



# Head teachers' Perspective of the Factors Affecting Performance in the Kenya Primary Certificate of Education National Examination in Embu County, Kenya

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## **Abstract**

*The stakeholders in education in Embu County led by the County Director of education and County Quality and Standards Officer in collaboration with the Embu County Senator expressed their concern about the declining performance in Kenya primary Certificate of Education (KCPE). Counselling Research Institute of Kenya (CRIKE) in collaboration with the County Education office decided to carry out a survey targeting the Head teachers with the aim of finding out factors affecting pupils' performance in KCPE. The study targeted 200 head teachers out of 475 to ensure the information obtained is a true reflection of the issues under the study. Descriptive research method and purposive sampling were applied. The data was analyzed using bar graphs, frequency tables and pie charts. The study found that the boy-child in the county is neglected and their enrolment in declining. The study revealed other factors that affect pupils KCPE results such as retrogressive cultural practices like female genital mutilation and early marriages, school factors such as inadequate resources and facilities, lack of proper organized pupils school feeding program, lack of motivation among the teachers and pupils, lack of adequate capacity building among the teachers and inadequate supervision of curriculum supervision by the head teachers. The recommend development of boy- child mentorship program, capacity building for teacher , involvement of local leaders in fighting the retrogressive cultural practices affecting education for both girls and boys, intensification of schools supervision to enhance teachers professionalism and increased involvements of parents in educational programs.*

## Introduction

Kenya is one of the countries that are offering free basic education at primary level as a strategy of promoting literacy level and promoting fast social – economic development. The government and other stakeholders in education are investing billions of money to ensure children in Kenya have access to basic education as stipulated in the Education act 2013. The study of Performance in Primary School level in National examinations is important in reducing wastage Eshiwani (1993). This is why stakeholders in education must ensure wastage reflected in declining performance in National examinations in public schools is reduced. This was concern of the cabinet secretary for education in his speech when releasing KCPE results for 2016.

In Kenya examination is a valid measure of academic performance Maiyo & Ashoya

(2009) Therefore, the declining performances in national exams especially in public primary schools is of great concern. Many researches on causes of poor performance of pupils in KCPE have been conducted in Kenya. However, the increased funding of the basic education by the government requires justification through improved performance of the learners in national examinations. This observation formed the basis of this study.

The role of head teachers is core in determining the school performance in national exams. The head teacher is the undoubtedly the central person in all leadership and team work exhibited in any school Mwamuye, Mulamba, Mrope & Cherutich (2012). Effective headship by head teachers is a significant in determining good school performance of schools Chittavi, (2002). This partly justifies why

the perspective of the head teachers as school the Chief executive officers is in schools is important in understanding factors leading to poor performance in Primary Schools in national examinations. The performance of KCPE is seen to depend mainly on how an efficient school administration is able to allocate resources and ensure thorough coverage of syllabus Wakori (2014). The quality of school administration play a vital role in academic performance as it is concerned with pupils, teachers, rules, regulation and policies that govern the school system.

Research carried out in Kenya support the fact that pupils' poor performance in Kenya Primary Certificate of Education is attributed to multiple factors. Some of the factors identified include inadequate learning resources, inadequate monitoring by head teachers, understaffing, high teacher turnout rate, inadequate prior preparation, lack of motivation for teachers, large workload, absenteeism by both teachers and pupils, pupils' lateness and lack of support by parents Reche, Bundi, Riungu & Mbugua (2012).

Pupils poor performance in KCPE is further attributed to retrogressive cultural practices such as insecure environments caused by social cultural practices such as cattle rustling, early marriages and female genital mutilation Mbugua, Kibet, Muthaa & Nkonke (2012). The retrogressive cultural practices deny children opportunity to attend school and transit to secondary schools and late to institutions of learning. In study carried in Muranga County on the boy – child education it was found that social – cultural factors and absent fathers affect children performance in education Mbatia (2015)

Studies done comparing private and public

primary schools performance in KCPE revealed that there is a correlation between the social – economic status of the family and high or low performance of pupils in KCPE Ochenje ( 2015). Low social economic status family may have a challenge providing nutritional food for the child and other basic needs such as medication and comfortable shelters conducive for learning. Such families may involve their children in child labour in search for mean of survival for the family. This may end up impacting negatively on pupils’ performance in education and particularly in national exams. Poverty affects pupils KCSE performances Mulwa (2004). However, this does not imply that children from low social economic status cannot excel in national examinations.

