

RANKING OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS IN NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS: THE PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Jane K. Amunga, Maurice M. Amadalo, Julius K. Maiyo
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya
E-mail: jnamunga@yahoo.com, maiyokip2004@yahoo.com

Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the teachers' and students' perception of ranking schools and students in national examinations. A descriptive survey design was used and secondary schools in Kakamega south district formed the study population. The sample frame consisted of 75 secondary schools stratified according to performance into low, average and top ranked categories. The sample size consisted of 36 schools (12 from each performance category) selected by simple random sampling and 252 respondents selected purposively from the 36 schools. Data collection instruments were questionnaires. Reliability was established by use of test retest technique. Most of the students and most head teachers approved of ranking while most of the teachers disapproved of ranking. Despite this stand on ranking, both the teachers and students felt that ranking should be improved and thus called for a system of assessment that encompassed all the aspects instead of focusing on academic performance only. This would ensure that ranking of schools and students did not glorify academic achievement at the expense of talent and other virtues.

Key words: ranking, perception, performance, talent and virtues.

Background

Ranking in Kenyan education history started after the establishment of Local Native Council (LNC) and independent schools (Bogonko, 1992). These schools were ranked alongside the existing missionary schools and by the early 1940s, their performance was way above that of missionary schools. Ranking was also done among the Government African Schools (GAS) whose first batch of pupils sat the Primary School Examinations (PSE) in 1938. During colonial period, examinations were organized by the British. After independence, the organization of examinations was localised in East Africa. The Cambridge syndicate that was conducting examinations was replaced by East African Examinations Council in 1973 which offered East African Certificate of Education (EACE) and East African Advanced Certificate of Education (EAACE). In 1980, an act of parliament empowered the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) to manage examinations in Kenyan schools (Eshiwani, 1993).

With the introduction of 8-4-4 system of education, Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) was replaced by KCPE from 1984. The Kenya Junior Secondary Examination (KJSE), Kenya Certificate of Education (KCE) Examination and Kenya Advanced Certificate of Education (KACE)

Examination were also phased out in 1985, 1987 and 1989 in that order (Eshiwani, 1993). Under the 8-4-4 system, the four year secondary school education cycle ends with the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination which replaced KCE in the old 7-4-2-3 system of education. This was followed by a radical change in the ranking of schools according to a performance index. Up to 2007, there have been seven categories of ranking examination results at the secondary school level used. These are: the overall, National schools, Provincial schools, District schools, Private schools, most improved schools and Students' categories. The publication of mean performance statistics for the top schools in the respective categories and top students in the nation and provinces was meant to make it possible for schools to compare their performance with other schools. This form of ranking was strictly based on students' academic performance in national. It also fails to take into consideration the difference in facilities and students' intake mark in form one among other factors.

To enhance equity and quality of education, the report on Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training not only focussed on teacher training and motivation but also recommended that school ranking system be abolished (Republic of Kenya, 1999). The pressure of examinations and ranking of schools according to performance were blamed for lack of depth in learning and the teaching process. Teachers geared their teaching to the examinations encouraging rote learning. Focusing on exam results ignored many other important outcomes of schooling like physical well being, life skills, integrity, confidence and deportment. It also led to a narrowing of the curriculum due to the neglect of non-examined subjects (World Bank, 2001).

The issue of assessment is critical to the functioning of schools. It serves as a motivator of student performance. In addition, it provides a feedback to the teacher on the effectiveness of teaching and student achievement. It also communicates to the students, parents and others what has been learnt (James 1998). The publication of league tables showing performance in public examinations is both a symptom and a cause of greater competition (Bray, 2003). The publication of results may lead to schools that are perceived to be doing well to attract students of high levels of ability while those perceived to be doing badly will be left with lower achieving students (Kellaghan 1996). It may also lead to the transfer of more able teachers, lower morale in individual schools and create ghetto schools. Although, Burgess et al (2002) argue that, provision of information on school performance is a pre-requisite for informed parental choice, the World Bank (2001) feel that where parents with social and/or economic advantage are encouraged to support schools with good results, morale and performance in poorer performing schools can be depressed.

In the United States, teachers' unions, school leaders, principals and teachers have tended to oppose policies linking assessment to accountability on the grounds of perverse effects including narrowing the curriculum to the practice of teaching to the test and incentives for teachers to cheat (Evers and Walberg, 2003). Evidence suggests that agencies alter the timing of their actions and engage in cream skimming in response to specific performance measures (Hickman, Henrick and Smith, 2002). They exclude weak students from sitting for examinations. Cheating was mentioned as another unproductive type of response to accountability incentives and misreporting of school dropout rates (Peabody and Markley, 2003). Schools also excluded weak students by engaging in cream skimming at the point of admission. This is because the higher the ability of students admitted, the better the out-put and the higher the schools relative position in the league tables (Wilson, 2001).

