and (ii), to examine the home—based factors contributing to the pupils' academic performance on transition from lower to upper primary school level in Ekerenyo Division, Nyamira North District, and Nyamira County, Kenya.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the Classical Liberal Theory advanced by Horace Mann (1796- 1889). The Classical Liberal Theory asserts that every person is born with a given amount of capacity and abilities. According to this theory, educational systems should be designed with a view to removing barriers of any nature, such as economic, gender, geographic, that prevent individuals from developing their inborn talents, which enable them to social promotion (Sherman & Wood, 1982). Horace Mann (1796- 1889), who was a liberal progressivism, termed education as “the great equalizer of opportunity and chance”, which enhances life chances of those born into humble circumstances. This theory calls for further going through education at different levels from primary to secondary levels to which access would be determined on the basis of an individual's merit and not on social backgrounds. According to this theory, educational opportunities should be availed to all such that accessing it to be according to one's desire and motivation and not a few individuals are allowed to receive it. Thus the U.N declared education as a basic right and should be made available for all.

The introduction of free primary education in Kenya by the government in 2003 increased educational opportunities of over 3 million children in primary schools. This was a positive move made by the government to alleviate

barriers of social injustices to equity in education for all citizens. The Classical Liberal Theory was relevant for this study because it emphasizes on the need for removing barriers to educational opportunities. It is true that each learner has his/ her own capacity. The talents or capacities can be developed through educational opportunities that are offered. Equitable distribution of educational resources and facilities enhances pupil's good performance and this eventually serves as an incentive for transition from one educational level to another. The home-based factors such as poverty, gender bias, cultural beliefs, attitudes of the learner and parent's on education and school-based factors such as rules, curriculum, teachers, and instructional resources affect pupil performance and transition from one level to another. Children who go to school from poor families lack even very basic needs for schooling like a pen, school uniform and other writing materials. They also lack food or suffer from malnutrition and this leads to infection of nutritional diseases. Such pupils are not able to concentrate in class and their performance will be low and even much lower as they become more aware of their state as they grow.

## II. Research Methodology

### Research Design and Locale

The descriptive survey research design was utilized in this study. The design was deemed appropriate because it is a method of collecting information using a combination of research approaches including administration of questionnaires, interviewing, and /or observation (Orodho, 2009a). According to Orodho (2009a, 2012) a survey design is more suitable because it helps in studies that attempt to describe the nature of the existing conditions, identify the standards against which existing conditions can be compared and determine relationships that exist between specific events.

The study was carried out at Ekerenyo Division, in Nyamira North sub- County, Nyamira County. Nyamira North Sub-County has two educational divisions, that is; Ekerenyo Division (southern part) and Nyamusi Division (northern part). The main economic occupation of the residents of the division is peasant farming with tea being the major cash crop and maize being the main food crop. Their farming activities are limited by the small fragments of land whose productivity is low and hence low income.

### Target Population and Sampling

The study targeted all teachers and education officers in Ekerenyo division, which was, 460 teachers in 56 public primary schools and four Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs). Teachers were targeted because they are in direct contact with pupils in day-to-day teaching and learning activities which includes use of recommended teaching and learning strategies and resources. They are also involved in the implementation and delivery of the curriculum. The headteachers were targeted because, apart from being classroom teachers, have administrative role of coordinating and supervising teaching and learning activities in the schools. Hence, were in a position to required information. The divisional and zonal education officers were targeted because they were charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the educational curriculum and government policies were delivered and implemented by teachers and other stakeholders. They also coordinate the school and parents from the home background of learners.

Ekerenyo division was made up of three zones from which five schools were sampled through simple random sampling, rotary, to give a total of 15 schools out of 56 schools in the division. For teachers, simple random was used to obtain six teachers for the study from each of the sampled school. The total number of teachers were thirty per zone which gave a total of ninety (90), that is 27% out of four hundred and sixty teachers in the whole division, yielding a sample of 105 as displayed in Table 1.