Children from poor families do benefit from the free primary education project despite their poor family background.

Finally the role of guidance and counselling services in determining pupils’ academic performance in KCPE cannot be underrated. Studies conducted on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in enhancing school discipline and academic performance indicate lack of comprehensive information and training in guidance and counselling among the teachers manning guidance and counselling departments in schools and poor budgetary allocations undermines the efficiency of guidance and counselling in enhancing school discipline and academic excellence Tiego and Kamore (2015). Research on the effects of guidance and counselling on pupils in public primary schools, revealed that an effective school counselling and guidance program benefits, pupils, parents and teachers by focusing on pupils’ needs and encouraging parents’ involvement in pupils’ learning and promoting team efforts to address school counselling competencies

and integrating interdisciplinary approach with all curricular areas Afande (2015).

### **Statement of the problem**

Primary schools in Embu County have been registering decline in pupils’ performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education national examination, thus attracting the concern of stakeholders in education sector in the County. In a concerted effort to seek remedies to the challenge **Counselling Research Institute of Kenya** in collaboration with the **County Education office** planned this study with the aim of exploring factors contributing to the declining performance in **KCPE** in primary schools in the County. The study focused on the head teachers’ perspective since they are the chief executive officers in their schools. The main objective of the study was to assist the stakeholders in education with practical recommendations that can help the County improve pupils’ performance in KCPE.

**Table 1: County KCPE results for the last seven years**

SUB COUNTY	CENTRES	KCPE MEAN SCORE					
		2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Embu West	58	260	260	263	266	261	264
Embu North	55	250	247	252	250	249	256
Mbeere North	110	240	247	251	253	244	245
Embu East	102	242	246	248	247	239	237
Mbeere South	151	232	239	241	248	243	247
<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>251</b>

**Table 2: Pupils enrolled for KPCE in 2015**

SUB COUNTY	CENTRES	2015 ENTRY		
		Boys	Girls	Total
Embu West	58	1151	1202	2353
Embu North	55	1026	1015	2041
Mbeere North	110	1226	1278	2504
Embu East	102	1463	1638	3101
Mbeere South	151	1828	1963	3791
<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>6694</b>	<b>7096</b>	<b>13790</b>

By the time the study was conducted it was evident from the table above showing the pupils enrolment in the five Counties, the number of boys enrolled in KCPE was lower than girls in three Sub-Counties namely Mbeere North, Embu East and Mbeere South while the numbers of boys enrolled was higher than girls in Embu West and Embu North. The declining enrolment of boys in KCPE was a major query for this study.