Performance tables for England have been published annually since 1992 (Wilson, 2003). Currently they are used to describe the difference between 'materials brought in and the finished product' and thus measures the value added by the production process (Wilson, 2003). However, other studies indicate that, despite the use of league tables in Kenya, Senegal and elsewhere, several factors indicate that their use is complicated and misleading. If students differ from school to school in their level of achievement when joining the schools, a measure of achievement at a later date that does not take this into account will be inequitable and misleading in that it will not adequately reflect a schools success in moving students from their initial entry level to their present level of achievement as reflected in a public examination (Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001b). At a general level,

high stakes may be associated with malpractice. In their effort to obtain high grades, students and sometimes teachers resort to various forms of cheating designed to give a candidate unfair advantage over others. This takes many forms including copying from other students during examinations, collusion between students and supervisors, use of material smuggled into the examination rooms and purchasing of examination papers (Kellaghan and Greaney, 1996b).

In New South Wales, a student's final mark in each subject is determined by a combination of school-based assessments conducted throughout the Higher School Certificate (HSC) component of the course which forms 50% and externally administered final examinations held in October or November of every year (Board of Studies-NSW, 2008). In Chile schools are evaluated on the basis of their improvement in student assessment scores, physical improvements by school administrators, working conditions of teachers, equality of opportunity through retention rates, promotion and avoidance of discrimination practices on basis of gender or disability and teacher- parents integration in school. The factors are weighted and adjusted to arrive at a final score entitlement for school. Enrolment in the winning school accounts for 25 % of the score. The schools are stratified into homogeneous groups so that competition is roughly between schools that are comparable in terms of student population, socio-economic status of the community where the school is based. Schools are ranked within each group according to score index and awards given to teachers of schools in that order to be divided among themselves according to hours worked (McMakin, 2000).

In Kenya, the low levels of transition rates between standard 6 and 7 was partially explained by the fact that schools discouraged weaker pupils from taking KCPE for fear that it would lower the mean scores in published league tables (Akers, Migoli and Nzomo, 2001). The publication of mean performance statistics for each school and for each district in league tables made it possible for schools to see where they stood with respect to other schools in the district and for districts to compare themselves with other districts. This was a key feature of the Kenya examination reform in which this kind of information was called incentive information (Somerset, 1987). The underlying idea was that dissemination of information would create competition between schools which would motivate teachers to change their instructional practices (Chapman and Synder, 2000). However, according to Ndago (2004), there is no moral justification in ranking schools where no genuine competition really existed because some schools admit the best KCPE candidates and have the best resources which creates uneven playground. In addition, IPAR (2004), maintain that ranking in national examinations at the individual student and also at the school level has resulted in fierce competition. The fierce competition sometimes led to departure from teaching to preparation for passing examinations. Ndago therefore argued that, instead of ranking schools using the percentage of candidates who attained a certain level of performance, we should use deviations (positive or negative) of the KCSE grades from the KCPE mark. Marenya (2007) also argued that the annual ritual ranking was not in keeping with the best practice internationally. In addition, it was immoral to rank schools as if they were competing on equal terms when others were facilitated to do well by taking the cream of standard 8 candidates, giving them reasonable facilities and ensuring that they were taught by competent and conscientious teachers while students in other schools were condemned to inescapable failure by the absence of the same conditions. He advocated for a grading system that captures and rewards everything that the school teaches and nurtures including talent.

Statement of the Problem

Ranking of schools and students in national examinations encourages positive competition. However, the extent to which this affects society and schools in particular has been evidenced by the anxiety of the stake-holders during release of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results in February every year, when the names of champion students and schools have graced the print and electronic media. The posting of results has reinforced a widely held belief that there are good and bad schools in Kenya. The national ban of ranking notwithstanding, schools are still ranked at the provincial and district level. This system of ranking has been criticised for promoting un-

fair competition among schools because the comparison between schools fails to take into account differences in the KCPE intake mark, social and physical conditions under which the different schools operate. Ranking individual students and schools creates fierce competition which sometimes leads to departure from teaching to preparation for passing examinations and cheating. Therefore, it is against this background that this study intended to investigate students' and teachers' perception of ranking.

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate teachers' perception of ranking
2. To investigate students' perception of ranking.

Instruments and Methods

The study was a descriptive survey design. This design was deemed most ideal for this study because although the study covered the 2003-2006 period, the practice was ongoing and its effects were still being felt. It was also appropriate in assessing the teachers' and students' perceptions of ranking. To obtain a representative sample, the 75 schools in the district were stratified into three categories of 25 schools each. The schools were ranked from the best to the last and divided into three even categories of 25 schools each. This stratification was based on mean performance in KCSE examination results between 2003–2006. A total of 12 schools were randomly selected from each of the categories. This sample of 36 schools comprising 48% of the target population was considered neither too small nor too big for the study (Mulusa, 1990; Cohen et al, 2000 and Polland, 2005). A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study. Teachers and students participating in the study were therefore purposively selected to include head teachers of participating schools and three teachers from each school (1 head of an academic department, 1 head of a non-academic department, and 1 teacher in a non-administrative position in the school). Three students were also purposively selected from each school. The study selected the head-student, the games captain and one student in the school who was not a prefect. It was assumed that this selection achieved even representation of the teacher and student population found within the school community. In addition, it was also assumed that the selected participants could provide the required information. Therefore, a total of 252 respondents participated in the study. The summary is provided in table 1.

