

## **Influence of teaching experience on pupils' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination in English subject in Kenya**

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**Abstract:** *Teaching experience is a repository of competencies and knowledge skills acquired by a classroom teacher in the field of teaching and assessing learner performance in formative and summative examinations. In the realm of teaching and learning English language and English composition as a subject, teacher (teaching) experience is an indicator of teacher familiarity through experiential learning of various instructional approaches for effective contentment delivery in a classroom domain. It further equips the classroom teacher with skills and competences on how to engage learners and maintain learner discipline during a class session inside or outside a school setting. The objective of this study was to determine the influence of teacher (teaching) experience on pupils' performance in KCPE examination in English subject in Kenya. The study used descriptive research design and purposive sampling as its method for research. The unit of analysis included teachers from public primary schools in Machakos County. The respondents were Primary school teachers who teach English subject in KCPE examination classes. The sample size was 132 teachers with teaching experience of between 1 year and 31 years. Data collection was done through questionnaires. The study found gradual increase in candidates' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination in English subject in Kenya from a Mean score of 45.8 % corresponding to teacher teaching experience of 4 years to a maximum Mean score of 53.2 % corresponding to 15 – 19 years of teacher teaching experience. The study also found that there was gradual decrease in candidates' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination in English subject in Kenya to 51.8 % corresponding to teacher teaching experience of 20 years and above. Candidates taught by teachers with teaching experience of 20 years achieved a Mean score of 53.1 %. Study concluded that teacher teaching experience significantly influences pupils' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination in English subject in Kenya. This influence is moderated by other factors such as age and work environment. Recommendations of study purposed to enhance pupils' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination in English subject are: (1) Promote high performing experienced teachers to higher responsibilities in order to boost their morale for the purpose of enhancing their classroom performance; (2) Develop teacher teaching experience through teacher exchange programmes and skills development trainings during school vacation; (3) Sustain morale of experienced teachers who are high performers by improving their terms of service like remuneration and timely promotion of deserving teachers; (4) Institutionalize mentoring programmes in schools to hasten transfer of experiential knowledge skills from more experienced teachers to less experienced teachers; and (5) Improve teacher-administration work relations, school resources and related physical infrastructure.*

**Key words;** *teaching experience, pupils' performance, English as a subject*

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### **I. Introduction**

Kenya Vision 2030 endeavors to achieve a globally competitive quality education for her citizens by the year 2030. UNESCO Report (2012) acknowledges that globally more than 61 million children fail in basic examinations of whom 41% live in sub Saharan Africa. The continued inability of many children to have average pass in primary examinations in Kenya is interpreted as failure of school system and lack of teacher preparedness and approaches in content delivery. Crystal (2003) says communication is a key competency which develops through Language learning, a determinant of not only the performance of a learner but understanding of other subjects.

UNESCO Report (2015) says that teacher preparedness refers to a complex process of a teacher possessing professional values and being able to practice those values, and being able to make sound judgment in school setting situations through teaching experience. UNESCO Report (2010) says that teacher (teaching) experience is considered as one of the critical aspects which enhances and improves learner performance. The Curriculum Journal, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2013 acknowledges teaching experience as a global issue that influences the implementation of classroom activities and learner's performance. Lee and Kim (2012) say that competency is linearly related to performance of any task; and that the same can be built periodically to enhance self-learning and innovation.

OECD Report (2009) says that many young teachers in Africa stay on and become more committed and ultimately improve learner's performance. Arriaza and Martin (2007) argued that as teachers stay longer in teaching they concentrate more on teaching and stop seeking promotions; and that their preparedness skills become more polished thus improving learners' performance. Thuraniira (2010) says teaching experience improves learner performance and creates a bond between the learners and the teachers thereby improving preparedness and performance. The MoE and KNEC Audit Reports (2017) on the performance of KCPE over the past years attribute the below average performance to learner indiscipline, among other factors. It is thus became necessary to interrogate in detail the influence of teaching experience in KCPE performance in English subject.

Whereas majority studies have linked performance of learners to teachers' experience, some published studies show that under some circumstances experienced teachers do not enhance learner performance. Boyd et al. (2008), Harris & Saass (2007), and Papay & Kraft (2007) posit that learners who are taught by less experienced teachers perform poor compared with learners taught by more experienced teachers; but that teachers with teaching experience of more than 25 years are in some circumstances found not to be as effective as less experienced teachers.