**Table .1: The number of schools and sample size per zone**

Name zone	No. Schools/ Headteachers	schools sampled	Teacher Population (N)	No. of teachers sampled (n)	Head teachers sampled (n)
Ekerenyo	21	5	168	30	5
Nyaramba	19	5	154	30	5
Kiabonyoru	16	5	138	30	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>15</b>

Three Zonal Quality Assurance officers from the three zones and the Divisional Quality Assurance officers were included in the sample. The total number of respondents for the entire study was 109.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The main data collection instruments were questionnaires and interview guides. The instruments were pretested prior to data collection to determine their validity and reliability. After obtaining letter of authorization and permit to collect data from the National Commission of Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and following correct chain of command from the County Director of Education of Nyamira County and principals of sampled schools, data was collected.

The quantitative data was analyzed with the assistance of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Computer programme version 21.0 and generated largely descriptive statistics, as illustrated by Orodho (2009b). The qualitative data from interview schedules was analyzed thematically and reported in narrative and direct quotes.

### III. Findings And Discussion

#### Pupils' performance in Transition from lower to upper classes

The first task was to examine the performance profile of pupils as they transit from one class level to the other. Table 2 shows the average marks of pupils in Ekerenyo and Nyaramba from standard one to eight, for four years. The results in the table indicate that pupils score high marks in lower than in upper primary. This implies that as the pupils advance to upper primary, there are some factors that influence their performance in education and it was upon finding out the factors of low performance and remedying them accordingly that the trend should change.

**Table 2 : Pupils' performance in two zones in Ekerenyo Division.**

Zone	Class	2006	2008	2009	2010
Nyaramba	1.	364.07	417.17	410.70 (ZCAT)	643.10
	2.	390.79	395.05	394.58	657.94
	3.	372.74	370.16	340.28	643.21
	4.	209.00	222.06	227.90 (DCAT)	229.17
	5.	207.92	217.10	218.00	246.08
	6.	221.83	214.51	238.73	258.46
	7.	218.03	230.17	216.49(DICAT)	213.44
	8.	232.56	224.13	229.75	252.25
Ekerenyo	1.	550.18	572.79	565.67 (ZCAT)	582.45
	2.	501.80	548.58	584.67	625.88
	3.	547.66	550.04	557.77	592.68
	4.	231.07	227.20	243.39 (DCAT)	242.50
	5.	225.36	226.79	236.41	241.17
	6.	237.07	229.14	224.56	244.49
	7.	220.84	200.10	242.47(DICAT)	213.81
	8.	238.28	255.12	245.03	249.69

**Source: Zonal / Divisional mark lists at school (2006, 2008, 2009 and 2010)**

The standard three pupils' performance lowers as they enter standard four compared to performance in standard one, two or three (lower primary) indicating that there is a significant impact on transition. Plans to support transition should begin as early as in class one to create an environment that promotes confident transition from lower primary school classroom to upper primary school classroom. Teachers should ensure they induct the pupils, that is, they should typically provide a variety of programmes intended to orientate pupils to the expectations and operations of the school. The programmes should also provide support for learning and the social and personal aspects of transition.

From the academic or instructionist perspective, the child was dependent on adult instruction in academic knowledge and skills necessary for a good start for later academic achievement (Katz, 1996). According to Katz, a learner depends on an adult for academic knowledge and skills, and if the instruction is given with a good start, the learner has good academic achievements. The adult is the teacher or any other person who has knowledge of the content to be learned (Oketch & Nware, 2012).

There should be a constant consultation between various stakeholders in respect to pupil performance to help eliminate the sharp drop in standard four. Margetts (2000) notes that transition programmes should be based on a philosophy that children's adjustment to school is easier when children are familiar with the situations, parents are informed about the new school and teachers have information about children's development and previous experiences. Certain continuities should be aimed at such as continuity of peers, of expectations between settings (including teacher and child behaviors) and of programming for children's learning.