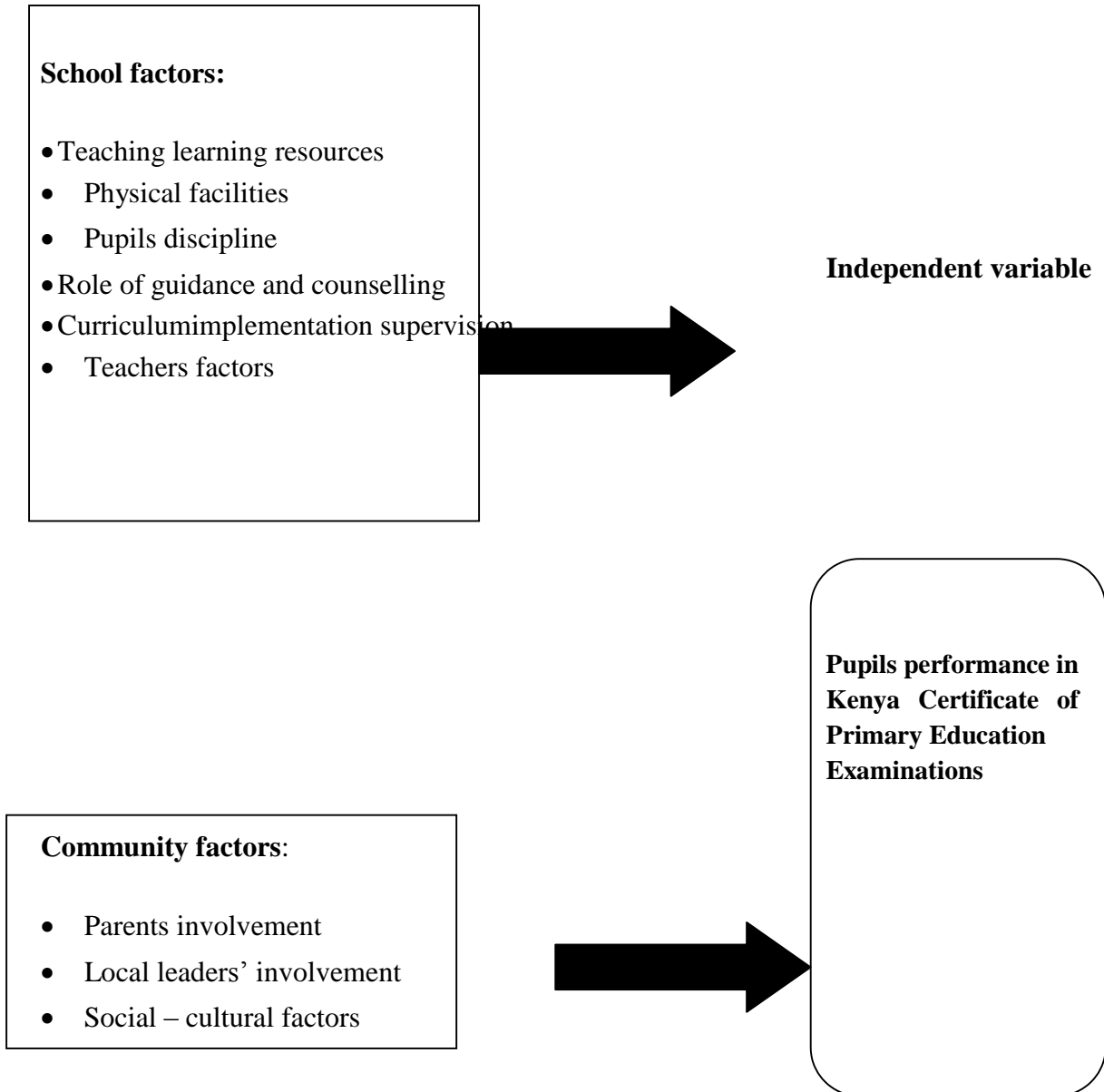
**Objectives of the study**

1. To establish school factors that influences pupils performances in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examinations in Embu County
2. To establish challenges that affects primary schools leading to declining performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examinations in Embu County.
3. To find out reasons why the boy – child enrolment in KCPE is declining in the Embu County.
4. To establish community factors that affect pupils’ performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examinations in Embu County.

**Conceptual framework**

**Fig 1.1** Below represents the conceptual framework of the studies

**Dependent variables**



## Research methodology

The study applied descriptive research design which involves collection of data from a population to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables Mugenda and Mugenda (1999). The research design was preferred because of its appropriateness in collecting data from the respondents in natural setting. The research targeted **200** out of the **475** head teachers selected in public and private primary schools in across the **five** Sub- Counties in Embu County. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the schools in all the five Sub- counties to ensure the target population provided reliable information Kombo and Tromp (2006). The study targeted head teachers from all types of schools in the county. Data collection was done using questionnaires consisting of carefully designed open and closed questions. Descriptive statistics in percentages and frequencies tables and pie charts were used to analyze the data obtained. The data collected was thematically analyzed. The qualitative data is presented in prose form to ensure the originality of the information obtained from the participants and enhance validity and reliability of the study. The right to privacy and confidentiality was guaranteed. Permission was sought from the County Director of education to allow the head teachers participate in the filling of the questionnaires.