Table 1. Respondents and the number from each category.

School Performance Category	No. of schools	No. of H/teachers	No. of teachers	No. of students	Total
Top	12	12	36	36	84
Average	12	12	36	36	84
Low	12	12	36	36	84
Total	36	36	108	108	252

Perceptions of the teachers and students were presented using cross-tabulations and percentages. The chi square was then used to determine whether there were any differences in the perceptions of the different respondents.

Teachers' and Students' Perception of Ranking

The teachers' and students' perception of ranking were determined by use of a variety of open and closed ended questions which sought to establish their own assessment of their school position

in the 2006 KCSE results and effects related to their schools' ranks. The choice of this particular year was influenced by the fact that it was the latest examination year and the results were still fresh in the respondents' mind. In addition, it was assumed that most of the teachers who were involved in the preparation of the candidates were most likely to be still in their stations. The questions also tried to establish what they thought was the most important factor that contributed to their school rank in that particular year, how the resultant school rank affected their self esteem, progression and their schools' relationships with other schools. In addition, the respondents were expected to state their state whether they approved or disapproved of ranking and if this practice had improved results. The analysis of perceptions was done at the levels of the respondents (head teachers, teachers and students). The chi-square statistical test at 0.05 level of significance was used to determine whether there were significant differences among the head teachers, teachers and students in their perceptions of ranking. In educational circles, the 5 per cent (0.05) used as level of significance indicates that the difference would have resulted from error in less than 5 out of 100 replications. Conversely there is a 95 per cent probability that the difference was not due to a sampling error.

Assessment of School Rank in the 2006 KCSE Results

Head teachers, teachers and students of the sample schools were asked to rate their school positions in the district in the 2006 KCSE results. A total of 47 (18.7%) of the respondents rated their schools' performance in 2006 KCSE as good while 171 (67.9%) rated them as average and 34 (13.5%) as poor. Generally, most respondents rated their schools' performance as average (Table 2).

Table 2. Assessment of school position in 2006 KCSE results.

Statement	H/ teachers	Teachers	Students	Total %
Good	8	19	20	47 (18.7)
Average	24	75	72	171 (67.9)
Poor	4	14	16	34 (13.5)
Total	36	108	108	252 (100)

From the information collected using the questionnaires, those who rated their schools' positions in the 2006 KCSE results as good felt that they had realised a positive performance index denoting an improvement as compared to the previous year while others attributed the mean grade to the commitment of the teachers and industry of a few of the students that led to positive performance index.

Those who rated their schools as average pegged this assessment on the low ability of students they admitted. They also thought that the performance was a mere average because the majority of the students lacked self-drive so that since the teachers input was more than that of the students and this could not translate into sterling performance. This is according to the justification of their rating obtained from the questionnaires.

Those who agreed with the fact that their schools realised poor results felt they could have done better with support from the community in terms prompt payment of fees and a positive attitude. However, some of the communities had given up on the schools and so had the students. It was pointed out that after registration which is usually in term one, some candidates stayed away from school and only resurfaced to sit for exams. This was one of the factors that contributed to the poor performance. The others who rated their performance as poor in spite of having been grouped in the top ranked schools category regarded their position and mean scores as a challenge and thought they should have done much better given the fact that most of the students they admitted had very high KCPE marks.

Factors that Contributed to the School Position in 2006 KCSE Results

Factors that were found to directly affect school ranking were teachers, students, the school administration, the community and the government. The majority of the respondents (94, 37.3%) felt that the students contributed greatly to the school rank. Teachers were named by 75 (29.8%) of the respondents. Only 4 (1.6%) said the government played a role in the ranking (Table 3).

Table 3. The factor that contributed to the school position.

Statement	H/ teachers	Teachers	Students	Total %
Teachers	14	30	31	75 (29.8)
Students	13	36	45	94 (37.3)
School administration	5	28	26	59 (23.4)
Community	4	12	4	20 (7.9)
Government	-	2	2	4 (1.6)
Total	36	108	108	252 (100)

In cases where there was poor performance, it was blamed on students who had very low ability on admission because of very low entry marks. It was reported that, parents insisted on admitting students with the lowest KCPE marks in low ranked schools but struggled to take those with better marks to other schools. Some of the candidates stayed away from school after registration and only resurfaced to sit for examinations. Most district schools were co-educational as well as day schools. As a result, student love affairs were prevalent in most of these schools which divided the attention of the candidates.

According to the responses received, the communities were reported to have failed to develop and equip the schools. They were uncooperative, and encouraged laziness among the students. In addition, they condoned indiscipline and failed to pay fees and support school activities. Students blamed the poor performance on fellow students being uncooperative, not following instructions, lacking commitment, being generally undisciplined and creating unrest in the schools. The students lacked a competitive spirit and self drive. In addition, they had poor study habits, were generally lazy and undisciplined. They were blamed for unrest in some schools which interfered with performance. The government was blamed for lack of financial resources in some schools because it was felt that it had not provided adequate bursary funds. Incidentally, the teachers were not mentioned by both students and teachers in relation to poor performance and a low school rank.

