



INFLUENCE OF TEACHER'S SUBJECT MATTER KNOWLEDGE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF KISWAHILI LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KATHONZWENI SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Kathonzweni Sub County has been posting poor results in Kiswahili language. This prompted the researchers to undertake a study in the Sub County. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of teacher's subject matter knowledge on students' academic achievement in Kiswahili language. This study was guided by Teacher Efficacy theory. The study was conducted in Kathonzweni Sub County, Kenya. The target population comprised of 60 Kiswahili teachers and 39 principals in all the 39 public secondary schools in the Sub County. The sample size was all the 39 principals and 60 Kiswahili hence Census Survey. Questionnaires for principals and teachers were used as instruments of data collection. The objective of the study was; to establish the influence of teacher's subject matter knowledge on students' academic achievement in Kiswahili language in public secondary schools in the Sub County. Both questionnaires were piloted for reliability and yielded on Chronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.833 for principal's questionnaire and 0.838 for teachers' questionnaire. The data collected was quantitatively analyzed using Statistical package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Pearson Correlation was used to establish relationships. The findings established that; a teacher's subject matter knowledge had significant influence on students' achievement on Kiswahili language ($r=0.618$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$). The findings of the study may be useful in advising the Ministry of Education (MOE) on ensuring thorough grounding of teachers in teacher training colleges and universities to produce fully baked Kiswahili teachers.

Keywords: Kiswahili Language, Student Achievement, Subject Matter Knowledge, Teacher Preparedness



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BACKGROUND

Subject matter knowledge of a classroom teacher is essential and extremely critical. Teachers' intellectual resources and dispositions largely determine their capacity to engage students' minds and hearts in learning process (Ball, 1988). Subject matter study is thought to

provide the teacher with understanding of the content he or she is to teach (Anderson, 1988). Teacher’s subject matter knowledge may be affected by the attitudes and expectations that their students bring to the classroom. Teacher’s understanding of subject matter affects their capacity to simplify content to help students to understand. Ademulegun (2001) added that students taught by teachers who are more qualified and experienced in terms of the subject matter perform better than those taught by far less qualified and experienced teachers. Odhiambo (2005) indicates that there is extremely growing demand and desire from the Kenyan government and public for accountability from the classroom teachers. In Kenya, many colleges have been established to prepare teachers for teaching through equipping them with the necessary skills needed. This study therefore sought to investigate the influence of teacher’s subject matter knowledge on students’ achievement on Kiswahili language in public secondary schools in Kathonzwi Sub County.

Statement of the Problem

Students’ academic achievement in the KCSE at national level has been dismal over the years. The general students’ academic achievement in Kathonzwi Sub County has been poor in the last 5 years as shown in the **table1.1** below;

Table: 1.1 General analyzed KNEC Results for Kathonzwi Sub County.

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Entry	1580	1643	1723	1949	2070
Mean scores	5.200 C-	4.491 D+	4.662 C-	3.480 D	3.353 D

Source: Kathonzwi Sub County Examinations Office

The number of candidates in this Sub County has significantly increased from 1580 to 2070 over the years but the mean scores have decreased over the last five years. The performance of Kiswahili language in the Sub County has been increasingly dropping for the last five years as shown in **Table1.2** below despite the infrastructure as well as technical support from the government and other development partnerships as well as other stakeholders. This worrying academic achievement is of great concern to parents; the government and general public since each of them expect very good results especially after making a huge investment in the secondary education in terms of money and human resources.

Table: 1.2 Kiswahili Language analyzed KNEC Results for Kathonzwi Sub County

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Entry	1580	1643	1723	1949	2070
Mean scores	5.943 C	5.531 C	5.242 C-	4.112 D+	3.719 D+

Source: Kathonzwi Sub County of Education Examinations Office

The study therefore the researcher sought to investigate the influence of teacher's subject matter knowledge on students' academic achievement in Kiswahili language in public secondary schools in Kathonzi Sub County.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of teacher's subject matter knowledge on students' academic achievement of Kiswahili language in public secondary schools in Kathonzi Sub County.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Teacher Efficacy theory for the purpose of the study to be under taken. According to Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly and Zelman (1977) teacher efficacy has been defined as the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to effect student academic achievement. This can be done or achieved mainly through confidence in content delivery, class management and other teaching practices. Gusky and Passaro (1994) indicate that it can also mean the teachers believe or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, how they retain the subject matter, even those who may have difficulties or unmotivated. Improving the efficacy of in-service teacher includes training and professional development of teachers on teaching methodology which is extremely paramount in classroom instruction. A teacher who is practicing teaching is better than who has already left teaching. Gusky (1982) in his study revealed that great efficacy was related more on positive attitude about teaching as well as high level of confidence in the teacher, Mastery of content by the teachers and implementation of teaching practices also discussed by Gusky as parameters used to measure teacher efficacy. Therefore, this theory connected with the study carried.