Rice (2010) says several institutions recognize experience as a factor in performance of various tasks. Rice and Wong (2010) found that working experience in Education is used to determine who to give responsibilities and who to promote. They concur that experience gained over time improves knowledge, skills and productivity. Teaching experience is traditionally held as a system influencer for effective learner performance in schools, and has for a long time informed many human resource policy decisions on teacher remuneration, promotions, distribution and transfers including extension of service contract terms beyond retirement age for long-serving certificated teachers in Education sector. Hariss and Sass (2008) found teacher experience has a significant effect on students' achievement in English language. Strauss and Vogt (2001) say that teacher teaching experience is a strong determinant of student academic achievement. Komolafe (1989) and Ojo (2008) found that teachers' experience affected performance of students in English language; adding that the more the teacher is qualified and experienced the better his or her students are likely to perform. Robinson (2009) and Rockoff (2004) say that a teacher's teaching experience contributes significantly to students' achievement in mathematics and language only if it was combined with other school factors.

Burden (2000) says that a teacher has three stages in his career. The first or survival stage which Fressler (1995) called pre-teaching concern stage occurs during the first year of teaching whereat teachers lack knowledge of teaching and learning environment: teacher level of confidence is also low as most of them are unwilling to try different strategies of teaching. He (Burden) called the second stage which occurs in the first four years of teaching the adjustment stage whereat teachers adapt a great deal to preparedness in term of planning and organization. At this stage, the teacher's level of confidence has built up, and now view learners as people. Lastly, the third stage is the mature stage which starts from five years of experience upwards, a stage wherein teacher has grasped and discovered the job. Moen (2005) says that at this mature stage, a teacher has self-discovery in the profession of teaching resulting in improved performance of learners. It is a period of consolidating, reefing and mastering teaching. At this level, teacher preparedness has developed through experience (tutoring, training, mentoring, coaching and management of learners).

Odumbe, Simatwa and Ayodo (2015) say that teachers with long experience enhance and improve performance; and that long serving teachers are hands on in preparation of their lessons and keen on learner digression from performance. Ongele (2007) says that long teaching experience in actual classroom teaching produces better learner performance results than short teaching experience. Crossman and Harris (2000) say that male teachers are slightly more satisfied in teaching profession than female teachers. Job satisfaction translates into better teacher preparedness and in some instances better learner grades. Fetler, M, (1999) says in Archival study published in education policy analysis journal California on High school staff characteristics and mathematics test results that teacher experience measured by the average number of years in service was positively related to test results. Rice (2013) says in CADER Article on Learning from experience: Evidence on the impact and distribution of teacher experience and the implications for teacher policy that years of teaching experience influence on student achievement. Rice, J.K, (2010) says in Urban Institute Washington D.C journal article on The Impact of Teacher Experience: Examining the Evidence and Policy Implications that Experience,

gained over time, enhances the knowledge, skills, and productivity of workers' and that teachers show the greatest productivity gains during their first few years on the job, after which their performance tends to level off. In a related finding in the same journal on Teacher Quality, she says that Teacher Quality gap between High-and Low-poverty schools is attributable to lower productivity returns of experienced teachers in High-poverty schools; and, that High-poverty schools are doubly disadvantaged in the sense that they have higher proportions of inexperienced teachers and their experienced teachers are less effective. Ladd and Sorrensen (2014) say in a working paper 112 on Returns to Teacher Experience: Student Achievement and Motivation in Middle School that experience has large returns for teachers in the form of higher test scores and improvements in student behavior with clear behavioral effects emerging for reductions in student absenteeism.