Where good performance was realised, the teachers were complemented for their hard work and sacrifice which resulted in a positive improvement index in some schools. This was because of their support and guidance of students, early syllabus coverage through the teaching of extra lessons that paved way for thorough revision, rigorous testing and marking, and general selflessness. The school administration not only motivated teachers and learners but also provided a conducive environment for learning and teaching.

Effect of the School Rank on the Respondents' Self Esteem

A total of 57 (22.6%), most of who were students said their school rank made them feel superior; 44 (17.5%) said it made them feel inferior while the majority 151 (59.9%); most of who were head teachers and teachers said it made them feel neither superior nor inferior (Table 4). This shows that generally, the school rank has no effect on the self esteem of the respondents.

Table 4. Effect of school rank on respondents' self esteem.

Statement	H/ teachers	Teachers	Students	Total %
Superior	3	11	43	57 (22.6)
Inferior	3	14	27	44 (17.5)
Neither	30	83	38	151 (59.9)
Total	36	108	108	252 (100)

Table 4 shows that there was a difference in the perceptions of the Head teachers, teachers and students. While the majority of the head teachers and teachers experienced no effect on their self esteem, most of the students felt superior as a result of their school rank. Those who felt superior might be the members of the schools which maintained a positive improvement index during the four years and were therefore proud of their positions. This shows they were proud of being associated with what they considered good results. The majority and most of who were head teachers and teachers, felt that the school rank had no effect on their self esteem because they regarded their role in these schools as a duty. A smaller percentage of 44 (17.5%) felt inferior showing that they did not regard teaching or enabling students to perform well as being good enough.

The Effect of the School Rank on Respondents' Progression

This study also sought to establish teachers' and students' perceptions of how their schools' ranks affected their progression in terms of promotions for the teachers and promotion to the next level of education for the students. The majority of the respondents 118 (46.8%) felt that their school rank determined to a large extent whether they were promoted or passed KCSE. Those who felt that their school rank decreased or had no effect on their progression were 65 (25.8%) and 69 (27.4%) respectively.

Table 5. Effect of school rank on respondents' progression.

Statement	H/ teachers	Teachers	Students	Total %
Increases chance	14	25	79	118 (46.8)
Decreases chance	13	34	18	65 (25.8)
No effect	9	49	11	69(27.4)
Total	39	108	108	252 (100)

Chi-square value 60.23 df 4 p value 0.0001

There was a significant difference in the responses of the Head teachers, teachers and students in their perceptions of how the school rank affected their progression (p value 0.0001, table 5) at 0.05 level of significance. The chi value of 60.23 is greater than the critical value of 9.49. Generally, the majority of the students felt that their school rank increased their chance of success in KCSE while the majority of teachers felt that the school rank had no effect on their promotion.

The Effect of the School Rank on the Inter-school Relationship

The majority of the respondents 147 (58.3%) felt their school rank earned their school respect from other schools, 61 (24.2%) said it earned their schools disrespect from other schools while the minority 44 (17.5%) said it had no effect on their inter-school relationship.

Table 6. Effect of school rank on Inter-school relationships.

Statement	H/ teachers	Teachers	Students	Total %
Respect	20	51	76	147 (58.3)
Disrespect	8	29	24	61 (24.2)
No effect	8	28	8	44 (17.5)
Total	36	108	108	252 (100)

Chi-square value 16.71 df 4 p value 0.002

Analysis by chi-square shows that there was a significant difference in the perceptions of the Head teachers, teachers and students on the effect of the school rank on their schools' relationship with other schools (p value 0.002, table 6) at 0.05 level of significance. The chi value of 16.71 is greater than the critical value of 9.49.

Respondents seemed to unanimously agree that being in a school that performed well in KCSE earned their schools respect from other schools implying that it is prestigious to be in a what they considered good performing schools. Despite being in average and low performing schools, some respondents were still proud of their performance in the 2006 KCSE examination results. Probably they realized an improvement that they were proud of the school rank and classification notwithstanding. However, a significant number felt that their school ranks earned their schools disrespect from other schools.

Respondents' Views on the Ranking of Schools Using National Examination Results

Respondents were asked to state whether they approved or disapproved of national ranking. Those who approved were the majority at 146 (57.9%) of the 252 respondents. The approval rating was highest among students at 90 (83.33%) as compared to 34 (31.48%) of the teachers and 22 (61.11%) of the head-teachers (Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents views on the ranking-Respondents.

Statement	H/ teachers	Teachers	Students	Total %
Approves	22	34	90	146 (57.9)
Disapproves	14	74	18	106 (42.1)
Total	36	108	108	252 (100)

Chi-square value 59.75 df 2 p value 0.0001

Analysis by chi-square shows that there was a significant difference in the stand taken on ranking taken by head teachers, teachers and students (p value 0.0001, table 7) at 0.05 level of significance. The chi value of 59.75 is greater than the critical value of 6.00. While the head teachers and students approved of ranking, the teachers did not. Most students felt that ranking encouraged positive competition among schools and students which was bound to improve performance. It also helped weak learners and low performing schools to identify their weaknesses and map out strategies for improvement. It also provided informed choice to the parents and students on which schools to choose. Other proponents of ranking said it provided a score card upon which schools evaluated their previous and current performance so as to arrest falling standards and lay down strategies for improvement like bench-marking. Such consultation helped schools to identify and strengthen their weaker areas leading to improved performance. The spiral effect of improved performance was a better position in the school rank, increased self-esteem by the students and teachers, increased enrolment and attraction of better quality KCPE products.