Literature Review

Teacher's Subject Matter Knowledge

Subject matter is an essential component of teacher knowledge. According to Buchman (1984) indicates that it would be very odd to expect a teacher to plan a lesson on, for instance, writing report in science and to evaluate related assignment, if that teacher is ignorant about writing and about science. Teachers' subject matter knowledge may be affected by the attitudes and expectations that their students bring to the classroom. Teacher's understanding of subject content affects their capacity to simplify content to help students to understand. Helping students learn subject matter involves more than delivery of facts and information (Ball, 1988). Jadama (2014) indicates that a teacher who is ignorant or

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uninformed about subject content can pass in accurate ideas to students, use texts uncritically and even change unsuitably. He further argues a teacher will find it extremely difficult to answer varied question from students about a subject matter if the teacher has little knowledge about it. Understanding of subject matter of a discipline enables teachers to plan their lesson and also to evaluate their assignment. The researcher further explains that; benefits of knowledge of subject matter include enabling the teachers to teach well using different teaching methodologies, give varied and alternative questions and ability to clarify misconceptions on subject content. This helps the teacher a great deal especially in the evaluation of the learners. Kimosop (2015) agrees with other researchers in that if the content to be learnt is incomplete the acquisition of curriculum goals will not be achieved.

Student Achievement

According to Ferguson (1990) academic achievement is the quality and quantity of knowledge skills, grades, techniques, positive attitude, behavior and philosophy that learners achieve or acquire and evaluated through marks and grades that the students attain in a test or examination which is done at the end of a topic, school term, year or education cycle. Adegoroye(2004) argues that improving academic achievement depends on improvement of quality of classroom practices of the subject teacher. The more organized the teacher is the better the performance. Baikie (2000) states that it is the teacher who should establish the right climate of conditions for learning, use of learning resources and appropriate teaching methods to attainment of Kiswahili language skills and achievement. Mutua(2008) found that low academic achievement of students in Kiswahili language was an aftermath of a negative attitude of both teachers and students towards teaching and learning process of Kiswahili language.

Summary of Literature Review and Research Gaps

From the studies cited above it is clear that teacher's subject matter knowledge has influence on student academic achievement. Other factors range from availability of learning resources, students' attitude and teacher motivation which can generally referred to the school culture. The students' academic achievement in Kathonzwani Sub County in the KNEC examinations schools has not been promising in the last five years.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population was the 39 principals and 60 Kiswahili teachers in the 39 public secondary schools in Kathonzwani Sub County. The sample size was all the 39 principals and 60 Kiswahili language teachers hence census

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survey. Questionnaires for the principals and Kiswahili teachers were used as the main instruments of data collection. A Pilot study was done in accordance to a recommendation by Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) that 1% of target population is examined to ensure reliability of the instruments before the actual study. One school was selected for the study. The collected data was quantitatively analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS).

Research Findings

The findings were as follows;

Influence of Teacher’s Subject Matter Knowledge on Students’ Academic Achievement

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of teacher’s subject matter knowledge on students’ academic achievement on Kiswahili language in public secondary schools in Kathonzi Sub County. The principals and teachers were asked to tick on their level of agreement on listed statements on influence of teacher’s subject matter knowledge. The data were analyzed in form of percentages and frequencies. **Table1.0** presents principals’ agreement level on influence of teacher’s subject matter knowledge on students’ achievement.

Table 1.0: Principals’ Responses on Influence of Teacher’s Subject Matter Knowledge on Students’ Academic Achievement.

Statement	SA %	A %	U %	SD %	D %
1 Teacher’s subject content knowledge is a measure of teacher effectiveness in teaching Kiswahili language.	42.9	37.1	17.1	2.9	0.0
2 Subject Matter knowledge allows the teacher to effectively alternate teaching methodologies leading to good performance in Kiswahili language.	77.1	22.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
3 Subject matter knowledge allows the teacher to give varied and alternate answers to learners hence affecting their performance in Kiswahili language.	74.3	20.0	2.9	2.9	0.0
4 Subject matter knowledge gives the teacher the ability to clarify misconceptions and hard concepts to learners helping them to perform well in Kiswahili language.	85.7	11.4	2.9	0.0	0.0
5 Subject matter knowledge helps the teacher in planning of lessons and evaluation of the learners’ assignments hence good performance in Kiswahili language.	88.6	8.6	2.9	0.0	0.0
N=35					

Findings in **Table1.0** show that: 42.9% (15) of the principals strongly agreed that teacher’s subject content knowledge is a measure of teacher effectiveness in teaching Kiswahili language; 77.1% (27) strongly agreed that subject Matter knowledge allows the teacher to effectively alternate teaching methodologies leading to high academic achievements in