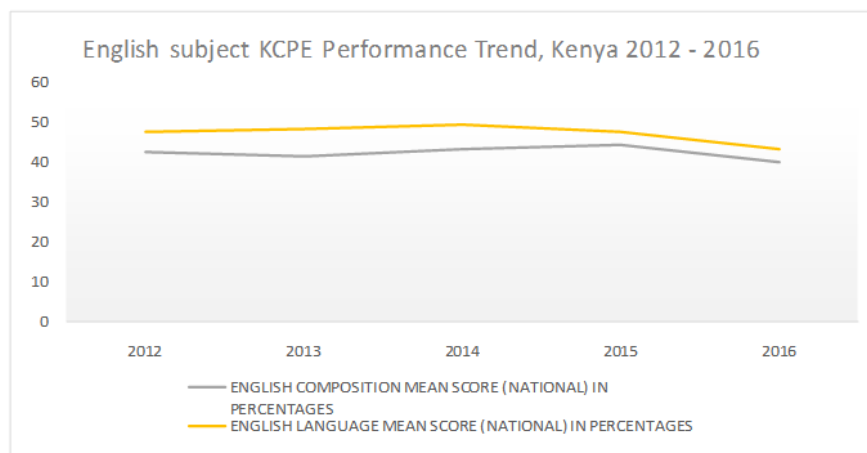
**Statement of the problem**

The performance of pupils' at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examinations (KCPE) in English subject in Kenya has been below average over last five successive years. Table 1 graphically illustrated in Figure 1 show National average performance of KCPE in English subject in Kenya from 2012 to 2016 and the performance trend.

**Table 1: National KCPE Mean Score in English subject 2012 – 2016**

Year	Composition	Language
2012	42.74	47.42
2013	41.56	48.09
2014	43.11	49.32
2015	44.34	47.7
2016	40.11	42.32

Source: KNEC KCPE Examination Report



**Figure 1: English subject KCPE performance trend in Kenya 2012 – 2016**

Quality of education in Kenya is largely dependent on its well trained and experienced teachers (Republic of Kenya 2005 Report). It is apparent from 2012 – 2016 KCPE results in English subject that there is a problem at Primary Education Level in Kenya.

**Purpose of Study**

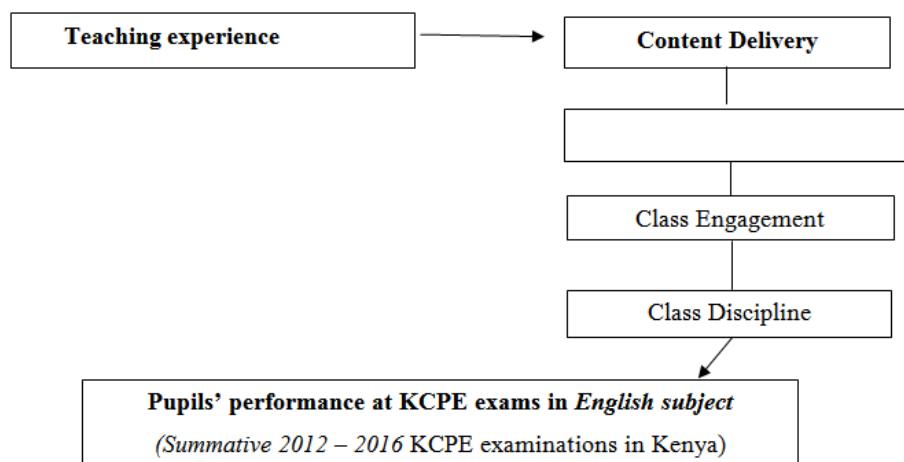
The purpose of this study was assess influence of teaching experience on pupils' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination in English Subject in Kenya.

**Research Hypothesis**

Teaching experience does not significantly influence pupils' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination in English Subject in Kenya.

### Conceptual Foundation

The study designed a pathway shown below to help illustrate the linkage between teacher teaching experience and pupils' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination showing problematic areas associated with content delivery in class.



### Constraints, trends & suggestions on teaching experience and learner achievement

Papay and Kraft (2014) describe teachers who have taught for a period of not more than 3 years as “novice teachers” who are but “simply trying to survive in the classroom as they build key classroom management skills, learn the curriculum, and add o their instructional abilities.” There are some constraints which deter teachers from gaining experience commensurate with number of continuous years of teaching in classrooms. Such constraints include lack of or poor mentorship programmes in schools, inadequate teacher professional documents, poor grasp of curriculum and content knowledge, poverty levels of learners, inadequate school resources/infrastructure, lack of teacher motivation, poor remuneration, unreasonable and untimely teacher transfers These teacher teaching experience constraints are more evident in developing economies like Kenya than in developed economies negatively impact on learner performance. Many suggestions to enable teachers acquire teaching experience commensurate with number of years of teaching in classrooms for enhanced learner performance include: (1) good grasp of content knowledge, (2) knowledge of pedagogy/instructional methodologies, (3) class management, (4) provision of appropriate school resources / infrastructure, (5) school mentorship programmes, and (6) extrinsic and intrinsic teacher motivation.