Those who disapproved felt that it made both the teachers and students to abandon low ranked schools for the top ranked ones leading to under staffing, under enrolment and under development in those schools. Conversely it caused over staffing, over enrolment and infrastructural development in the receiving schools. It made weak students to be registered in the low ranked schools further lowering their mean scores and affected promotions to senior positions. It also resulted in cheating to maintain a positive improvement index and false rank, low self esteem among some students from low ranked schools and general indiscipline.

There were those who felt that ranking was unfair because competition was skewed by a number of factors for example, schools did not have level playing ground as they were diversified in terms of availability of resources and the entry behaviour of the students. It led to teachers being overworked. Some schools and students resorted to unorthodox ways of achieving good results like teaching exam oriented materials in order to maintain or improve their ranking. It also violated some of the national educational objectives like education for all because of enforced repetition that sometimes resulted in dropping out of school altogether.

Factors that Should be Considered in the Ranking Schools and Students in National Examinations

Respondents were asked to suggest any other factors that could be used in ranking schools and students in national examinations. From the study, 50 (19.8%) of the respondents felt that there should be use of continuous assessment tests, 39 (15.5%) recommended the use of entry marks at KCPE and value added at the end of form four and extra –curricular activities while 37(14.7%) wanted the number of candidates put into consideration during ranking and 23 (9.1%) of the respondents offered no suggestion (Table 8).

Table 8. Other suggested factors for consideration in ranking.

Statement	15H/ teachers29	Teachers	Students	Total %
Extracurricular Activities	4	14	21	39 (15.5)
Entry and value Added	9	25	5	39 (15.5)
Available resources	4	8	5	17 (6.7)
Level of wastage	-	2	1	3 (1.2)
Do regional ranking	1	2	4	7 (2.7)
Continuous assessment	6	15	29	50 (19.8)
Just rank students	5	10	7	22 (8.7)
Consider discipline	1	5	5	11 (4.4)
No suggestion	4	8	11	23 (9.1)
Number of candidates	2	16	19	37 (14.7)
Consider gender	-	3	1	4 (1.6)
Total	36	10	108	252 (100)

Most of the head teachers and teachers formed the bulk of those who favoured the use of entry marks and value added. It was important to assess what value a school had added to a student given the KCPE mark during ranking since some schools put in little effort and added very little value yet they received all the glory while others went unrecognized even after adding a lot of value to very low KCPE marks.

Most of the students wanted the use of continuous assessment tests. This is because students were tested and graded throughout the four years they were in school so it was only fair that their cumulative achievement during this entire period of study forms part of the final assessment.

A significant number of teachers and students also suggested that extra curricular activities because it was felt that they contributed to the building of an all round individual. This would also facilitate nurturing of talent which had been stifled by some parents and schools in favour of the

academic work. In addition, even schools considered as non-performing because of the emphasis on the academic would also get a chance to show where they can excel as talent is equally important to the development of the nation.

The number of candidates entered for the examination should was the other key factor for consideration. This is because some schools registered too many candidates while others cut down on their numbers through repetition and registration in other centres in order to attain a positive mean score. This would also be an indirect way of checking wastage in schools. The levels of wastage and gender consideration were the least favoured factors (Table 8).

A General Assessment of the other Effects of Ranking

Respondents were asked to generally assess the effects of ranking by use of a likert scale. Head teachers and teachers had a six item likert scale while the students had a two item likert scale.

Teachers and students were asked whether ranking of schools and students destroyed their morale by creating jealousy. A summary of their responses shows that, 123 (48.8%) agreed, 121 (48.0%) disagreed, while only 8 (3.2%) were undecided (Table 9).

Table 9. The effect of ranking on morale and jealousy.

Statement	15H/ teachers ²⁹	Teachers	Students	Total %
Disagree	17	25	78	121 (48.0)
Undecided	3	3	2	8 (3.2)
Agree	16	80	28	123 (48.8)
Total	36	108	108	252 (100)

Most of the respondents who agreed were teachers while those who disagreed were students. This means that, while the students felt that ranking did not destroy their morale by creating jealousy, the teachers on the other hand felt that ranking actually did just that and this explains why they had disapproved of ranking.

Respondents were asked to say to what extent they felt that ranking inculcated a spirit of competition and hard work among schools. A few 34 (13.5%) disagreed and the majority 211 (83.7%) agreed. Only 7 (2.8%) were undecided (Table 10). From the response of the overwhelming majority it can be concluded that ranking indeed had the positive effect of creating competition and hard work.

Table 10. The effect of ranking on competition and hard work.