## Results and Discussion

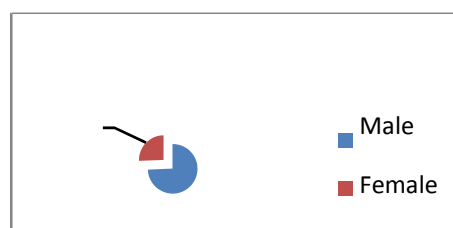
### Demographic information of the respondents

**Table: 3 Gender of the respondents**

Gender	Frequency
Male	149
Female	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

### Head teachers

51, 26  
%  
149, 7  
4%

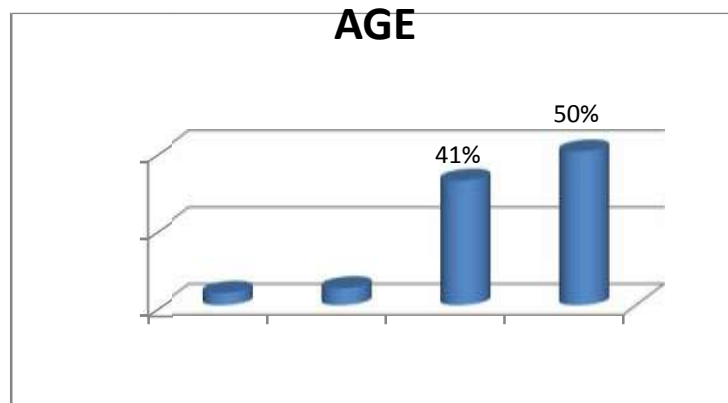


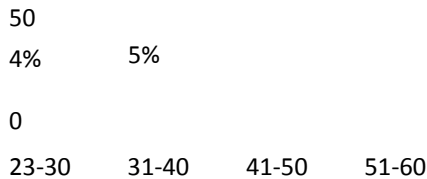
Majority of the head teachers in the **Embu** County are men as observed from the sampled population of the head teachers who participated in the study as shown in the frequency table above. This can be an issue for further investigation.

**Table 4: Age of the respondents**

Age of respondents	Frequency
23-30	8
31-40	11
41-50	81
51-60	100
<b>N= 200</b>	

100





91% of the respondents aged between 41- 60 headed public primary school, 5% aging between 31- 40 were from both public schools and private schools with 5 and 7 seven head teachers respectively. 4% aging 23 – 30 heads public and private schools with 2 and 6 head teachers respectively. These finding points out vividly that most of the head teachers are approaching the retirement. This can give insight on their level of motivation and commitment to their supervisory responsibility. With the new emerging trends and reforms in education it would be important to investigate how well the head teachers are updated on modern leadership and supervisory approaches that are required to manage implementation of educational reforms taking place in the county.

**Education level of the respondents**

**Table 5:** Education level of the respondents

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage %
P1	24	12%
Diploma	108	54%
Bachelor degree	62	31%
Master degree	5	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the findings it is evident that 81% of the teachers have diploma and degrees, 5% masters only 24% are P1 holders. This is evident that most of the head teachers have competence required to lead the schools. Their competency in supervision is evidenced by their good responses in rating teachers and parents’ roles in supporting implementation of curriculum and educational programs important in enhancing pupils’ performance in KCPE. The declining performance in KCPE in the County may be attributed more to other factors like inadequate resources, negative cultural influences, lack of support by local leaders and parents and lack of motivation among the learners and teachers.

**Types of schools represented in the sample**

91% of the respondents were head teachers from public day schools 2% from public boarding schools and only 7% were from private schools. This is evidence that the findings of this study can be generalized to reflect what is happening in primary schools in the

County thus enhancing the reliability of the study.

**Table 7:** Location of the schools sampled

School location	Frequency	Percentage %
Urban	6	3%
Sub urban	18	9%
Rural	176	88%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The study revealed that 88% of the schools in the County are in the rural areas, 9% sub-urban areas and 3% in urban. This finding can create insight why many pupils in the county are greatly affected the negative cultural factors like female circumcision, early marriages and drugs and substance abuse which impact negatively on their education.