#### Home-based factors influencing performance of pupils on transition

The second objective for the study was to identify home-based factors that influence performance of pupils on transition from lower to upper primary in Ekerenyo Division.

In identifying home-based factors influencing the performance of pupils and hence their transition from lower to upper primary, respondents enlisted the factors.

**Table 3: Home-based factors influencing performance of pupils**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Absenteeism	16	21.1
Malnutrition	5	6.6
Language barrier	41	54.1
Lateness	1	1.3
Lack of parent involvement	2	2.6
Poverty	1	1.3
HIV and AIDS- Orphans	1	1.3
Peer influence	4	5.3
Coping with adolescence	4	5.2
Drug abuse	1	1.3

The main home-based factors influencing the performance of pupils on transition from lower to upper primary negatively were enlisted by the respondents, who were involved in the study. The study found that the most highly ranked factor that influenced performance negatively was language barrier (54.1%) which implies that pupils had no command of the language being used for communication. The other factor respondents recorded was absenteeism (21.1%) which may as a result of lack of guidance and counseling or child labor to earn the family some income among others. The least ranked responses were: lateness (1.3%), poverty (1.3%), drug abuse (1.3%) and the impact of HIV and AIDS (1.3%) which resulted to the presence of many pupils in schools who were orphans and who had none to depend on for their up-keep.

On the other hand, in finding out the background of parents of the pupils in school under the study, head teachers were requested to give information about the background of parents. One hundred percent said that the parents of the pupils in the Ekereny Division were peasant farmers, who earned very little from their farming activities and would not be able to provide their children with basic educational requirements such as uniforms. Becker (1964) argues that education is referred to as an economic good because it is used for consumption and investment.

Kundu and Bose (1986) say that the child's language development is influenced to a great extent by his home environment. The child hailing from a lower socio-economic background would be restricted in the use of language especially, English which was only used as a medium of instruction at school for upper pupils, who had not had command of it. The school had a role of developing a language policy, within its boundaries, to help pupils to use either English or Kiswahili in their interactions and this helps them to know the language used for delivery of the curriculum content. This finding is in tandem with Arnold (1993) who avers that parents' decision to take their children to school is influenced by the costs of educating their children and by their perceived benefits of education. According to Arnold, parents take a major role in deciding to which school to take his/ her child to learn and this depends on their financial status. The study established that the enlisted factors were interrelated and negatively contributing to the performance of pupils and hence their low transition from one level to the other in Ekereny Division.

#### **IV. Conclusion And Recommendations**

The gist of this study was to determine the main home-based factors influencing pupils' performance and low transition from lower to upper primary schools in the study locale. The findings of the study lead to two main conclusions. First, some home-based factors such as language barrier, absenteeism, malnutrition, peer influence, copying with adolescence, lack of parent involvement, lateness, HIV/ AIDS- orphans, poverty and drug abuse call for parents to do their part, release them early enough from home and feed them balanced diet were found to be negatively influencing pupils access to school, their participation and low transition from one class level to the other. Secondly, it was also evident that parents have abrogated their role of guiding and counseling their children against associating themselves with bad company, yet such bad company ruins morals and encourages such practices as drug abuse. Parents or guardians also needed to educate them on how to cope with adolescence, a normal developmental stage.

From the findings and discussion, it is recommended that:

1. Parents should ensure their children went to school always to avoid absenteeism so that learners may go through all teaching and learning experiences since it is these experiences that account for overall good performance. Parents also to reduce absenteeism through provision of basic needs such as balanced diet and clothing (especially uniforms) which pupils used as an excuse.
2. Parents should monitor their children's learning activities through regular checking of their written work, regular consultation with teachers on performance of pupils.
3. Parents should guide and counsel their children against immoral conduct which leads to drug abuse and irresponsible behavior such as sexual immorality, a cause of early pregnancy and sexual diseases.
4. Encourage pupils to have positive attitude to all subjects and educational activities in general for it enables them to do well. This may be done through rewarding the high performers or most improved areas, use of locally available teaching and learning resources and giving assignment in form of homework.

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