Statement	15H/ teachers ²⁹	Teachers	Students	Total %
Disagree	4	24	6	34 (13.5)
Undecided	1	4	2	7 (2.8)
Agree	31	80	100	211 (83.0)
Total	36	108	108	252 (100)

The spirit of competition and hard work is clearly depicted by what is happening in most secondary schools where teachers and students have doubled their efforts in order to improve their ranking in the local league tables. This has been done through bench marking, extra teaching and remedial lessons for early completion of the syllabus and rigorous revision.

When asked to show to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the suggestion that results could be improved by promoting teachers who excelled in their respective subject areas irrespective of school rank, 74 (51.4%) of the respondents and most of who were teachers disagreed. Those who strongly agreed and most of who were head teachers were 65 (45.1%). Those who were undecided were only 5 (3.5% table 11).

Table 11. Improvement of results dependence on teachers' promotions.

Statement	15H/ teachers ²⁹	Teachers	Total %
Disagree	11	63	74 (51.4)
Undecided	1	4	5 (3.5)
Agree	24	41	65 (45.1)
Total	36	108	144 (100)

From the findings, it can be concluded that generally, results cannot be improved by promoting teachers who excel in their respective subject areas irrespective of school rank.

Respondents were also asked to say to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the feeling that promotions in the service were based on the mean score of ones school in national examinations. Generally respondents disagreed with this observation as shown by the fact that 76 (52.8%) disagreed and only 50 (34.7%) agreed but 18 (12.5%) of the respondents were undecided (Table 12).

Table 12. Ranking leads to promotions in the service.

Statement	15H/ teachers ²⁹	Teachers	Total %
Disagree	23	53	76 (52.8)
Undecided	3	15	18 (12.5)
Agree	10	40	50 (34.7)
Total	36	108	144 (100)

This shows that promotions in teaching service are not necessarily based on the performance of ones school in national examinations because there are other factors that come into play like experience and number of years in the service.

Respondents were asked to say to what extent they agreed that results had been improved by promoting teachers from top ranked schools to headship positions in low ranked schools. A total of 96 (66.0%) disagreed, while 39 (27.3%) agreed but 10 (6.0%) were however undecided. Half of the head teachers disagreed while most of the teachers either disagreed (Table 13).

Table 13. Ranking and headship.

Statement	15H/ teachers ²⁹	Teachers	Total %
Disagree	23	73	95 (66.0)
Undecided	2	8	10 (6.9)
Agree	12	27	39 (27.1)
Total	36	108	144 (100)

That an overwhelming majority refuted this shows that results had not been improved by promoting teachers from top ranked schools to headship positions in low ranked schools.

Finally, respondents were asked to state to what extent they felt results had been improved by ranking schools and students in national examinations. A total of 67 (46.5%) respondents, most of who were teachers disagreed, 69 (47.9%) most of who were head teachers agreed while only 8 (5.6%) of the respondents were undecided (Table 14).

Table 14. Ranking and improvement of results.

Statement	15H/ teachers ²⁹	Teachers	Total %
Disagree	14	53	67 (46.5)
Undecided	1	7	8 (5.6)
Agree	21	48	65 (47.9)
Total	36	108	144 (100)

The difference between those who disagreed and agreed is only 2 (1.39%) leading to the conclusion that, there is no significant relationship between ranking and performance as the respondents are divided on whether ranking has actually improved results.

Discussion of Findings

Teachers and students are the primary stakeholders in education and they are more affected by the posting of examination outcomes either positively or negatively more than anybody else. It was therefore found necessary to establish their perceptions of ranking and to begin with, they were asked to assess their schools' positions in the district in the 2006 KCSE examinations. Most of them assessed their schools' performance as average (table 2). On the most important factor that contributed to the stated school position in 2006, the majority of the respondents, 37.3%, said the student was responsible. They focussed on a number of student factors especially their entry behaviour. Top ranked schools had the priority over low ranked schools during form one selection and were therefore regarded as admitting the cream of the students in the district. In addition, they had better learning and teaching resources. Respondents felt that the system of ranking was therefore unfair in so far as it did not take into consideration the entry behaviour of the students and the facilities thus concurring with sentiments that were expressed by Ndago (2004) and Kellaghan and Greaney (2001b).

Where the school administration was rated positively by 59 (23.4%) of the respondents, it was instrumental in contributing to the school position through motivation of teachers, creating team work and a conducive environment for teaching and learning. The Report of the Provincial Working Committee on the Improvement of Education in Western Province (1998) similarly noted that, there was motivation in some schools by the PTA members who bought and gave awards to performing school teachers and students in order to stimulate hard work. In Chile, there was a clear cut motivation practice where the schools were ranked within each group (student population, socio-economic status of the community where the school was based whether the school were rural or urban) according to the score index and awards given to teachers of schools in that order to be divided among themselves according to hours worked (McMakin, 2000).

The perception of the effect of ranking on self esteem received mixed reactions with the majority of the students responding that it made them feel superior and therefore the better the school rank the higher the self esteem. On the contrary, the head teachers and teachers felt that their school rank made them feel neither superior nor inferior (table 4). Similarly, the majority of students felt that their school rank determined to a great extent whether they were promoted to the next level of education. The teachers felt that it really had no effect on their progression (table 5). The majority of respondents from all the categories were unanimous in their perception of the effect of the school rank on their schools' relationship with other schools. A good school rank earned it respect from the other schools (table 6).