**School factors**

**Table 8:** Availability of teaching learning resources

Resources	Adequate		Inadequate		Not available	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Text books	44	23%	138	73%	8	4%
Classrooms	92	46%	108	52%	0	0%
Teaching aids	18	9%	154	77%	28	14%
ICT Equipments	6	3%	63	31%	131	66%
Chalk / exercise books	124	62%	76	38%	0	0%
Library	8	4%	16	8%	176	88%
Games equipments	10	5%	150	75%	40	20%
Costumes / music / drama equipments	10	5%	60	30%	130	65%

Despite government efforts in funding free primary education 73% of the schools do not have adequate text books while in others (4%) textbooks are not available. This might explain why students do not complete assignments or read on their own at home. Textbooks contribute significantly in pupil’s performance KCPE. About 52% of the respondents indicated that classrooms are inadequate causing congestion due to over enrolment. Congested classes are not conducive for learning and can be a contributing factor to declining performance in the County. 77% of the schools do not have adequate teaching aids while 14% indicated teaching aids are not available. The importance of teaching aids in enhancing learning especially for the young children can never be underrated as a factor leading to good performance in examinations. 66% of the schools do not have ICT equipments while 31% indicated they are inadequate and therefore many schools may not be using the digitized teaching resources prepared by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development to enhance pupils’ performance in KCPE examinations. 88% of the



respondents indicated that library facilities are not available thus hindering learners' accessibility to extra learning materials. Lack of libraries is a challenge that the education stakeholders in the County may need to address as a way of promoting pupils reading culture. Most of the schools according to the data do not have adequate games, music and drama equipments and costumes. In general the study findings vividly indicate that lack of adequate teaching and learning resources is a factor impacting negatively on learning leading to pupils' low performance in KCPE examinations.

## Methods of motivating the learners

In an open question the respondents were asked to list the methods used in their schools to motivate pupils to work hard in academics and develop interest in learning. The following ways of motivating pupils were highlighted:

- a) Giving awards to the best performing pupils such as exercise books, pens, budes, mugs or plates.
- b) Verbal appreciation of best performers in assembly
- c) Involving pupils in setting targets
- d) Organizing academic tours for the pupils
- e) Organizing annual prize giving days to recognize best performers in KCPE
- f) Inviting motivational speakers to talk to the pupils

According to the respondents schools are making some efforts in motivating learner to develop interest in education. However the declining performance in KCPE demands the school to interrogate and evaluate the effectiveness of their motivational strategies. The study revealed that most pupils have negative attitude toward education. Lack of motivation may be a contributing factor to pupils' chronic absenteeism.

## Forms of pupils' indiscipline that affects their academic performance

According to the respondents the following forms of indiscipline affects pupils academic performance

- a) Chronic absenteeism
- b) Bullying
- c) Truancy
- d) Poor time management
- e) Coupling Speaking in vernacular
- f) Drugs and substance abuse (alcohol and miraa)
- g) Engagement in playing pull table game

The above forms of indiscipline are evidence that the pupils discipline level in the County is wanting. The indiscipline mostly affects boys than girls. This can partly explain why girls seem to

perform better than boys in KCPE in the County. The study revealed that parents do not take their role in following their children discipline seriously. The schools do not have effective guidance and counselling departments to enhance school discipline and academic performance. The issue of pupils discipline should be addressed by the school stakeholders as a strategy of improving pupils' performance in KCPE.

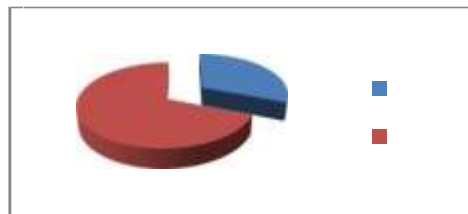
**Pupils' performance according to gender**

In an open question respondents were asked their observation about pupils' performances in KCPE examinations according to their gender. The table below shows the responses given by the respondents.

**Table 9:** Rating Pupils performance according to gender

Genders	Frequency	%
Boys	62	31%
Girls	138	69%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	

69%



31%

69% of the respondents revealed that girls perform better than boys in education in the County compared to 31% who indicated boys performed better than girls. The enrolment data indicated further decline of boy –child in three Counties as indicated in **table 2**. The studies therefore show that the boy - child in Embu County needs attention and mentorship. The decline in boys’ enrolment, their engagement in various forms of indiscipline and minimal performance in KCPE are vivid evidences that the boy child in Embu County needs attention and mentorship to be able to compete favourably with the girls.