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Kiswahili language; 74.3% (26) strongly agreed that subject matter knowledge allows the teacher to give varied and alternate answers to learners hence affecting their academic achievement in Kiswahili language; 85.7% (30) strongly agreed that subject matter knowledge gives the teacher the ability to clarify misconceptions and hard concepts to learners helping them to perform well in Kiswahili language and 88.6% (31) of the principals strongly agreed that subject matter knowledge helps the teacher in planning of lessons and evaluation of the learners' assignments hence high academic achievement in Kiswahili language. This shows that subject content knowledge influence teacher effectiveness in teaching Kiswahili language which also have an impact on academic achievement. The finding is in agreement with Jadama (2014) that benefits of knowledge of subject matter include enabling the teachers to teach well using different teaching methodologies, give varied and alternative questions and ability to clarify misconceptions on subject matter.

Table 1.1 presents teachers' agreement level on influence of subject matter knowledge on students' academic achievement

Table 1.1: Teachers' Responses on Influence of Subject Matter Knowledge on students' academic achievement in Kiswahili language.

No	Statement	SA %	A %	U %	SD %	D %
1	Teacher's subject content knowledge is a measure of teacher effectiveness in teaching Kiswahili language.	64.0	32.0	4.0	0.0	0.0
2	Subject Matter knowledge allows the teacher to effectively alternate teaching methodologies leading to good performance in Kiswahili language.	82.0	18.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
3	Subject matter knowledge allows the teacher to give varied and alternate answers to learners hence affecting their performance in Kiswahili language.	78.0	22.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	Subject matter knowledge gives the teacher the ability to clarify misconceptions and hard concepts to learners helping them to perform well in Kiswahili language.	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	Subject matter knowledge helps the teacher in planning of lessons and evaluation of the learners' assignments hence high academic achievement in Kiswahili language.	76.0	24.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
6	Teacher's knowledge on subject matter helps the learner to understand more the same subject matter very well.	72.0	26.0	2.0	0.0	0.0

N=50

Findings in **Table 1.1** show that: 64% (32) of the teachers strongly agreed that teacher's subject content knowledge is a measure of teacher effectiveness in teaching Kiswahili language; 82% (41) strongly agreed that subject Matter knowledge allows the teacher to effectively alternate teaching methodologies leading to high academic achievement in Kiswahili language; 78% (39) strongly agreed that subject matter knowledge allows the

teacher to give varied and alternate answers to learners hence affecting their academic achievements in Kiswahili language; 80% (40) strongly agreed that subject matter knowledge gives the teacher the ability to clarify misconceptions and hard concepts to learners helping them to perform well in Kiswahili language; 76% (38) strongly agreed that subject matter knowledge helps the teacher in planning of lessons and evaluation of the learners' assignments hence high academic achievement in Kiswahili language and 72% (36) of the teachers strongly agreed that teacher's knowledge on subject matter helps the learner to understand more the same subject matter very well. This implies that knowledge on subject matter influences academic achievement in Kiswahili. The findings concurs with Jadama (2014) that benefits of knowledge of subject matter include enabling the teachers to teach well using different teaching methodologies, give varied and alternative questions and ability to clarify misconceptions on subject matter.

A correlation between teacher subject matter and students' achievement was computed. It was established that teacher's subject matter knowledge has significant influence ($r=0.618$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$) on students' achievement on Kiswahili language in public secondary schools in Kathonzi Sub County. Majority of the teachers strongly agreed that: subject Matter knowledge allows the teacher to effectively alternate teaching methodologies leading to good performance in Kiswahili language; subject matter knowledge allows the teacher to give varied and alternate answers to learners hence affecting their performance in Kiswahili language; subject matter knowledge gives the teacher the ability to clarify misconceptions and hard concepts to learners helping them to perform well in Kiswahili language; subject matter knowledge helps the teacher in planning of lessons and evaluation of the learners' assignments hence good performance in Kiswahili language and teacher's knowledge on subject matter helps the learner to understand more the same subject matter very well. The findings concur with Jadama (2014) that benefits of knowledge of subject matter include enabling the teachers to teach well using different teaching methodologies, give varied and alternative questions and ability to clarify misconceptions on subject matter.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It was also concluded that teacher's subject matter knowledge is an important issue in subject academic achievement since it provides the teacher with understanding of the content he or she is to teach. Researcher recommends that; The Teachers Service Commission to deploy more qualified Kiswahili language teachers to teacher-learner ration. A related study focusing

on a larger area like a county could be carried out to determine if the circumstances in Kathonzwi Sub County apply to other Counties.

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