On their views on ranking, the majority of respondents (57.9%) approved of it. An equally large number (42.1%) disapproved of it (table 7). The majority who approved of ranking felt that it was the perfect performance measure which also stimulated competition that led to improvement in performance. It kept teachers and students on their toes as it helped them to evaluate themselves and step up the pressure of hard work. This agrees with James (1998), that the issue of assessment is critical to the functioning of schools as it served as a motivator of student performance. It also serves the function of providing a feedback to the teacher and communicates to the students, parents and others what had been learnt. Similarly, it agrees with Somerset (1987) who adds that the publication of mean performance statistics for each school and for each district in the league tables made it possible for schools to see where they stood with respect to other schools in the district and for districts to compare themselves with other districts. Proponents of ranking also felt that ranking of schools and students provided informed choice to the parents and students on which schools to choose which equally agreed with the findings of Burgess et al (2002).

Those who disapproved of ranking said that it was unfair because competition was skewed by a number of factors. Schools did not have level playing ground as they were diversified in terms of availability of resources and the entry behaviour of the students which is in line with Kellaghan (1996) and Ndago (2004). Other opponents of ranking also felt that in order to maintain or improve their ranking teachers were over-worked. Some schools and students resorted to unorthodox ways of achieving good results like cheating and teaching exam oriented materials. This concurs with IPAR (2004), that ranking in national examinations at the individual student and the school level had resulted in fierce competition which sometimes led to departure from teaching to preparation for passing examinations. According to Kellaghan and Greaney (1996b), at a general level, high stakes were associated with malpractice because in their effort to obtain high grades. Students and sometimes teachers resorted to various forms of cheating designed to give a candidate unfair advantage over others. This took many forms including copying from other students during examinations, collusion between students and supervisors, use of material smuggled into the examination rooms and purchasing of examination papers.

It was found that ranking made both the teachers and students to abandon low ranked schools for the top ranked ones leading to under staffing, under enrolment and under development in those schools. It caused over staffing, over enrolment and good development in the receiving schools. This agrees with Kellaghan (1996) that publication of results may lead to the transfer of more able teachers, lower morale in individual low ranked schools and create ghetto schools.

Both those who approved and disapproved of ranking felt that it should be improved upon by putting into consideration a number of other factors. A total of 19.8% of the respondents, most of who were students, recommended the use of continuous assessment tests (table 8). This suggestion agrees with the practice in New South Wales where the examination system at the secondary school level consists of continuous assessment and final examinations (Board of Studies-NSW, 2008).

The other factors that were heavily favoured were the use of co-curricular activities (15.5%) and the use of the KCPE entry mark and value added measure at the end of form IV (15.5%). This concurs with the grading system in England where before 2003, the league tables were based only on raw output—unadjusted test scores—and information was provided at the school average level but since then, the league tables have also included indicators of the value added by the school between key stages. The value added measure is used to describe the difference between ‘materials brought in and the finished product’ and thus measures the value added by the production process (Wilson, 2003). This is the measure also recommended by Ndago (2004) when he suggested that that instead of ranking schools using the percentage of candidates who attained a certain level of performance, we should use deviations (positive or negative) of the KCSE grades from the KCPE mark. This observation is in line with the findings of the study where 39 (15.5%) of the respondents suggested the use of entry marks at KCPE and value added at the KCSE.

Additionally, the number of candidates, available resources, regional ranking, level of wastage were suggested for consideration during ranking students. This would be in line with what happens in Chile where schools were stratified into homogeneous groups so that competition was roughly between schools that were comparable in terms of student population, socio-economic status of the community where the school was based whether the schools were rural or urban. Enrolment in the winning school accounted for 25% of the score (McMakin, 2000).

On the general assessment of the other effects of ranking, most respondents affirmed that it created competition and hard work which again concurs with Somerset (1987). While ranking was highly favoured by the students, the teachers felt that it destroyed the morale of the teaching force by creating jealousy, suspicion and distrust. The study also found that results could not be improved by promoting teachers who excelled in their respective subject areas irrespective of school rank. Similarly, results had not been improved by promoting teachers from top` ranked schools to headship positions in low ranked schools. The respondents' views on whether results had been improved by ranking had a mixed reaction with 46.53% disagreeing while 47.92% agreed.

Generally, the teachers and students called for a system of assessment that encompassed all the aspects instead of focusing on academic performance only. This view agrees with the argument

that the grading system should capture and reward everything that the school teaches and nurtures, including talent (Marenya, 2007). This would be in line with the practice in England (Wilson, 2003) and in Chile (MacMakin, 2000).

Recommendations

Schools and students should be graded on the basis of continuous assessment tests, extra-curricular activities, entry mark and value added and the candidature. This will ensure that grading does not glorify academic achievement at the expense of talent and other virtues.

Schools and communities should be sensitized to the realization that a schools' and students' mean scores provide a score card upon which schools evaluate their performance so as to arrest falling standards and lay down strategies for improvement. Therefore while good mean scores should be celebrated, a poor one should invite concerted effort from all the stakeholders to improve on it.