The study established some factors that affects the boy-child education in the County as follows:

- a) Boys are neglected by their fathers / their need go unmet.
- b) Boys are engaged child – labour in the community.
- c) Boys are hooked in drugs and substances abuse / alcoholism.
- d) Boys lack mentorship and support by the community.
- e) Boys get attracted to farming, miraa and boda boda businesses leading to their high dropout rate

The girl child according to the respondents gets much attention both from their parents and community. The mothers’ role in supporting the girl child education was noted and emphasized by the respondents

### Rating of the teachers professionalism

In order to meet the objective of assessing teachers’ efficiency in their professional responsibilities, the head teachers were asked to rate the teachers in their schools in performing some selected responsibilities perceived important in enhancing pupils perform in KCPE exams. The study through the respondents rating established that teachers’ commitment to professionalism is wanting. The head teachers responses are summarized in the table below.

**Table 10:** Rating of the teachers’ professionalism

Professional responsibility	Very good		Good		Fair		Wanting	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Maximizing use of class time	34	17%	98	49%	56	28%	12	6%
Lesson preparation	32	16%	88	44%	70	35%	10	5%
Preparation of lesson plans	28	14%	102	51%	50	25%	20	10%
Preparation of pupils performance progressive records	25	12%	83	43%	80	39%	12	6%
Motivating pupils	16	8%	88	44%	86	43%	10	5%
Use of teaching aids	20	10%	84	42%	84	42%	12	6%
Exposing pupils to practical learning	20	10%	65	32%	95	48%	20	10%
Taking care of pupils individual differences while teaching	22	11%	70	35%	98	49%	10	5%
Setting targets for pupils	40	20%	80	40%	56	28%	24	12%

Giving individual feedback to pupils on academic progress	32	16%	89	44%	65	33%	14	7%
Frequent marking of pupils books	23	11%	80	40%	89	45%	8	4%
Guiding and counselling pupils	18	9%	78	39%	74	37%	30	15%
<b>N=200</b>								

Maximizing of lesson time 66% lesson preparation 66% preparation of pupils performance progressive records 55%, motivating pupils 52%, preparation and use of teaching aids 52%, Exposing pupils to practical learning experiences 42%, Taking care of pupils individual differences while teaching 46%, Setting targets for pupils 60%, Giving individual feedback to pupils on academic progress 60%, Frequent marking of pupils books 51% Guiding and counselling pupils 48%. The study established that teachers’ adherence to their professionalism is fairly average but much improvement is required especially in exposing learners to real life learning experiences to enhance better understanding and the mastery content taught. The study finding further revealed that schools do not have effective guidance and counselling programs to address the learner academic and discipline challenges. This supports earlier findings that pupils discipline in the County is wanting. It was noted that due to large and congested classes teacher do not adequately offer individualized attention to weak and strong learners. This can help in explaining why the private schools in the County perform better in KCSE than the public schools.

**Ways of motivating the teachers**

The study findings revealed that teachers especially in public primary schools are lowly motivated. In an open question the respondents were asked to list methods used in their schools to motivate teachers. Their responses are summarized as follows;

- a. Organising teachers parties after an improvement is achieved in KCPE results.
- b. Appreciating teachers verbally for good performance.
- c. Giving some awards/ tokens to teachers for good performance in KCPE Exams
- d. Recommending performing teachers for promotion.
- e. Some private schools give teachers’ children scholarship to study without paying school fees.
- f. Some private schools provide free staff houses to the teachers g. Private schools offers special allowances for extra work done.

The study findings show that teachers in the county especially in public schools are not highly motivated despite the efforts made by the school managers to implement some motivational strategies for the teachers. This lack of motivation among teachers can probably explain why majority are not committed to their professionalism and hence low pupils’ performance in KCSE. The private school in the County seem to have more motivating strategies for their teachers and this can further explain their improved performance in KCPE exams.