## II. Research Methodology

The study used descriptive research and purposive sampling. The unit of analysis was public primary schools in Kenya and respondents were teachers of English subject. The study selected 84 public primary schools out of 842 in all 8 Sub-Counties of Machakos County. Total number of teachers interviewed was 132 out of 1687 teachers who teach English subject in both high-end and low-end public primary schools in Machakos County. Teacher (Teaching) Experience interrogated by the study focused on classroom teachers who at least taught KCPE examination class in English subject at their present school over the past five successive years (2012 – 2016). Teachers interviewed cut across the 3 stages of experiential learning viz. Survival or pre-teaching concern stage which is the first year of teaching wherein the level of confidence is low; Adjustment stage which is the first four years of teaching wherein the level of confidence has built up; and, Mature stage which runs from five years of experience upwards wherein the level of confidence and preparedness has developed. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected, collated and analyzed through descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Findings were presented as charts, graphs and tables.

### Research Findings

The study sought informational data on the number of years teachers who teach English subject have accumulatively taught in the classroom since joining the teaching service. For ease of data management, number of teaching years were categorized in five Groups viz. Up to 1 year (survival stage); 1 – 4 years (adjustment stage); 5 – 9 years (mature stage); 10 – 14 years (mature stage); 15 – 19 years (mature stage); and 20+ years. The scores in each category were computed as percentages. Data was then collated, analyzed, presented, interpreted and discussed in-text. The lowest teaching experience was one year (teachers below twenty-five years) while the highest teaching experience was twenty-one years across gender. Teachers who are above forty-five years had taught for an average of twenty-one years. The study observed that there was a significant

increase (bump) in learners' performance after a teaching experience of three years (teachers in age bracket 24 – 30). The highest learners' performance was reported at 53.1% which corresponded with a teaching experience ranging from seventeen years to twenty years (teachers whose age is up to 45 years old). The study further observed that there was a gradual fall in learners' performance at 51.6 percentage mark which corresponded with a teaching experience of twenty-one years (teachers who were above forty-five years old). In summary, teaching experience is one of the key teacher preparedness independent variables which significantly influenced learner performance in KCPE in English subject. The results are presented in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2.

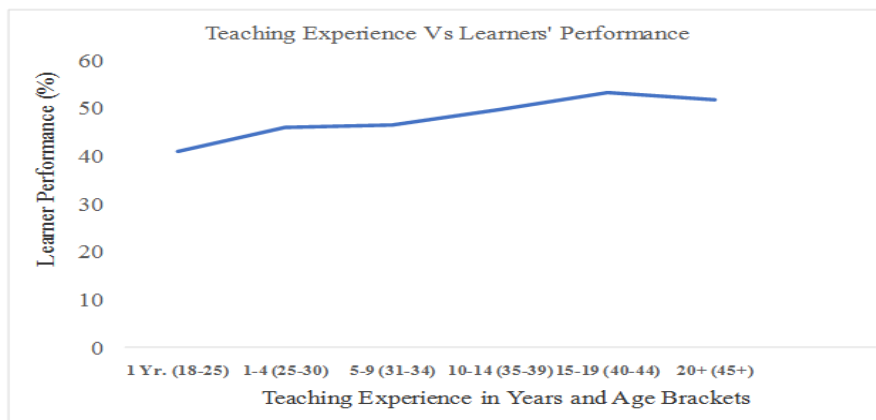
**Table 3.1:** Proportional grouped Mean teaching experience in years (%)

Grouped Mean Teaching experience in years (percentages)

1 – 4 years 5 %	5 – 9 years 12 %	10 – 14 years 25 %	15 – 19 years 40 %	20+ years 18 %
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**Table 3.2:** Teachers' ages, teaching experience and Learners' performance

Teachers' Age	Teaching Experience (yrs.)	KCPE performance
≤ 30 years old	4 years' experience	45.8 %
31 – 34 yrs.	5 – 9 years' experience	46.3 %
35 – 39 yrs.	10 – 14 years' experience	49.6 %
40 – 44 yrs.	15 - 19 years' experience	53.2 %
Over 45 years old	≥ 20 years' experience	51.8 %