References

- Akers, J., Migoli, J. & Nzomo, J. (2001). Identifying and Addressing the causes of Declining Participation Rates in Kenyan Primary Schools. *International Journal of Educational Development* 21, 361–374.
- Board of Studies; NSW (2008). *Studying for New South Wales Higher School Certificate: An Information Booklet for Year 10 students*. Sydney: Board of Studies; NSW.
- Bogonko, S. N. (1992). *A History of Modern Education in Kenya (1895–1991)*. Nairobi: Evans Brothers.
- Bray, M. (2003). *Adverse effects of private supplementary tutoring: Dimensions, Implications and Government Responses*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Burgess, S., Propper, C. & Wilson D. (2002). *Will more choice improve outcomes in education and Health care? Evidence from Economic Research*. Bristol.
- <http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/CMPO/Choice.pdf> Retrieved 15 July, 2007.
- Chapman, D. W. & Synder, C. W. (2000). Can High Stakes National Testing Improve Instruction? Re-examining Conventional Wisdom. *International Journal of Educational Development* 20, 457–474.
- Eshiwani, G. (1993). *Education in Kenya since Independence 35–189*. Nairobi: East African Publishers.
- Evers, W. and Walberg, H. (2003). *School Accountability, An Assessment of by Kovet Task Force on K-12 Education*. Stanford, C. A: Hoover Institution Press.
- Hickman, J., Henrick, C. J. & Smith, J. (2002). The Performance of Performance Standards. *Journal of Human Resources*, 37(4), 778–881.
- Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR, 2004). *The sociology of Private Tuition*, 10 (7).
- James, M. (1998). *Using Assessment for School Achievement*. Oxford: Heinman.
- Kellaghan, T. and Greaney, V. (2001 b). *Using Assessment to Improve the Quality of Education*, 9-29. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Kellaghan, T. & Greaney, V. (1996). The Integrity of Public Examinations in Developing Countries. In Goldatein, H and Lewis, T (Eds.), *Assessment: Problems, Developments and Statistical Issues*, 167-188. New York: Wiley.
- Kellaghan, T. & Greaney, V. (2003). *Monotoring Performance: Assessment and Examinations in Africa*. Paris: Association for the Development of Education in Africa.
- Kellaghan, T. (1996). Can Public Examinations be used to Provide Information for National Assessment? In. Murphy, P., Greaney V., Lochhaed E., and Rojas, C. (Eds), *National Assessments: Testing the system* 33–48. Washington .D.C: World Bank.

Marenya, G. (2007, March 13). Needed is an Education System that Rewards and Values all. *The Daily Nation*, p. 6.

Mulusa, T. (1990). *Evaluation Research for Beginners: A Practical Study Guide*. Bonn: Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung.

McMakin, R. (2000). *Competition, Parental Involvement and Public School Performance*. Toronto: National Tax Association Proceedings.

Ndago, A (2004, September 3). *Tyranny of Ranking Uneven Schools*. Nairobi: The East African Standard, p. 4.

Peabody, Z. and Markley, M (2003). *State may Lower HISD Rating: Almost 30,000 dropouts miscoun- ted*. Houston Chronicle.

Polland, R. J (2005). *Essentials of Education Research and Analysis: Methods for Determining Sample Size*. [http://www.unf.edu/dept/cirt/workshops/survey/Poland Manual.pdf](http://www.unf.edu/dept/cirt/workshops/survey/Poland%20Manual.pdf).

Republic of Kenya (1999). *Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET)*. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya chaired by Davy Koech. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Western Province Secretariat (1998). *Report of Provincial Working Committee on Improvement of Education Standards in Western Province*. Unpublished Report.

Somerset, A. (1987). *Examination Reform in Kenya*. Washington D.C: World Bank.

Wilson, D. (2001). *Information, Incentives and Insurer Behaviour: An Analysis of Selection in Health Insurance Market*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Bristol.

Wilson, D. (2003). *Which Ranking? The Use of Alternative Performance Indicators in the English Secondary Education Market 2–37*. University of Bristol.

World Bank (2001). *Alternative Schools and Roma Education; A review of alternative Secondary School Models for the Education of Roma Children in Hungary*. Budapest: Raja Press.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) for recognizing, approving and funding this study. Special thanks also go to the 252 members comprising Head teachers, teachers and students from the 36 secondary schools in the district which formed the study sample. Their cooperation in filling the questionnaires is highly appreciated.

Advised by Laima Railienė, University of Šiauliai, Lithuania

Jane K. Amunga	Lecturer, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya. P.O. Box 190 Kakamega, Kenya. Phone: 0722830454. E-mail: jnamunga@yahoo.com
Maurice M. Amadalo	Senior Lecturer, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology Department of Science and Mathematics Education, P.O. Box 190, Kakamega, Kenya. Website: http://www.mmust.ac.ke/
Julius K. Maiyo	Lecturer at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Department of Educa- tional Planning and Management, Kenya. P.O. Box 190, Kakamega, Kenya. Phone: 254-721-223-154. E-mail: maiyokip2004@yahoo.com Website: http://www.wust.ac.ke/