**Rating of teachers involvement in professional capacity building programs**

**Table 11:** Respondents rating of teachers’ involvement in professional capacity building

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	44	22%
Sometimes	98	49%
Rarely	58	29%
Not involved	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The study found that head teachers do attend seminars and workshops. However, ordinary teachers are inadequately capacity build, with **58%** of the respondents indicating that ordinary teachers are rarely involved in capacity building in County. This is further supported by the head teachers suggestions that ordinary teachers competency should be enhanced through professional capacity building programs targeting some specific areas. The respondents suggested some areas that teachers require to enhance their competency as follows;

- a. Teaching and evaluating various subject
  - i. Mathematics
  - ii. English
- b. Guidance and counselling
- c. Identifying and mentoring children with special needs.
- d. Mentoring the boy – child
- e. Positive strategies of enhancing pupils discipline

**Table12: Head teachers rating of their professionalism in performing some selected responsibilities important in curriculum implementation and supervision**

Responsibility	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Evaluating teaching methods of teachers in class	18	<b>9%</b>	132	<b>66%</b>	50	<b>25%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>
Review of pupils exercise books	57	<b>28%</b>	129	<b>64%</b>	11	<b>6%</b>	3	<b>2%</b>
Checking record of work books	59	<b>29%</b>	115	<b>58%</b>	26	<b>13%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>
Checking teachers attendance	157	<b>78%</b>	40	<b>20%</b>	3	<b>2%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>
Monitoring syllabus coverage	117	<b>58%</b>	75	<b>38%</b>	8	<b>4%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>
Mentorship of pupils with special learning needs	86	<b>43%</b>	90	<b>45%</b>	22	<b>11%</b>	2	<b>1%</b>
Checking and discussing exam analysis with parents	66	<b>33%</b>	126	<b>63%</b>	8	<b>4%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>

Conducting staff meetings to discuss	130	<b>65%</b>	65	<b>32%</b>	5	<b>4%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>
Organize internal capacity team building seminars / workshops for teachers	18	<b>9%</b>	84	<b>42%</b>	90	<b>45%</b>	8	<b>4%</b>
<b>N=200</b>								

Evaluating teaching methods of teachers in class 75%, Review of pupils exercise books 82%, Checking record of work books 87%, Checking teachers attendance 98%, Monitoring syllabus coverage 96%, Mentorship of pupils with special learning needs 85% Checking and discussing exam analysis with parents 96 %, Conducting staff meetings to discuss pupils performances 97% and Organize internal capacity team building seminars / workshops for teachers 51%. The study established that the head teachers are competent and committed to their supervisory role in curriculum implantation and supervision. This can be explained by their higher levels of training since out of the sampled head teachers 54% are diploma holders, 31% are degree holders and 3% are masters degrees holders. The declining performance in KCPE in the County cannot be attributed to head teachers' incompetence but others factors as discussed in this study findings. The study further reveals that unlike the ordinary teachers, head teachers in the county to attend capacity building seminars and workshops frequently to enhance their competency.

**Table 13: Rating the parents' involvements**

Activity	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Academic clinic	66	<b>33%</b>	126	<b>63%</b>	3	<b>1%</b>	5	<b>3%</b>
Following up pupils assignments and academic performance	16	<b>8%</b>	16	<b>8%</b>	66	<b>32%</b>	108	<b>52%</b>
Guiding and counselling pupils	6	<b>3%</b>	9	<b>4%</b>	125	<b>63%</b>	60	<b>30%</b>
Supporting schools' motivation programs	52	<b>26%</b>	92	<b>46%</b>	20	<b>10%</b>	36	<b>18%</b>
Supporting pupils feeding program	60	<b>30%</b>	80	<b>40%</b>	27	<b>13%</b>	33	<b>17%</b>
Supporting provision of physical facilities in schools.	68	<b>34%</b>	116	<b>58%</b>	2	<b>1%</b>	14	<b>7%</b>
Monitoring pupils discipline	54	<b>24%</b>	128	<b>17%</b>	8	<b>44%</b>	33	<b>15%</b>
<b>N=200</b>								

Academic clinic **96%** , Following up pupils assignments and academic performance **16%**, Guiding and counselling pupils **7%**, Supporting school motivational programs **72%**, Supporting pupils feeding program **70%** , Supporting provision of physical facilities in schools **92%** and Monitoring pupils discipline **41%**. According to the respondents who are the school administrators parents do support the schools by attending academic clinics s to discuss pupils performances, supporting the provision of physical facilities, pupils feeding program and schools motivational programs . However, in some sub- counties respondents revealed high level of poverty. This can explain why some public schools in the County are congested due to lack of adequate classes despite receiving parents support. The high attendance parents during the academic clinics could be as a result of pressure made by the schools managers and not out interest in their children performance. This is supported by the findings that only **16%** of the parents follow up their children’s assignment and academic performance. Parents in the County are further rated lowly in their responsibility of guiding and counselling as well monitoring of the pupils discipline. This evidenced in the earlier finding of this study about pupils’ discipline that is wanting.