**Figure 2:** Relationship between Teaching experience and Learner performance

The figure shows the relationship between teaching experience of teachers who taught KCPE examination classes and learners' performance in KCPE in English subject. The particulars of teachers with a teaching experience of less than 3 years were helpful in advancing the scope of study but were not captured in real analysis of the study because they did not teach English subject in KCPE examination classes between 2012 and 2016. There is a marginal increase in the learner performance with increase in teaching experience of teachers who taught English subject in KCPE exam classes for 2012 – 2016. KCPE candidates taught by teachers with a teaching experience of not more than 5 years posted a Mean score of 45.8 % in KCPE in combined English subject. KCPE candidates taught by teachers with a teaching experience averaging 6 – 10 years posted a Mean score of 46.3 % in KCPE in combined English subject. KCPE candidates taught by teachers with a teaching experience averaging 12 years posted a Mean score of 49.6 % in KCPE in combined English subject. KCPE candidates taught by teachers with a teaching experience averaging 17 – 20 years posted a Mean score of 53.2 % in KCPE in combined English subject. Lastly, KCPE candidates taught by teachers with a teaching experience of over 20 years posted a Mean score of 51.8 % in KCPE in combined English subject. The study found that longest serving teachers of English had teaching experience of 31 years. It is the finding of this study that performance of KCPE in English subject in schools in Kenya begins to fall when KCPE candidates are taught by teachers with teaching experience of more than 21 years.

**Table 3.3.** T-test result on teaching experience & performance of KCPE, English subject

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Years of teaching English language – KCSE	-28.365	121	.000

There is a statistically significant relationship between teachers' years of teaching experience and students KCPE performance in English subject  $t(131) = -28.37, p = 0.00$ . This implies that years of teaching influences performance of KCPE in English subject hence rejection of the null hypothesis stating that teaching experience does not significantly influence performance of KCPE in English subject in Kenya. The study found that teaching experience does significantly influence performance of KCPE in English subject in schools in Kenya. This finding is consistent with the finding of Jones (1997) and Hariss & Sass (2008) to the effect that teachers' experience and qualification has a significant effect on students' achievement in English language. The study finding is also in agreement with Strauss & Vogt (2001) to the effect that teachers' experience is a strong determinant of students' academic achievements, and which was also supported by findings of Ojo (2008) to the effect that teacher experience, among other variables, affected performance of students in English language. He (Ojo) concluded by saying that the more the teacher is qualified and experienced, the better his or her students are likely to perform. Lastly, the finding of this study is in agreement with Clotfieter, Ladd & Vigdor (2010) to extent that years of teaching experience influence learner performance.

Candidates in Machakos County schools whose KCPE examination classes were taught by Teachers with a teaching experience of less than five years posted a Mean score performance of 45.8 %. Candidates in Machakos County schools whose KCPE examination classes were taught by Teachers with a teaching experience of 11 – 16 years posted a Mean score performance of 49.6 %. Candidates in Machakos County schools whose KCPE examination classes were taught by Teachers with a teaching experience of 17 – 20 years posted a Mean score performance of 53.2%. Lastly, Candidates in Machakos County schools whose KCPE examination classes were taught by Teachers with a teaching experience of over 20 years posted a Mean score performance of 51.8 %. The study thus found that teaching experience is positively related to performance of KCPE up to about 20 years after which it no longer positively influences the performance.

### **Conclusion of study**

This study concluded that teacher teaching experience significantly influences pupils' performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination in English subject in Kenya; and that this influence is moderated by other factors such as age and work environment.

### **Recommendations of the study**

The study recommended as follows:

- (1) Promote high performing experienced teachers to higher responsibilities in order to boost their morale for the purpose of enhancing their classroom performance;
- (2) Develop teacher teaching experience through teacher exchange programmes and skills development trainings during school vacation;
- (3) Sustain morale of experienced teachers who are high performers by improving their terms of service like remuneration and timely promotion of deserving teachers;
- (4) Institutionalize mentoring programmes in schools to hasten transfer of experiential knowledge skills from more experienced teachers to less experienced teachers; and
- (5) Improve teacher-administration work relations, school resources and related physical infrastructure.

### **Suggestions for further study.**

This study, aware of the significant role played by teacher experience on KCPE performance in English subject in Kenya, hereby recommends that a study triangulating Teacher teaching experience, teacher competency, commensurate teacher remuneration and mobility in schools in Kenya.

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