### **Rating teachers parents working relations**

**Table 14: Respondents rating of the teachers’ parents working relations**

<b>RATING</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very strong	28	14%
Strong	70	35%
Weak	100	50%
Very weak	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The working relation between teachers and parents is wanting with **50%** of the respondent parents – teachers’ relations as weak and **1%** very weak. This can explain why it is difficult for the primary schools to involve parents in mentoring pupils’ assignments and discipline at homes. Schools cannot achieve much success without adequate involvement and support by parents in monitoring pupils while at home since majority of the institutions both public and private are day schools.

### **Cultural factors affecting pupils’ academic performance in the county**

- a. Female genital mutilation
- b. Early marriages for girls
- c. Poverty in some areas
- d. Child labour
- e. Alcoholism, drugs and substance abuse
- f. Initiating boys at an early age making them feel mature and drop out of school
- g. Neglecting the boy child

The study established that pupils performance in KCPE is negatively affected by some retrogressive



cultural practices such female genital mutilation, early marriages and child labour against government legislations, policies and children's rights. The issues of child labour alcoholism and substance abuse mostly affect boy- child in the County partly leading school dropout. The identified cultural issues need the attention of the local leaders, community and all other stakeholders in education. Some of the stakeholder that are involved in education in the County include;

- a. Parents Associations
- b. Board of managements
- c. County education board
- d. County government

### **Challenges that affects primary school pupils' performance in Embu County**

In open ended question the respondent were asked to list down challenges negatively affect pupils academic performance especially in KCPE exams. The following challenges were identified from the respondents' responses.

- a. Chronic absenteeism of the pupils
- b. Community negative attitudes toward education
- c. Lack adequate classes / congestion
- d. Over enrolment of pupils in public schools
- e. Understaffing of public schools
- f. Inadequate finances / parents in some areas are poor
- g. Unstable families / family separation due to alcoholism (local brew), drugs and substance abuse. Increase of single mothers
- h. Teachers overstaying in one school
- i. Parents laxity to support education of their children
- j. Politics among parents since they resist change
- k. Poor cooperation between parents and teachers
- l. Low academic level of parents
- m. Community engaging children in child labour especially boys
- n. Poor infrastructure in some areas. (roads) making some schools inaccessible especially during the rainy season
- o. Lack of properly organized school feeding program Retrogressive cultural practices like female genital mutilation, early marriages and early initiation of boys.
- q. Lack of motivation among teachers
- r. Ineffective guidance and counselling services in addressing pupils, parents and teachers issues that affect academic performance
- s. Pupils lack mentorship and good role models to motivate them in education.
- t. Inadequate teaching and learning resources ( books / teaching aids)
- u. Miraa farming and motorcycle business attracting underage children especially boys leading to school dropout.
- v. Lack of support by the local administration especially in fighting local brew, pull table games and following parents who do not take their children to school.
- w. Pupils engagement in pull table games

### **Recommendations**

- a. The County need to consider putting in place boy – child mentorship programs.
- b. The County to consider intensifying professional capacity building programs for ordinary

teachers especially in school discipline , guidance and counselling, teaching and evaluation methodologies and identifying and mentoring pupils with special needs.

d. The Teachers Service Commission and Ministry of Education to consider intensifying supervision of primary schools in the County to improve teachers' adherence to professionalism.

e. The County to consider intensify parents' empowerments programs as a strategy of minimizing retrogressive cultural practices and enhancing positive attitude toward education.

f. Local leaders to establish strategies of mobilizing resources to support primary schools in the provision of more teaching and learning resources and physical facilities.

g. Develop sustainable methods of motivating both pupils and teachers in the County.

h. Local administration to consider putting in place strategies to protect children from child labour and other retrogressive cultural practices that affect education in the children education in the County.

i. Further researches can be carried out to find out other stakeholders perspective e.g. teachers, parents, pupils and education officers on factors affecting the boy – child education in the county.

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